



# The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association



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**E-mail items to The Aviator at: [Aviator@vhp.org](mailto:Aviator@vhp.org)**

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# PRESIDENT'S CORNER



What a disruptive turmoil we have had to endure these past six months. I trust that this message finds you and your loved ones safe, and not in harm's way. Anytime in life that there are forces beyond our control, we simply have to adjust and adapt. We can complain and grouse (and maybe a rant now and then feels good as a cathartic release – I know it does for me), but at the end of the day, we have to do what's necessary, even if difficult, to cope with the conditions and circumstances we are confronted by. If there is a silver lining however, many of the members I have spoken to have told me that a lot of long-neglected projects around the home are now being addressed; organizing personal papers and affairs, taking up various hobbies, cleaning out the garage, reading that book, taking old photos and getting them in sequence with notes, exercising more, having more home-cooked dinner dates with our spouses, going for walks, tracking down long lost friends and catching up through emails, telling family members how important they are, and one guy even admitted he's been binge-watching shows on Netflix!

This unwelcomed pause in our normal routines has perhaps given us some pause – to reflect – the glass is always half full. Our economy has been shaken, and the rough spots or cycles will no doubt continue, but the good news is that the stock market is hovering at about 90% of its beginning year high. I'd like to think that most people realize that the publicly traded companies on the various exchanges did not make any fundamental or catastrophic mistakes causing the initial and significant "virus" drop – they are essentially sound companies, have a future, are worthy of investing in, and will rebound accordingly when this pandemic abates. Economists like to point out that there is a difference between the market and the economy. Critics like to also

point out that the market forces or motives can often be speculation, fear, and greed – which can lead to panic. Emotion does play a part, but it is comforting to see that most mature investors and institutions have been admirably and relatively calm despite these tenuous times. Hang in there my friends – barring any future craziness, which cannot be ruled out – we will come out the other side of this.

*Art Jacobs, VHAP President*



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# FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

## REMINDERS:

- 2020 directories purchased will be delivered in October 2020.
- Paper Directories purchased beginning September 1, 2020 will be for the 2021 directory that will be delivered in October 2021. The deadline for ordering the 2021 directory will be August 31, 2021.
- The price for a pre-ordered copy of the paper directory is \$25.
- 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>!

**PLEASE HELP US REDUCE THE COSTS OF REMAINING ITEMS!** If you move, PLEASE go on line to <https://directory.vhpa.org> and log in with your member number, then set up a password. Then on the left side will be

a box with red lettering that says "Other Services." Under "Other Services" will be a box that says, "Update My Information." Click on this button and you can make updates directly to your information. You can also call HQ with an update to your contact information!

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

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

Sherry Rodgers

VHPA Office Manager

## CD DIRECTORY TO STOP

Because of decrease in demand and changing technology, the Executive Council has elected to stop producing the membership directory CD after this year's issue. Most members are now switching to smart phones, tablets and laptops that do not have CD drives so there is no way to use a CD. Also, the CD is obsolete as soon as it is produced, while the online membership direc

tory is updated daily and online has much more information than the CD. Our web sites are being redesigned to accommodate this massive move to portable technology making it even easier to access membership information with any device that can connect with the Internet. The deadline for ordering a 2020 membership directory CD is August 31, with delivery in October.

## VHPA 2021 CALENDAR



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The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and Acclaim Press are pleased to present the new VHPA 2021 Calendar, now available for immediate shipment. This is the 28th calendar produced by the VHPA.

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

Printed in full-color, this 17x11-inch (BIG) wall calendar is the perfect gift for all VHPA members and their families. **Only \$14.95!** (plus shipping & Missouri state taxes if applicable)

Order your copies today!





# "YOUR" VHPA LEGACY – ESTATE PLANNING

Based upon numerous inquiries and suggestions regarding member estate planning and the VHPA, here is the relevant information from the Executive Council if you would like to participate.

Our members have done a remarkable job in ensuring our story will be preserved and continue long after we are gone. Many of you have generously contributed to our scholarship fund under the auspices of AAAA, and of course, we now have a fully funded endowment in place with the Vietnam Center for Archives (VNCA) with Texas Tech University. Additionally, many of you have recorded your oral history with our own Mike Law or through other military associations or universities. These efforts will provide historians and our descendants a detailed, accurate, and vivid account of what we did in Vietnam and how we honorably served our country.

There is another avenue the Executive Council would invite you to look into and consider with regard to "your" legacy, that is, a "bequest" in your estate plan to leave something, even a nominal amount, to the VHPA. You can leave either a specific dollar amount or indicate a percentage of your estate. The process is a very simple one for your family attorney to complete:

There are four typical options for gifts of this nature:

1. The VHPA Scholarship Fund.
2. The Texas Tech Vietnam Center for the Archives (VNCA).
3. The VHPA General Fund.
4. A VHPA Directed Gift.

A "directed" gift is one where you want the money to go to a specific purpose, project, or effort within the VHPA. For example, subsidizing Gold Star breakfasts, reunion supplies to

keep our registration fees low, a travel fund for our HQ staff to attend reunions, Color Guard banquet dinners, etc. Your gift will be specifically restricted to that area.

In such situations, a majority of people have made their bequests to the VHPA General Fund for two reasons:

- 1) Any money left over in the General Fund when we are all gone will automatically go to the Scholarship Fund and Texas Tech anyway.
- 2) The implicit trust is that the VHPA will put the money to good use as it sees fit and toward specific or even unanticipated needs down the road.

You can also specify that your gift be "In Memory of" or "In Honor of" if you so desire. And by the way, these bequests are "revocable" if you set it up that way in that if your financial situation changes before your death, you can change or eliminate the bequest at any time. And, bear in mind, depending upon your particular estate plan or trust, there may be some favorable tax consequences associated for you and your heirs.

**A SIMPLE PROCESS:** Just confer with your family attorney regarding the specific wording this bequest requires as the rules may vary state to state.

We are already one of the most respected and well-run military veterans' associations in the country. Your generosity will only add luster to that reputation as your gift will go toward preserving our very unique history in our service to the country during the Vietnam War.

**The VHPA Executive Council**



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*My fellow rotor-heads,*

I've been following the recent conversation regarding our association's legacy. After all, second to marrying my bride of fifty years, the decision to join the ranks of Army aviators was the most important one of my life. I consider what that decision gave and cost me. A public station, prestige, solid friendships and also night sweats and a gunshot wound that will always remind me of then. But this is now, and our glory years are well behind us.

It is my understanding that the Association is currently set up as a 'last man standing organization.' The ranks are now growing thinner and many are concerned that no one will be there to carry the torch. This is true. As we did then when no one was there to take over when things got rough. We did it ourselves.

Our legacy now and forever is displayed at Arlington Cemetery, Texas Tech., and the annals of the U.S. Army. We don't need anything more. We did not volunteer to go into the breach for legacy. Glory found us, each of us together. Now is the time to enjoy the sunset.

What I'm trying to express is that I am proud of the last man concept. It is honorable and final. Perhaps an Association close-out committee with legal assistance can tie up loose ends when the time comes. The last VHPA aviator standing can hold the trophy and drink to us from a very good bottle of scotch. Then it will end. We were soldiers at a time and place that never can be duplicated. With our passing will be the time to close the book. Our actions are legacy enough. History will tell our story.

*Respectfully,*

Timothy B. Braun WO1  
Co. B. 227 Avn. Bn. (Combat. Assault)  
1st Cavalry Division

RVN 1968-69

*To the Editor:*

This is my humble opinion to the March/April 2020 article "Planning for the End".

As long as the VHPA is alive, the one thing I care about is that the VHPA maintain its focus on the Vietnam Veterans that were army aviators, crew chiefs, gunners, and support. In military history, there was nothing prior to Vietnam that used helicopter air cavalry/airmobile tactics, and there will be nothing like it in the future.

Nothing lasts forever; when the VHPA bleeds out I want it and what it represented to be remembered and then buried. My point is that leaving the VHPA in a state that would allow it to be modified, morphed, re-imagined, consolidated, merged (watered down) would be a travesty (in my eyes).

What I care about is that long after we are all gone, this unique group of individuals and approach to war fighting is remembered. This can be accomplished in a number of ways:

1. The VHPA needs to create a Will and appoint an Executor.
2. Its total archive needs to be preserved & maintained like any other historical information.
3. The archive must be available to the Public; physical and online.
4. A contractual guardianship/caretaker needs to be created, along with a process for assigning generational guardians to ensure its preservation and public access into the future.
5. So, create a plan with a timeline, and execute it.

In reading the letters to the Editor in the July-August 2020 Issue, I most liked Mike Law's input. Especially his emphasis on SOP's...

if it's not written down, it doesn't exist! So, as Major Bowling once said to me on the radio, "Press on."

*Stay Safe,*

Ricky Gerontis (Pallbearer 37)

*Ricky, there have been articles (not quite as eye-catching as are many war stories and easy to overlook) explaining the role of Texas Tech University in the preservation of our archives. That aspect, at least, has already been assured. ~Ed.*

*To the Editor:*

I'd like to share a light-hearted tale, which the article on the "Repose" recalled for me.

We had been flying medevacs out to the Repose, or one of the other hospital ships, all afternoon and while waiting in the '46 onboard ship I had gotten into some casual radio conversations with the friendly shipboard air controller about the relative merits of living on a clean, safe, boozeless ship versus a muddy stinking rocket-magnet of a base, but with booze. As we finished our last delivery of



the afternoon, he asked me if I could take some passengers back to Marble Mountain, there was a USO show on base that night. I said, "Sure", and pretty soon out come some all dressed-up nurses. The crew chief's and gunner's eyes get as big as saucers. So, I told the controller that if it's nurses, he's talking about, I'll take as many as he's got! He says OK, wait one, and after about five minutes another handful come running out, laughing like crazy, and climb aboard. The crew chief is now all smiles – ROUND EYES, maybe we can fly off to one of those small islands out in the South China Sea!

While the nurses are getting situated, one of them, their leader I believe, sticks her head in the cockpit to thank me, and I get an idea. I have the co-pilot unstrap and go back to entertain the passengers and ask the nurse if she'd like to ride up front. Which of course she would, so she climbs into the co-pilot's seat. With the crew chief's careful and able assistance with her straps (ho, ho, bigger smiles all the time), she gets buckled in. I had her put on the copilot's helmet, and show her how to use the trigger for intercom and broadcast. Then I dictated some notes for her to write on the kneeboard, and off we go. As we're approaching Marble, there was the usual high amount of late afternoon radio traffic so I waited for a break, gave her the high sign, and out on the air comes this very clear, very feminine voice "Marble tower, Injure 1-0, over." All the other radio traffic stopped. Stunned silence. Finally, the tower replies "Uh... Injure 1-0, go ahead." She said, "Injure 1-0 is feet wet, one mile out for landing, over." Still silence and a big pause before tower responds with landing instructions. "Roger Marble tower," she added, "we have passengers on board and request ground transportation to nurses billeting, over." Now there's no pause, rather this big smiley voice comes back "ROGER 1-0, cleared to land, contact ground control when clear of the runway!"

I figured on catching some flak for that stunt, but by then I had about ten months in country and didn't give a s\*\*\*. We had to have some fun to maintain a vestige of sanity over there. Also, I think Maj. Yanke had taken over HMM-265 from the prior CO (who would undoubtedly have thrown a tantrum) and Yanke, pilot's pilot that he was, thought it was pretty funny too. No repercussions from the Base or the Wing or anyone else either. I think they were just all too happy for the delivery...

**Fred Pratt, USMC, RVN, Jan '68 - Feb '69  
HMM-265 & HMM-161**

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**Ned Crimmin  
TSgt, USAF, Ret**

USAFSS Intelligence Analyst 1964-74  
USAF Admin Supervisor 1974-83  
Tours of Duty:  
1963-64 Basic Lackland AFB, Tx  
1964-68 RAF Chicksands, England  
1968-71 NSA Ft. Meade, Md.  
1971-74 Osan AB, ROK  
1974-83 Vandenberg AFB, Ca



#### VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION SATISFIED CLIENTS

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

#### KOREAN WAR VET SATISFIED CLIENT

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

## The Old Aviator.

"Why? No. I'm not angry at anyone. I'm not sad or lonely either. My friends and I have lot's of fun. Harm anyone? Are you kidding? Of course not! I won't even swat mosquitoes."



Frank White

#### About the Artist:

Frank White is a U.S. Army Veteran, and former licensed Funeral Director. He was totally disabled as a result of an airplane crash in 1988. His hobbies of drawing, painting, and model building were perfected during his recovery. He has contributed works to the US Army Aviation Museum and has numerous paintings and models in the Richard Petty Museum. He recreated the artwork on the restoration of the only remaining ACH-47 Guns A Go-Go aircraft, "Easy Money," which also displays a series of paintings of the Go-Go in action. He holds a patent (US8021238) on an ingenious model display method, and has contributed content to modeling magazines. Frank now puts his heart into customized scale model commissions, landscape/object painting, as well as cartoons. Examples of his work may be seen on the following website: <http://floatingmid.com> and <http://gunsagogo.org/>

Frank may be contacted at: [fwhite@floatingmid.com](mailto:fwhite@floatingmid.com).



# National American Huey History Museum

Presented by American Huey 369  
and Robert Fureigh, Musket 39, 176th AHC



You've seen us: at reunions, manning our booth in the Vendors Area; at the 2014 Louisville Reunion, with our two Hueys and an OH-6 performing a re-enactment of a downed-pilot rescue, adjacent to the Ohio River near the hotel; in the Vintage Aircraft area at annual conferences of Helicopter Association International; as well as mentioned in the Aviator in Activities Reports (American Huey Chapter).

American Huey 369 - formed 16 years ago, is committed to: (a) preserving the history of Vietnam veterans and the Hueys they flew and depended on in Vietnam; (b) educating current and future generations about the Huey; and (c) honoring all that flew them or were supported by them on the ground in combat, and especially Gold Star family members that continue to suffer and grieve the loss of their loved ones.

The story of AH369 and its slow, steady growth in volunteers, support, successes and dreams is well presented at [www.americanhuey369.com](http://www.americanhuey369.com). Commitment to the mission is also reflected in the restoration to flight of three Vietnam veteran Hueys (two slicks and a B-model gunship), 12 static aircraft (10 slicks; one OH-6; one Cobra), and recently, a beautiful, flyable UH-1H donated by Lockheed Martin. Other acquisitions include vehicles, equipment, artifacts, an ever-growing library of books, pictures, movies, and memorabilia, and purchase of 34 acres of beautiful land across nearby US Route 31.

AH369 has operated out of a large, old hangar (no heat or air) at Grissom Air Reserve Base since 2008, with part of it beginning use as a museum in 2011. With interest and support continuing to build over the years, as well as our inventory of aircraft and equipment increasing, the need for a permanent hangar/museum began to crystallize, resulting in an architect developing conceptual drawings for a 30,000 sq. ft. hangar/museum and a need to start raising money. A goal of \$4 million was determined and fundraising efforts began - slowly at first but becoming more structured five years ago. The initial fundraising effort involved a 30"x40" (215 lb.) bronze "Living History Hangar" plaque - seeking 250 donations of \$1,000, for which a donor provides a name to be memorialized by being cast on the plaque. Such donors became known as Museum Founders. In eight months, all 250 lines on the plaque were committed, \$276K raised, and the bronze plaque was cast, to be prominently displayed in the entrance foyer of the museum. This was followed by a similar 30"x50" (235 lb.) Phase II "Restoration Hangar" bronze plaque that raised \$260K in 18 months. The much larger - 56"x80" (802 lb.) final Phase III bronze plaque, when completed will raise \$3.5 million. To date, Phase III Founder fundraising stands at \$871,500. Together with other Building Fund donations, brick sales, and Jim Crigler's Mission of Honor, total fundraising is at \$1,471,725 - 37% of the goal.

**Bad News:** Before the pandemic arose, the Air Force dropped a bomb on our flight line neighborhood. Our temporary hangar/museum is among a few buildings deemed to be in violation of certain safety clearance standards and must be demolished. While a deadline has not been announced, we have been told it could be six months or a few years. With such serious uncertainty, the need to recruit more Phase III Museum Founders is as obvious as the MASTER CAUTION light - triggered by the illumination of the BECOME A FOUNDER segment light.

**Good News:** We persevere. We responded to tactical emergencies; and to fill the Cav hats at the reunion business meetings; and to Bob Hesselbein's rally to fight for the granite monument at Arlington National Cemetery.

Over the last four years, more than a thousand veterans and patriots have become Founders. I know many VHPAers that are eager for this Museum to be completed soon. To pull this off, we need several hundred more Museum Founders by the end of the year. If you're able to help with this tactical emergency, you may use the form on the facing page or find it at [www.americanhuey369.com](http://www.americanhuey369.com).

*This is a paid advertisement.*



# "HUEY" IROQUOIS

ARTHUR M. YOUNG  
INVENTOR, BELT HELICOPTER  
1945-1946

THE AIRCRAFT  
1945-1946

YH-40  
1ST BATTAL, 1ST AVIATION BATTALION  
1945-1946

THE AIRCRAFT, 1945-1946

LAWRENCE D. BELL  
FOUNDER, BELT HELICOPTER  
1945-1946

REMEMBER A MAN WHO SAVED YOUR LIFE? REMEMBER TO BE A LITTLE THING AND ILL SHOW YOU A  
MAN WHO SAVED YOUR LIFE? REMEMBER TO BE A LITTLE THING AND ILL SHOW YOU A

## NATIONAL AMERICAN HUEY HISTORY MUSEUM ESTABLISHED 2016



HT-16 TH-11



MARINE UH-1E



NAVY SCARWOLF HAL-3



NAVY HH-1C



NAVY RESCUE UH-1N



MARINE UH-1N



MARINE UH-1Y & AH-1W



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UH-1B TRAINER FORT RUCKER



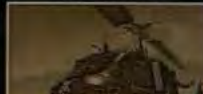
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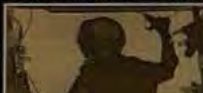
UH-1H & AH-1G



HISTORIC MISSION



ASSAULT HELICOPTER "SLICK"



MAN IN THE DOOR

## "IT'S TIME" Become a Founder

**LAST CHANCE** to add your name to the  
"Final" 3rd Phase Founders Bronze Plaque to be  
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## Quilters Show and Tell

With Covid-19 sticking around and having to stay home or distancing, it should give us quilters lots of time to make block and quilts for our Veterans as well as making something for that someone special in your life.

Information for the blocks:

1. 12 and one half inch square blocks, unfinished
2. Colors are to be Red, White/Cream, and blue
3. Blocks style are your choice
4. Prewash all fabrics to stabilize the colors and preshrink
5. Fabric is to be quilt quality fabric

I still need volunteer longarm quilters interested in quilting a few quilts for our group projects, please contact

me (see my contact info below). I would like to thank our volunteers, Shireen Hatten and Roslyn Atwood who have been quilting for our veterans the last several years. Failure to find "longarm" support may terminate our ongoing veteran project.

Looking forward to Reunion in Charlotte, NC in July of 2021 and seeing the recipients of the quilts, fellow quilters and anyone else who is interested in our program.

Hope everyone is taking the required measures to stay safe. See you in July.

Kathleen Sherfey  
12420 W 53rd Terr.  
Shawnee, KS 66216  
klskms@aol.com

## Vietnam Helo Operations-VHPA Rotorheads Return

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## ~ LOOKING FOR ~

### *Signal Corp Aviation Vietnam 1962 - 1972 History Project*



I am working on a Signal Aviation history document for the Vietnam Center and Archive. I need your help in gathering information about these units to complete a history. Currently the Center has ZERO information. These were all small aviation units, usually part of a HQ, and have very little in the way of official US Army reports available. I have been in contact with some of our members, who have contributed a good bit of information about their experiences. I need more!

Especially any information about the 53rd Signal BN Aviation Section. The VHPA database had two members who were assigned to the 53rd, but I have been able to find no other information about this unit. In addition, early information on the 39th Signal BN Aviation Section from 1962-65 is mostly not available. This was mostly fixed wing (U-1A, U-6A) support in this period.

Please talk to your fixed wing buddies and anybody else that you know that might have information that can be used.

The following is a very short summary of Signal Aviation support history in Vietnam:

Signal organic aviation support started in 1962 with the 39th Signal BN Aviation Section located in Tan Son Nhut. In 1965, 39th became part of 2nd Signal Group. 2nd Signal Group added the 41st Signal BN in Nha Trang and they also had a small signal aviation section.

In 1966 the 1st Signal Brigade took over and created three signal aviation sections that later were defined as detachments. These were 2nd Signal Group in Ton Son Nhut, 21st Signal group in Nha Trang, and

12th Signal Group in Phu Bai. At its peak, the 1st Signal Brigade had 23,000 personnel in Vietnam and Thailand and were supported by these three aviation detachments. The Brigade aviation grew to 36 helicopters and nine fixed wing aircraft. In 1971, the 2nd Group was renamed the 1st Signal Brigade Aviation Detachment and the 12th Group was renamed the 37th Signal Aviation Detachment. All the detachments stood down by the end of 1972.

There were also two other organic Signal BN Aviation Sections in Vietnam from 1966-71 that reported to MACV through the I and II Field Force Headquarters. The IFFV / 54th Signal BN Aviation Section was located in Nha Trang and the IFFV / 53rd Signal BN may have had an aviation section located in Long Binh.

**Dave Anderson, Satellite 33**  
**daveanderson0813@yahoo.com**  
**707-741-0497**

### *Looking for names in photo.*

Here are seven contemporary flight instructors and Flight Training Section Commanders from the same Fort Rucker Flight Training Branch, around 1969-1970. I am the third from the right. And Pete Peduzzi is the fourth from the right. Does anybody recognize any of the other five Captains, or know of their whereabouts today?



**John S. (Steve) Martin, Brigadier General (Ret),**  
**VHPA Life Member**  
**jsmartinbg@gmail.com**



# LOOKING FOR BOB

DALE HOUSE

Bob had to leave country early. Not that he wanted to. It's just the way it happened, which is what this story is about.

Bob was Maintenance Officer for A Troop, 7/17 Air Cav based at Camp Enari in Pleiku. He was my Hooch buddy while we were there. He was the unit LOACH (OH-6) test pilot. We did a lot of drinking back then. We had an 'O' club not far from our hooch. Only a couple of piss-tubes away. We'd talk about our lives back in the states. I'd share with him what we did in the AO that day and he would tell me about the test flights he did. I told him on several occasions that if he could give me a heads up on one of his test flights, I'd like to go along and get some stick time.

After about three months, the Unit moved our base to An Khe. We were going to be reassigned our billeting and he said, 'If we didn't see each other again to look him up after our tours were over.' We had settled in, "up on the hill" where the 1st Cav had recently vacated their billeting. Although, we were assigned to different hooches, we continued to see one another most every night in our company area. During those conversations, Bob would once again say, 'we should stay in touch, let's look each other up after we get stateside.' One night he said that he had a test flight the following morning in a Loach, and if I wanted to come along, he'd take me. It so happened that I had a day off from the AO, so we made a date.

The following morning, we went down to the Golf Course (it wasn't really a golf course). It was an open space near an Army runway where all the aircraft were parked in revetments. The loach was located in a revetment near the runway. As he was preflighting, I noticed the dual controls were not installed. I said, "Hey Bob, The duals aren't in." He said, "That's OK,

it's just a short flight to see if the controls are rigged right."

Well, that instantly got my attention. So, I said, "Bob, I don't think I want to go up in a helicopter that just had its controls rigged and not have duals in it. Not that anything bad is going to happen. I just want to get some stick time." So, Bob said, "Oh, all right! What a chicken shit." I let that go, after all how much of a chicken shit was I? I was a Combat Helicopter Pilot; Right? We both waited till a mechanic brought out the duals and installed them. Bob helped, so it didn't take very long.

Bob did his run up and we hovered out to the runway and took off. As we were climbing on the upwind, Bob said, "Have you ever looked up through the green house and gotten dizzy?" He was demonstrating at that moment what he meant. So, I followed suit and I looked up through the green house. I didn't notice anything and said so. As I looked back out the bubble, looking forward, we were pointed kind of at the sky. I

looked over at Bob and he was still looking out through the green house. I said, "Bob! You're scaring me, knock it off, and nudged him with my elbow.

That's when all hell broke loose! It's also when I really, really got scared. Of course, I didn't know I was scared, that came later. You know, when you're in a situation that you should be scared but you don't have time to think about it? Well, that was one of those moments.

Bob started shaking all over. He then pulled full aft on the cyclic and full pitch. I look out the green house instinctively to see where we were. I was now looking at the ground. Also, instinctively I realized that this is not normal. I tried to get the controls away from Bob, but Bob wasn't letting go. I tried to pull his arms off the controls but that wasn't working out so well either. I starting beating the crap out of him trying to get him to let the controls go. I continued this for about a day



Bob Dahl's stories back home.



and half, give or take 5 or 10 seconds. You know the feeling? It seems like forever but only seconds have passed? Yeah, it was like that.

Going back to those moments when you don't have time to think. Well I was still there. Self-preservation was the order of the day. I think we split S out of the inverted position, but I'm not sure. It could have been a half-Cuban. All I know was, when I looked up through the green house, we were still looking at the ground at least I was, I don't know what Bob was looking at.

Time, I thought, was running out. I managed to get the controls away from Bob. When I did, I looked out to see where I was. We were now pointed at the ground. I heard someone saying "Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!" Over and over again. I think that was me. I must have gotten someone's attention or maybe watching us got their (the towers') attention. When they responded, (You know when the tower doesn't understand something or they want you to respond, that says, we're in control of the situation; they say something like, "Say intention's, Over"). Well, I simply did not know at that point in time what my intentions were. I had never been in a Loach before, and sure as hell hadn't been upside down in one. I think I responded as any cool Aviator would. Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! I didn't hear anything further from the tower. We must have been quite a sight. Well, as luck would have it, we didn't die, although the tower must have stroked out.

Remember, we were screaming at the ground. The runway was now below me. To this day I'm still not sure how I regained control of the helicopter. It must have appeared to the tower that 'Impact' was imminent!

Just prior to 'impact', I did a hard flare, then we began to spin. I was pushing on the pedals, but nothing was happening. I looked down briefly and realized Bob had his feet on the pedals. So, I instinctively chopped the throttle, and pulled pitch.

"And There I was." Sitting on the runway, just about where we had taken off, pointed in the opposite direction. WHAT A RIDE! Getting "stick time" took on a whole new perspective. The next thing I knew, a Medevac landed in front of me. People were yelling at me, and some guys were running from one side to the other. The engine was still running, and I couldn't hear

what anyone was saying. There was a lot of commotion. The only thing I remember saying at that point in time was "Holy Shit" over and over. What the Hell just happened???????

I finally figured out how to shut the helicopter down. I got the attention of one of the crewmen and pointed to Bob. They pulled Bob out, put him on a stretcher, put him in the Medevac helicopter and flew away. I was left alone, still sitting in the helicopter wondering what to do; the rotors were still turning. Not too long after, a crew came out and ground handled the helicopter off the runway. One of them asked what happened? I said, "I don't know." I wasn't very talkative. I was given a ride back to the company area where I took the rest of the day off.

A few days later, I saw Bob in the hospital. They were going to send him home. He was pretty well recovered from the seizure, but it would take him a few weeks to recover from the bruises. Remember? I beat the shit out of him. He had had a "Grand Mall Seizure". So, the Doctor had told me. Bob told me to look him up when I got back stateside, after the war. I said that I would.

I learned a couple things from all this. Don't get in a helicopter without duals. I also learned everything I ever wanted to know about epileptic seizures and flicker vertigo. After blocking out all the bad ju ju, going upside down was not all that bad. I survived helicopter inverted flight. I think I learned a few other things, but it took me years to figure it all out. Later in life, I would become a check pilot in the Hughes 500 (OH-6). I would also become the only guy in the US that issues Aerobatic Competency in helicopters for the FAA.

Back to the point of this whole story. When I told this story in front of an audience at the 2010 Florida VHPA Reunion, I was still "Looking for Bob". I tried to connect with Bob through the years. Never did. I looked for him in San Diego, where he told me he and his wife had been living. I looked for him in Seattle where he grew up. I did, however, find him in Wyoming, and finally paid him a visit. I said "Goodbye" to my friend at the Rock Springs Cemetery.



# A Pilot's Daughter Gets a Belated Christmas Present Back in 1969

*By David Hause, Huey CE, S00191*

I was a proud member of Thunder Aviation with HHC, 3rd BDE, 101st ABN DIV and I want to share this story about one of our brave pilots and the brave man who rescued him the day after Christmas in 1969.

Operation Randolph Glen, 7 December 1969 – 31 March 1970, was designed to keep pressure on the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) units in Thua Thien Province and prevent them from mounting any attacks on the populated coastal regions. The 101st Airborne Division in cooperation with the ARVN 1st Infantry Division conducted operations to locate and engage PAVN and Vietcong (VC) units and interdict supply lines into the populated lowlands of Thua Thien Province. On 11 December the 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment and the ARVN 54th Regiment air assaulted from Camp Evans into multiple landing zones near Firebase O'Reilly to conduct reconnaissance operations.

On 26 December one of the 2nd/506th reconnaissance units encountered a heavily-booby-trapped area. W.O. Lawrence T. "Terry" Lanier of HHC 3rd BDE, 101st ABN, was the pilot of an OH-6 Command & Control Helicopter. His passenger was the unit's Battalion Commander LTC Howard G. Crowell. LTC Crowell directed W.O. Lanier to land near the recon unit so he could discuss the situation with the platoon leader. As the chopper was taking off after the meeting, a booby trap exploded 15 yards away. The pilot was slightly injured but maintained control of his ship. The booby trap damaged the engine and in a short time caused it to explode. A

small piece of the exploding engine lodged in the back of WO Lanier's neck. Somehow, he managed to crash land his Loach into the jungle trees and both he and his passenger survived.



**Terri Lanier Rice I**

**My daddy standing in front of what was left of his helicopter after he was shot down in Vietnam.**

**I am so thankful that God hand picked him and blessed me with him for 52 years.**

**He was not perfect, but he was perfect for me. HAPPY VETERANS DAY Daddy! -**

Flying in the area and hearing the distress call on the radio was the Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division, Maj. Gen. John M. Wright. Gen. Wright, a pilot himself, orchestrated the rescue of these men. Gen. Wright was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his action on this day. Here is the citation which describes the rescue.

"While returning to Camp Eagle from Camp Evans, Republic of Vietnam Major General Wright observed the downed helicopter of the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion (Airmobile), 506th Infantry which had crashed in an enemy-infested area after sustaining extensive damage from an enemy mine. Another helicopter in the area had tried unsuccessfully to land and pick up the crew. Major General Wright piloted his helicopter

over the downed aircraft and dropped an emergency radio to the crew below. Because of the high trees in the immediate vicinity of the crash site, landing was impossible. Major General Wright directed the two men on the ground to another location. He then skillfully lowered his aircraft to within five feet of the ground. The main rotor blades were striking the trees, but he continued to hover over the men until they were pulled into the aircraft. The men were then quickly flown to the 326th Medical Battalion (Airmobile) for treatment. Major General Wright's decisive and courageous actions in an unsecured area resulted in the rescuing of the downed crewmen



approximately two minutes after the crash. Major General Wright's outstanding flying ability and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army."

I feel it is important to note here part of Gen. Wright's history which may have helped to develop his character as I'm sure he didn't want the same thing to happen to his two soldiers on the ground that happened to him during WWII. Taken in part from the VHPA web site it reads; "Captured on Corregidor by the Japanese, he was a prisoner of war for three years and four months, enduring the worst kind of depraved, inhuman, and demoralizing conditions."

Thanks to Gen. Wright's actions that day, Terry Lanier became a career serviceman of the U.S. Army. A loving husband and father, he also was a very active member of the North Carolina VHPA Chapter. He received both an Air Medal with "V" device and a Purple Heart for the action on 26 December 1969. Sad to say W.O. Lawrence T. "Terry" Lanier died after tour on November 3, 2018.

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Loren McAnally (205) 529-4684 cell  
(life member VHPA & CHPA)



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# 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.  
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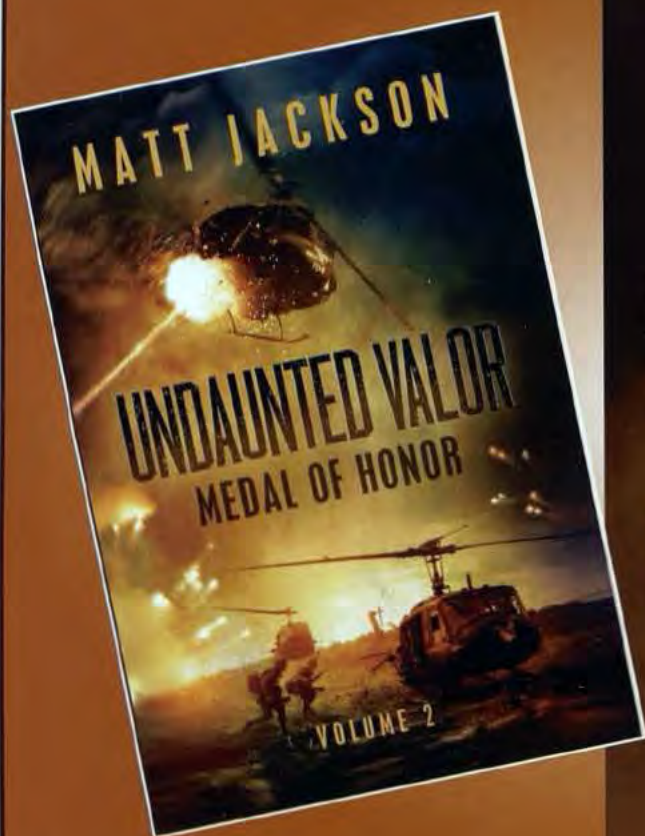
*AVIATOR REPORT completed for 6 New Members and covers the period 6.29.20 to 7.29.20*

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**Hattiesburg Mississippi**  
**Army**  
**68-511 68-17**  
**336 AHC in 68-69; 14 TC BN**  
**in 71; 604 TC CO in 71; 611**  
**TC CO in 72**

**Hill Lawrence E. 'Larry' \*\***  
**Midland Texas**  
**Army**  
**71-1 70-47**  
**A/123 AVN 23 INF in 71; 196**  
**LIB in 71-72**

**Ziemba Richard M. \*\***  
**Pensacola Florida**  
**Army**  
**69-37 69-37**  
**45 MED CO in 70**

**Stastny Randall S. 'Randy' \*\***  
**Jasper Georgia**  
**Army**  
**69-10 69-22**  
**B/2/20 ARA 1 CAV in 69-70**



"This book ambushed me in the first chapter and I was decisively engaged through the last page. As the son of one of the main characters, I knew how the story would end, but I still could not put it down. I am a veteran of multiple combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and for me Undaunted Valor: Medal of Honor effectively captures the tenor of combat operations in its descriptions of the intense emotions, hilarity, and tragedy experienced by troops living in a hostile environment. The story it tells of the bravery and dedication of fighting men to their fellow soldiers is one that will resonate with every reader.

-Colonel John Adams, USMC (ret.)"

AT THE CONCLUSION of the Cambodian Incursion in 1970, many thought that the South Vietnamese forces were in a position to take possession of the war with a chance of victory. Vietnamization commenced with the withdrawal of US forces from that county. However, US Army Aviation was still needed and many aviation units were the last to leave South Vietnam. As events unfolded, those aviation units left saw some of the most intense fighting of the war. This is the story of two of those actions resulting in two Medals of Honor, one posthumously.

Matt Jackson served twenty-five years, enlisting in 1968 as a Private and retired in 1993 as a Colonel having served in both aviation units and infantry assignments as commander of both an airborne rifle company and an air assault infantry battalion in Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

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# Identifying the Domesticated Vietnam Helicopter Pilot

As a self-educated naturalist, I feel it important to direct attention toward a diminishing species of humankind known as the Vietnam helicopter pilot whose irreversible status as an endangered species will soon make it extinct. Already, the vestiges of the genus rotorhead unrulares are becoming increasingly rare not only within the indigenous pilot population but among the population in general. Before they disappear entirely, I shall endeavor to acquaint the casual observer with the principal characteristics of this unusual breed of person so the observer may recognize a specimen should it be encountered in the wild, which is its natural state.

First, it is important for an observer to discern the difference between the domesticated and the feral Vietnam helicopter pilot. The feral Vietnam helicopter pilot is easily recognized because it has entirely resisted any attempts to polish its nature; whereas the domesticated Vietnam helicopter pilot, which is an adaptation of the species and far more common today, is more difficult to recognize because it has been almost completely tamed, its natural characteristics substantially regressed as a result of its acculturation with polite society. In extreme cases, the most domesticated of Vietnam helicopter pilots can hardly be distinguished from a normal person at all.

So much for the generalities; now for the specifics. Like feral Vietnam helicopter pilots, the domesticated Vietnam helicopter pilot has such a natural deficiency of humbleness that he considers himself smarter, faster, stronger, wittier, luckier, and by the standards of unkempt ruggedness, more handsome than other men, pilots or otherwise, and compared to pilots specifically, believes he possesses the superior hand-eye coordination of a tentacled octopus and reflexes of a caffeinated cheetah; yet unlike the feral Vietnam helicopter pilot, the domesticated version of the species allows those other men to have their own, mistaken opinion.

Although individual specimens of domesticated Vietnam helicopter pilots may not be easily identified when camouflaged among ordinary persons,

they can be readily distinguished when they aggregate with members of their own species, most often at an annual migratory gathering called a "reunion" but in many ways bearing a closer resemblance to a mountain man "rendezvous." On such occasions, their true nature emerges, and in those circumstances, they exhibit the characteristics of that nature through their boisterously jovial exchange of insults with their fellow pack mates, their assertions of incredible feats of bravado, and sometimes when recalling events of their collective experience, inspiring one another with expressions of remarkably creative profanity. In contrast, when separated from members of its species, the domesticated Vietnam helicopter pilot is only moderately rude, exhibits the thinnest veneer of vanity, and expresses itself with such a boringly mild degree of profanity that even a convention of cloistered nuns would take little notice. However, be warned: even a lone domesticated Vietnam helicopter pilot, when provoked, can out brag, out cuss, and out flatulate any other two-legged cultured creature currently in existence; therefore, ordinary persons should not attempt to compete in those areas with a member of this species when its true nature has been aroused.

If you yourself happen to be a domesticated Vietnam helicopter pilot who has forgotten your natural identity, it is important for you to be reminded of these characteristics because they have made you what you are. Furthermore, if you do not recognize these characteristics about yourself, I submit that you are in denial, and until you accept who you are—that is, your true nature as a Vietnam helicopter pilot—you will experience an unfulfilled life of aggravation. But once you accept who you are, then your aggravation will be full.

Ira McComic  
VHPA Life Member  
Author of *A Cobra Pilot in Vietnam: True Tales and Otherwise*  
[AmiradoPublishing@gmail.com](mailto:AmiradoPublishing@gmail.com)



# GUNS A GO-GO TET

*This story is from June 1987*

I have been planning to write for some time now. If I may indulge upon your time for a few moments, I have a tale concerning an incident involving my brief tour with Go-Go. Many years have passed, but I can recall it as if it were just this afternoon!

Within the first few hours of the Tet offensive in '68, the heavily armed AH-47 Chinook helicopters of the 1st Cavalry Division -known as "Guns a Go-Go" -were downed by enemy groundfire very early on. Some of the pilots and crew were wounded, necessitating a call for volunteers to fill their vacancies. CWO Bob Jones, Alpha Co., 228th, who had flown Go-Go missions during the early months of his tour, was personally requested to fill in as an Aircraft Commander. Bob was also asked to bring a volunteer pilot with him. As Bob and I were both Flight Section Leaders in Alpha, and since we shared space in the same hooch, I suppose it was only natural that I happened to be selected as "volunteer pilot of the day!"

On 8 February, the AH-47 gunship named BIRTH CONTROL (I cannot remember her call sign, but Go-Go 4 rings a bell!) had been hastily patched, given a new engine, and retrofitted with new external weapons systems to replace those jettisoned during the previous emergency. We were given a free-fire zone to the southwest of the Red Beach maintenance facility, and with a full load of ordnance we departed for a leisurely hour or so of testing the aircraft and weapons systems.

As we neared our target, we flicked the weapons systems switches to "ARM" and made last minute adjustments to our sights. Bob would be working the 20mm's and rockets; I would be handling the "chunker" and the crew in the back would be manning the five fifties in the cargo compartment. Compared to the past several days, we felt this would be a "piece of cake"!

Swinging wide of our target -an abandoned village consisting of two or three long houses, and perhaps a dozen or so small thatched huts -we set up our run so that we would be coming in, more or less from west to east, avoiding the high terrain as best we could and leaving ourselves the most open area toward the sea in case of an emergency. I recall thinking of the past inhabitants of that village. Had they fled to seek

safety from the VC/NVA forces, or had they been forcibly removed and relocated by US forces to ensure their safety.

Their village was so beautiful, so remote and peaceful from my viewpoint, that I hated the thought of using it as a test. In one or two passes, we would leave nothing standing. Only fire and ashes!

The scene was so serene as we turned onto final and began our first firing run. No sign of life anywhere except for a few water buffalo grazing in the paddies here and there. That serenity was abruptly shattered as an almost continuous



This photo of AH-47A #64-13145, 'Birth Control' was taken by WO Steve Rockett at LZ Uplift in April 1967.

pop-pop-popping gave way to an angry snap and crack as Charlie's rounds found their mark.

For a few moments, I was frozen into a complete state of helplessness as I watched an old mamasan determinedly firing an AK47 that was strapped beneath a water buffalo. As I remember it today, everything happened in slow-motion. I had taken many hits before, but that was the first time I had ever been able to see, with 100% clarity, where the fire was coming from, and establish eye to eye contact with the person who was trying to snuff my life! That moment will be forever etched in my mind!

At about the same time, the flight engineer shouted over the intercom that we had a bad fuel leak, and that we ought to "shut it down." "Which one?" I asked. The panel instruments were indicating all OK. I turned to see fuel pouring over the ramp in a clever imitation of Niagara Falls at peak season! "Number 2 -shut down #2!" came the reply. As I quickly slammed the #2. Condition Lever from FLIGHT to STOP, just as Bob was starting to turn to a clear area, I realized the mistake. Number 2 was the good engine, with Number 1



dying of fuel starvation.

As #2 hit STOP, the aircraft began a rapid and almost uncontrollable descent. With Bob and me, both on the controls, we had to milk the thrust lever for all it was worth in attempting to regain lost RPM. We hit ground rather hard, but with no apparent injury to the crew and only minor damage to the aircraft. Once again, all outside armament was jettisoned and much of the ammunition inside was thrown overboard before landing - though no one could recall just when all of this took place. One thing that everyone agreed on was that the FE should take a short course in recognizing 1 from 2 and the #2 engine was running fine while #1 was about to die of fuel starvation!

Emergency repairs were made; all excess weapons, ammunition and equipment still on board were left with a Marine unit which had come to our aid, and the ship was flown back to Red Beach for further repairs and refitting. BIRTH CONTROL took 32 hits that day, I'm told. I was evacuated to Japan on the 19th due to a back injury, possibly incurred during the landing on the 8th. As far as I can determine that was the last flight for BIRTH CONTROL. If so, I feel honored to have been a part of her gallant history - though I would have much preferred more ideal conditions!

**Bill McKenzie, DAT February 24, 1990**  
(Razorback 26 & Rough Rider 26)

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

**Patrick Leary, FVSO President and VHPA Life Member**



Since being founded in 2005 by men who had served in Vietnam, FVSO has raised funds to help support the 850 Montagnard children who live in seven Vinh Son orphanages, all located in the Kontum and Pleiku areas. FVSO provides dental care, food, shelter, medicine, & education. Contributions directly support the children and their caregivers. Because FVSO is a non-profit organization, your donations are tax deductible. Our 2020 fundraising period runs through the end of the year. All gifts are greatly appreciated.

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dental check-ups  
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**For more information, please contact FVSO at:**

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

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



# The Vietnam Center and Archive (VNCA) Announces A New Tool IMAGE CAPTIONING

by Mike Law

← → ↻ 📍 vhc.vietnam.ttu.edu ☆ ⓘ

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Thank you for being a VNCA Volunteer!

First timers use "Sign Up"

Actually, there are TWO ANNOUNCEMENTs here. The first is that the VNCA now has a new portal (like a door or entry point) called **Volunteer Headquarters (VHQ)** <https://vhq.vietnam.ttu.edu/>. The second is that the VNCA has a new tool or project called **Image Captioning**. VHPAers should be very happy to start using these to enhance the quality of the images (photographs, film, and slides) hosted by the Virtual Vietnam Archive (VVA). Remember, the VVA is what we all see online at <https://vva.vietnam.ttu.edu/>. We 'search' the VVA rather than physically visit the VNCA at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX.

*Some background information, please:*



This is a digital IMAGE VA S066113. Created by the VNCA in 2013 from a 35mm slide donated by Garry Gitzen.

This is the current Caption in the VVA for this IMAGE.  
**NOTHING!**

It is important to remember that should you do a SEARCH in the VVA for an IMAGE, the Search Engine primarily looks for keywords in the CAPTION. No caption = no find! Effectively this photo is 'not findable' unless you do a photo by photo review of the collection. It would be nice if the CAPTION for this IMAGE contained something like the following: "Crashed 361 Avn Co AH-1G Cobra about March 1968 on a lowboy trailer at Camp Holloway prior to taking it to the bone yard." Should we eventually learn the names of the crew, the full tail number, the exact date, etc. Those could be added to the CAPTION. BTW, Garry was an E-5 in the 665th TC Det assigned to the 361st Avn Co and left Vietnam in April 1968.



Once you complete the **Sign Up** process, I encourage to you click on the **Resources** tab in the display shown above. You will see something like:

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Resources

Quick Data Entry Guide

Captioning and Navigation Guide

Captioning Tips

Video - Intro to Image Captioning

Era Terms & Acronyms (Coming Soon)

Identification Guides

Airplanes

Helicopters

Naval Vessels

Vehicles

Weapons

Famous People

Places & Things

Other Websites

U.S. Insignia, Badges, etc. (by Branch)

U.S. Military Rank Insignia (by Branch)

A WONDERFUL 2 and 1/2 minute video that explains SO MUCH about Captioning and the Volunteer Project. Please make this PRIORITY #1

A WONDERFUL six page guide that explains, terms, standards, captioning tips, etc. Please make this PRIORITY #2

I was one of the Beta Testers for the Image Captioning Project in June 2020. At that time, the Captioning and Navigation Guide was 21 pages long. It is now just 6 pages long because they took the time to prepare the Video. Please, please watch that Video. Then please consider printing the Captioning and Navigation Guide. It will be something of a 'bible' to you ~ trust me!!!

Should you click on the **Projects** tab in the display shown above. You will see something like:

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Image Captioning Project

Use these options to browse and select images for entering information:

Browse By Collection

View images grouped by the person who donated them.

Browse By Association

View collections of images grouped by their tie to a veteran's association. (E.g. Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) or Americal Division Association)

100 Random Images


View images pulled randomly from all collections.

Browse By Subject

View images grouped by a specific topic or theme.

Featured Collections

These images have very little description and would benefit most from being captioned.



VAS029272

William Foulke Collection (1040)

Department of the Army Special Photographic Office (DASPO)

These red tabs are links for how you can start Captioning.

Now, if you are some of the 'VHPA pioneers' who donated photos and slides the VNCA years ago, please contact VHQA directly. They will give you special access to your images and keep everyone out of your collection (for a while). Some of the pioneers are: Curt Knapp, John Taber, Phil Lanphier, and Garry Gitzen. There are others I am certain and even dozens more 'in the queue' to be worked. More on the **Image processing queue** in the next Aviator.

Questions, please contact Mike Law 830-730-0950 or [calendar@vhpa.org](mailto:calendar@vhpa.org).



# ATTENTION TO DETAIL

by Richard Hudgens, NAVHPA

When I enlisted in October of 1965, I was interested in going to Army flight school and took the Flight Aptitude Skills Test and did an introduction ride in an OH-13, both with good results. I was told to expect orders for Flight School at my next training post. Not to delay my adrenalin rush I volunteered for Airborne School and reported for Basic at Ft. Leonard Wood. At my next two training posts (Ft. Gordon – Advanced Infantry & Ft. Benning – Jump School) I was told to expect orders at my next assignment (RVN)! After about four months in country and a witness to how small arms could easily bring down a helicopter, I decided my survival chances were somewhat enhanced by staying with my infantry company.

After Vietnam I was assigned to the 82nd Airborne at Ft. Bragg to finish off the remainder of my enlistment. Besides my military jumps I decided I needed more excitement, so I decided to join the local sport parachute club. I bought a modified T-28 (conical) parachute and reserve from a friend and did about 26 jumps before getting out of the Army. Later my friend told me he had “acquired” the main parachute from the back of a C-130 while stationed in Germany.

Almost two years later, while in college, I noticed a sport parachute club in the Springfield MO area and decided to start again in sport jumping. After talking to club officials, I brought my reserve parachute to the rigger to be re-packed (required every 90 days). The chute was stored in an area that allowed it to get soaked over the past two years. The rigger opened the container and repacked the chute into the container with great difficulty because of the wet, swelled material. Both of us struggled to insert the ripcord pins. He told me to bring it in after my first jump the following weekend and he would hang it in the hangar to dry it out properly and he signed off the re-pack.

Later that day I noticed that my main chute was damp, but I was able to let it dry for a couple days before packing it myself. Part of the packing procedure was to run four strands of 60 lb. test cord through each of the four ripcord cones and tie it off to the static line. Since I hadn't jumped for almost two years, I would be required to make one jump on a static line where my chute would be opened regardless of my actions. The 60 lb. test cord was purchased from the store where I worked. The four strands of 60 lb. strength cord, was considered adequate to keep the parachute container closed until I was falling free of the aircraft when my weight on a taut static line would break loose the container and deploy the main parachute. In the process I was to be observed by the Jumpmaster pulling a “dummy” ripcord with an orange cloth.

I showed up at the Ozark, MO airport (which now is a farmer's pasture) on Sunday morning, the 3rd of May 1970. I pre-

sented my main chute for inspection by the club safety officer and Jumpmaster. After an examination they asked to see the cord I used to tie the static line to the ripcord cones. I showed the cord and they clearly identified the package markings as 60 lb. test, and that I ran four strands through each of the cones. Satisfied, the Jumpmaster instructed all going on the first lift to start loading. The aircraft was a Cessna-180 (conventional gear) with the cabin door hinged to swing vertically latching to the bottom of the right wing. The only seat in the cabin was the pilot's. Two other jumpers loaded first then the pilot and Jumpmaster. I was the last to load and found myself on my knees with my face only inches from the right side of the instrument panel. The Jumpmaster positioned immediately behind me with one knee on the floor and one against the back of my main parachute. The pilot was wearing a parachute harness with the emergency chute stowed on the floor, immediately behind his seat. The pilot was a friend of the aircraft owner, who remained on the ground as an observer.

During the takeoff roll, the Jumpmaster hooked the end of the yellow static line to a floor eyebolt and held the line slack in his hand. The other end of the 25' static line was attached to my chute container. As the aircraft leveled off at about 3,000 feet above the airport, I felt the constant pressure of the Jumpmaster's knee against my container as he was constantly looking out the door for the spot to signal me to jump. On his signal, I got out of the aircraft placing my left foot on an exterior step and held on to the diagonal wing strut then waited for the next command to jump. While positioned outside the aircraft, looking at the Jumpmaster I felt this strong tugging sensation on my main chute container. As I looked back over my left shoulder, I saw an expression of fright on the Jumpmaster and saw the deployment sleeve of my main chute feeding out of my pack being pulled by a small pilot chute. It appeared that more than half of the deployment sleeve was being pulled toward the rear of the aircraft. I immediately let go of the aircraft and fell free of the aircraft, so I thought.

Upon feeling a “strong jolt” I looked behind me and saw that the chute had wrapped around the right horizontal stabilizer bending it down at a right angle due to my weight. Additionally, I noticed the pilot chute fluttering against the vertical stabilizer and rudder. I was being spun around at a significant rate but was able to observe people jumping out of the aircraft.

Later I was told that the Jumpmaster told everybody in the aircraft to jump. I am sure the other jumpers knew there was a problem with the pitch attitude of the aircraft and the pilot struggling with the controls. As the last jumper left the aircraft, the pilot was babbling and pleading not to be left alone. The pilot while trying to manage the damaged elevator control system had to reach



behind his seat, grab the emergency chute and attach it to his harness. He jumped out of the aircraft in a tumbling fashion causing one of the chute's suspension lines to tighten up on top of the canopy making for two smaller canopies or what is often called a "Mae West". He was also wearing strap-on sandals.

As the Jumpmaster exited the aircraft, he shouted to me to "cut loose" meaning to disconnect from the entangled main chute. The last jumper did likewise. I counted three jumpers exiting the aircraft and started to consider my options. One option was that perhaps I could pull myself back to the rear of the aircraft and somehow get inside the cabin. That option disappeared when I noticed the pilot exiting the aircraft. I realized then that I had to cut loose.

In the process of cutting loose, one of the two risers attached to my harness would not release because of not activating both simultaneously. They were the old military, "Two-Shot" design with redundant safety features. I had to pull myself up on the riser relaxing the pressure before the release would function properly. My last picture in my mind of letting go of the riser, was my gloved hand holding on to the freed riser with my chute wrapped around the tail of the aircraft in the background.

As I fell, my body immediately went back first which is ideal for deploying the reserve chute. I grabbed the ripcord and realized it would not budge with one hand. I had to use both hands to pull the ripcord free from the container. To my surprise the parachute would not deploy, and I had to reach into the white mass of nylon to pull it out of the pack. When it finally deployed the opening shock snapped each of my vertebrae and I felt moisture coming off the inflated canopy. Observers on the ground noticed that once the canopy billowed, I swung about two times before hitting the ground. After landing it took some effort to be able to breathe normally. I noticed I had landed about 70' from a grazing cow that seemed unimpressed by my feat.

The Jumpmaster and two other jumpers landed with no problem, but the pilot with the "Mae West" and sandals hurt his ankle on landing. After I freed myself from the aircraft the aircraft leveled somewhat and seemed to be flying on its own toward the crowd on the ground. Then for no apparent reason it made a slight turn as if it were in the traffic pattern for landing on Runway 18, with my chute wrapped around the tail. On what might be considered a left base it descended into the ground about near the approach end of Runway 18. It struck the ground nose first, then right wing.

I gathered up my chute, took off my helmet and started walking back to the vehicle parking and parachute packing area. I was greeted by the Jumpmaster, Safety Officer, and aircraft owner. After explaining I was alright, they congratulated me on a successful reserve deployment and landing. The aircraft owner asked what happened and the Jumpmaster said he saw my pilot chute

and deployment sleeve popping out of my container. At this point I was throwing my reserve, harness, helmet and jump suit into the trunk of my car. The aircraft owner asked if I had used the proper cord on the ripcord cones. The Jumpmaster said I had and he saw the container the cord was packaged. I reached into my kit bag and showed the owner the container and cord. He read the 60 lb. test label and pulled out some of the cord and easily snapped the line in two. He looked at me, shook his head and threw the cord back into the kit bag.

I hopped in the back of a pick-up that was going out to the wrecked aircraft. When we got to the site, I started to remove my damaged chute from the mangled wreckage. The canopy had three or four panels ripped and some of the suspension lines were severed. I was told to not disturb the wreckage and the FAA would release the chute to me once they were through with their initial investigation. This was my first introduction to the FAA. As I drove away from the parking lot my foot was shaking so bad on the accelerator pedal, I had to let a friend drive me back to the apartment.

That evening two local network TV affiliates showed up at my apartment did interviews that appeared on the local news that evening and national news the following morning. It was bumped as the lead headline in the afternoon after the news broke on the Kent State Shooting by Ohio National Guard.

About three weeks later I retrieved my chute and sent it off to be repaired. The FAA never interviewed me to question the use of the rotten cord on the static line or even that the rigger packed my reserve while the material was wet.

After the repair I made about eight more jumps and got up to about a 40 second delay doing relative work with other jumpers. As I went along with these jumps, I still was apprehensive on each exit from an aircraft. On my last jump an aircraft departing the local runway into the sun almost hit me because of his impaired vision. Later that afternoon I made the decision to end the hobby of skydiving, especially since I had just received my acceptance from the ROTC detachment for flight training. I sold my main and reserve chute to a student nurse that sat next to me in an Economics Class. She broke both legs and hip on her first jump, and I retrieved the chutes from her while she was in the hospital, gave her money back and sold it to a senior in the ROTC Detachment. He broke an ankle on his first jump and at that point I decided to stop tracking the equipment. In retrospect, I think that parachute had a bad omen because it was removed from a C-130 in an inappropriate manner.

I started ROTC sponsored, Private Pilot Flight Training that fall. When I enrolled, my new instructor was writing my name in the training folder and asked if I had any relatives that were in aviation locally. He vaguely recalled my last name from the parachute incident. I told him I thought I was the only family member that

*Continued on page 29*



# History of Arizona Helicopters

*By Robert 'Bob' Thydean*

The CIA called the American support of the Laotian Civil War (1959 – 1975) The Secret War. It kept under the radar the hundreds of thousands of flight hours that were collectively flown by hundreds of mostly American pilots in a multitude of airplanes and helicopters to not only protect the local population, but to provide transportation, medical and food assistance to the Laotian people. From a civilian aviation point of view, Air America received most of the notoriety; but Continental Air Services, Boun Oum Airways, Bird Air, and Arizona Helicopters had an enormous impact in supporting of the Lao people. While each company has its own history, this collective air support was extensive - only secondary to Vietnam in Southeast Asia.

After graduating from Warrant Officer flight classes 67-19 and 67-21, I flew for the 1st Cav in C/229 AHB and the Aviation Platoon of the 2nd Bde, 1st Cav from Jan 1968 until Jan 1969. I left the Army in June 1970 and went to work initially for Southern Airways as an instructor until they started down-sizing. In March 1972, I was hired by Arizona Helicopters for a fire contract with California Department of Forestry that ended in November. Then, they offered me a job in Laos as Robert M. "Tug" Wachs, a World War II Bomber pilot and owner of Arizona Helicopters was awarded a USAID contract to provide aviation support in Laos. Continental had acquired Bird Air and Boun Oum had ceased operations. This is my experience of the impact that Arizona Helicopters, the flight, and maintenance crews had during our time in Laos, December 1972 to December 1973.

To the best of my knowledge, here is a roster of Arizona Helicopters employees who worked in Laos. All were pilots unless noted otherwise: John C. Beeson, Jim Burrell (Chief Pilot), William 'Bill' Canada, Walter K 'Kin' Caudill Jr., William 'Willie' C. Dykes, Larry Eckert, Griffin E 'Skip' Fisk, Joe Jones (Mechanic), Lawrence J Kirsch, Jack Knots, Donald 'Don' L Ledbetter, Dave Parkinson (Lead Mechanic), Juan A

Serrato, Jerry L Sunley, Robert 'Bob' W Thydean, Keith A Watson, and William 'Bill' R Wehling. I believe we had 14 pilots counting Jim Burrell and about 20+ mechanics/helpers headed up by Dave Parkinson assisted by Joe Jones. One of the mechanics was Filipino (ex-Air America) & four were Laotian, the rest being helpers. The aircraft were always spotless and



One of eight Bell 206Bs on the Arizona Helicopter flight line at Vientiane Laos Airport about October 1973.



Some Bell 206Bs and the only Bell 47G3B-1 on Arizona Helicopter's side of the Air America hangar in Vientiane Laos December 1973.

ready for the missions each morning in spite of all the issues that go along with buying new aircraft. The office manager was Boon who not only handled daily inter-office functions but was our go between with the US Embassy/USAID officials and Net being the office Secretary. We were based at Wat-tay Airport (VTE) just outside of Vientiane; the relatively safe capital of Laos located on the Mekong River which bordered Northern Thailand.

The fleet consisted of seven FAA registered Bell 206Bs



# in Laos 1972-1973

*Photos from Bob Thydean; scanned, cropped, and enhanced by Mike Law.*

(Jet Ranger or OH-58 Kiowa, military designation), one FAA registered Bell 47G3B-1 (Ranger or OH-13 Sioux) and a Pilatus Porter (PC-6 STOL fixed wing). Six of the B-206Bs were air freighted from the States & one along with the Porter was flown from Nepal. We initially did our maintenance out of a small older hangar but eventually shared space with Air America in their Quonset style hangar.

Jim Burrell picked me up at the Vientiane Airport around 10 pm in mid-December. During our short conversation as we



Two Bell 206Bs and the Bell 47G3B-1 on the Arizona Helicopter flight line at Vientiane Laos Airport about October 1973.



Arizona Helicopter's Pilatus Porter at Vientiane Laos Airport about October 1973.

headed to the staff house, he explained that he anticipated losing two to three pilots during our one year contract. I remember thinking that's about a 15-20 % attrition - about the same or worse than we lost in my units in Vietnam.

I reported to the airport early the next morning. Jim said my secret clearance wasn't in yet, but would I do a test flight on one of the Rangers. A mechanic, Joe Jones, was closing the cowl. I did a quick walk around and we took off north from the airport. We were a couple miles out at about 250 feet when Joe said he had just changed the fuel control and the governor, so he needed me to roll off throttle to do a function check. I lowered collective, chopped throttle; unexpectedly, the N-1

dropped to 43% and froze there., low rotor RPM horn began beeping along with Joe expressing his disbelief and grabbing the dash panel. There was nothing but heavy foliage and trees everywhere. Then I noticed a brown spot on the ground over his left shoulder - where it looked like an oxen trail existed. I immediately made a 90 degree turn to the left heading for that 30' spot. I flared at about 70', did a 180 degree left turn descending over the spot to find it was a 10' deep artillery hole in the ground! Going totally IFR as I flared in powdery dust, a

complete brown out, I leveled the aircraft, pulled a little collective to extend the touchdown spot a few feet past the hole. I could feel the skids touch the ground and we came to a stop. I shut the engine down and let it cool for 15 minutes while watching locals in black pajamas descend on us. Then I cranked it back up and we flew back to airport. Figured if it flew once, it'd fly again. Lesson learned - never chop throttle without doing it first under power at a hover. I was thankful to have been conducting lots of auto-rotations to the ground during pilot checkouts in Scottsdale prior to leaving for Laos.

Family members were allowed in-country as Vientiane was relatively safe; five pilots had their wives or girl friends with them in Laos. We rented a very

comfortable villa protected by a seven-foot wall with concertina wire on top.

Everyone had their own guard, maid, and automobile. Our guard carried a radio instead of a gun. Our maid, Nan, a North Vietnamese was paying for her son to go to college in France by cutting off a link from a two-foot long gold chain for the needed tuition. The costs were very reasonable: guard \$30, maid \$80, auto \$75, and rent \$130 a month until Nan negotiated it down to \$100 a month. We ate off the local open-air markets. The city of Vientiane had some interesting landmarks and names of businesses. There was the Vertical Runway (Patuxay Monument), an arch built with the money designated for an



additional runway at the airport. Then there was an electronics store named the "Long Dong" and a bread bakery named the "Come Every Day Bun Manufacturer."

The Air America (ACA) club was available to all Americans for dining and had a small pool table for relaxing times. On Friday nights, Warren (a US Army soldier), "Park'em" Johnson (a DC-4 Captain), my wife and I would meet to play pool. There were several good restaurants in town, but you never knew when the bread tray would be displaying ears from a neighborhood rat visiting the table.

The entire country was covered with aircraft. The area north of the Plain of Jars was mostly Air America's domain while Continental seemed to be everywhere, and Arizona Helicopters mostly covered the southern half from Bon Houayxay on the west to

Pakxe to the east. Continental flew numerous types of airplanes, many being the Pilatus Porters with PT-6 turbine engines. They were also equipped with tundra tires that made them a great short field aircraft. Each village had a short runway often on the side of a hill. It was steep enough that a helicopter couldn't land on it, but they

could and did with their Porters. They would make their approach uphill, give it full throttle, nose up almost to a stall, and land in just a few feet. They would stop at the top of the slope and park 90 degrees to the slope with their cargo door open to the downhill side, then unload and takeoff downhill. It was an absolute pleasure to watch the precision of those pilots. Helicopters unloaded their cargo on much flatter spots near the villages. Laos was a great location for ex-Vietnam pilots to develop our experience and build time as most of us had less than 2000 flight hours when we got there.

We were pretty much on our own when it came to weather conditions and learning how to manage our daily routines as a primary pilot. We were, however, assigned a kicker (load master) who spoke broken English. Once we arrived at our assigned areas, they directed loading and unloading and knew which village needed which supplies. We were on a USAID

(United States Agency for International Development) contract. Passengers were scheduled through a dispatch system outside our control. We flew people who worked for all entities of government, i.e. Army, CIA, Commanding Lao General, Young Pao, Pop Buell, an Iowa farmer who was welcomed by both the local Lao villagers and the Pathet Lao, including family members accompanying their deceased. We even flew food to the enemy, Pathet Lao, in an attempt to keep them from pillaging and stealing food from the villagers. An average day included 50 to 60 flights to different villages. Pilots averaged over 100 flight hours per month for around 15,000 total hrs flown that year.

Juan Serrato and I spent two weeks of eight-hour flight days, with two aircraft sling loading cargo nets of opium plants

cut from the villagers fields for a US supported program to convert them from growing opium to growing corn. Several politicians flew over from D.C. and burned the pile, consequently the country smelled of poppies for a month! They're still growing opium.

Most days started at 07:00, takeoff at 08:00. Hot refueled all day and on most jobs,

never shutting down. We'd return around 17:00. I asked Jim how he figured out our schedule as we never knew when we were going to have a day off. He said when we couldn't tally our sorties correctly (we had to write down every landing/take off), he would schedule us off the next day. It worked!!

The rainy and smoky seasons were the most challenging times. On IFR days, either Air America or Continental would take off and climb until they were on top of the clouds. If they were lower than 11,000' we would load passengers and do an ITO (instrument take-off), climb on top and head to our longer distance areas. LS 272 was about 40 minutes north. So, we'd fly low level to that location. I was frequently assigned to Bon Houayxay; a two and a half-hour flight on a three-hour fuel tank. We put an external extender on our fuel tanks to give us 30 extra minutes of flight time. The only navigation aids were ADF. The only problem with this was the Pathet Lao put



Arizona Helicopters, maintenance area at Vientiane Laos Airport. They had between four and 20 maintenance employees including two or three Americans, several Filipinos, and Lao helpers and cleaners.



up ADF antennas near ours with stronger signals to hopefully draw us near to get a shot at us. Consequently, most navigation was done the old-fashioned way, time and distance. One nice thing about the weather in Laos is there's not a lot of wind, so the tops of clouds are more easily subject to ground temperature. The lower temp of the Mekong River would cause a dip in the upper layer of clouds indicating its location, direction etc. So once the river made its final bend south of Bon Houayxay, I would do a tactical approach at 60 knots with a 500 foot-rate of descent to a selected altitude. Then, I would slow the descent incrementally to break out over the river, find a familiar tree and head north low level to my destination.

Only once, about two hours into the flight I had drifted too far north, and I heard the craziest static/scratching over the VHF radio that I'd ever heard. I was warned that the Chinese would lock in on you and had anti-aircraft artillery in that area. They'd previously shot down C-123s and C-130s up to 18,000'. I immediately began evasive maneuvering as they said if you hear the second static, you wouldn't hear the third.

On another occasion, I spent my week in Bon Houayxay, and had come down with a cold. The weather was poor with heavy clouds and smoke so thick you couldn't tell there was a difference. I called Jim with my situation and he told me to get my A\_\_ home. We made it back to Vientiane with four passengers, including my wife and her cat but I was soaking wet from sweat. On the way, I never heard one radio call from anyone. Later, I found out no one was flying because the whole country was grounded due to heavy smoke. There were words!!

The only pilot who was physically shot was Bill Wehling. He was assigned as I understand from others to patrol the area east of the border along the Chinese trail between Laos and Viet Nam where he was directed to fly to a local village. When he got there, it was evident something was wrong. He decided to look in the window of a hut as there wasn't any outside activity, any chickens, pigs, kids, nothing moving except suddenly, an AK-47 protruding from the hut. One bullet came through the lower glass, ricocheted off the cyclic and hit him in the stomach. The aircraft sustained several hits. With the help of his American passenger, they flew the helicopter and landed safely. An Air America helicopter picked him up and he was flown to a hospital in Udorn, Thailand where he stayed a couple days. They were concerned about gangrene setting in so with the help of Vice President Agnew, he was flown to Okinawa where he recovered.

The only accident I recall occurred when a pilot, after a hot refueling left the fuel hose draped over the skid. On takeoff from LS 272, he experienced dynamic rollover – the Jet Ranger was destroyed but no one was injured.

For the most part, every day was our new normal, routine

but challenging, a year none of us will forget. However, on the second to the last day of the contract, Jim came up to me and said, "we have a mission and I want you to fly it." This flight may be the difference between getting the contract renewed and losing it. Mr. Wachs had been negotiating with the CIA to take over locations in both Vietnam and Laos as companies were leaving due to the peace accord. The next morning, I departed to LS360 which was about 50 minutes flight NE of Vientiane. The General jumped in the back seat with the kicker up front. I asked the General where he wanted to go, and the kicker said he didn't speak English. So here we are; the General has the map and directs me thru the kicker. I was told to head north. Now I knew that anything north of LS360 was pretty much enemy controlled, so I planned to fly low level the entire flight. Nearly two hours passed. I asked how much farther several times, as I'd gone past my no return on fuel and we're getting close to North Vietnam. Finally, he indicated to turn right and go up a valley. This made us more vulnerable as we were an easier target to small arms fire now. We flew another 10 or so minutes and another deep valley opened up. He indicated to turn left and look for a village. I continued flying low level attempting to keep from taking ground fire. Then the kicker asked me to climb so the General could see the villages. Well, that's what we did, I climbed to 300' and the sounds of gun fire started. The General pointed to some huts near a rock outcropping, so I made an approach to that village. There was barely enough room to put the skids onto the rocky ledge with brush nearly touching the rotor blades and the tail boom hanging over the edge of the cliff. Both the General and kicker departed the helicopter, rifles in hand. They hit the deck and opened up in a fire fight. Here I was with a 9mm under my arm and an Uzi with 500 rounds on the floor with my hands full of flight controls. They jump up, run back to the helicopter hollering, "Wrong village!" I said, "No shit buckwheat!" I immediately flew backwards off the ledge, losing altitude as fast as possible trying to get out of range. The General indicated for me to climb again. So up to 300' I went and the shooting began again. He pointed to some huts a few hundred feet north. I hoped he's right this time, and landed by sneaking my nose into the brush. There was just enough room for the width of the aircraft. They departed and began talking to the villagers and exchanged information off the map. Meanwhile, I sat in the aircraft waiting for the next event when I noticed the brush next to my door moving. It's some young men pumping 'something' into my fuel tank out of a 55-gallon drum with a hand pump. I know, you're thinking I was hoping it was clean jet fuel, aren't you? The General did mention there was fuel available where we were going, but this isn't the control over refueling I was used to. We departed backward off the ledge, low level; thank-



ing God we didn't take any rounds, at least that I knew of. A couple hours later we arrived in LS360, off loaded passengers, topped off with fuel and returned to Vientiane.

The next day a flight of three remaining Jet Rangers departed for Singapore, VFR on top. We strapped 55 gal drums in the back seat with a hand pump. I flew trail and could tell every time one of the pilots was low on fuel by the way the aircraft swayed back and forth as he had to reach in the back-seat to hand pump the fuel. It took us two days (12 flight hours) to get down to Singapore. After getting the aircraft hangared, I jumped a flight back to Vientiane to help pack our bags and give away most of our household possessions. The country was under Communist control at that time so getting out of country was a little more complicated. Russian Aeroflot airplanes were landing regularly, bringing in military personnel/equipment. There were some 50 soldiers (15 year olds dressed in their dad's army clothes carrying AK-47s) in two lines of which my wife and I had to walk in between with passports in hand, one bag each and our cat, Sir. After passports were stamped, we got in a sampan with several monks and floated across the Mekong River to Thailand. There we caught a Samlor (a Thai rickshaw), and then found a cab to take us to Udorn. Then we traveled 20 hours by train to Bangkok and caught a flight to Singapore.

Here is a brief 'aftermath' to our time in Laos. On 21 February 1973, the Royalists and the Pathet Lao agreed to a cease-fire, effective at noon on the 22nd. As an internal agreement between Laotians, it was subject to no international supervision or enforcement. Once spared constant air strikes, Communist columns claimed additional territory. Air strikes were now discontinued, except for sporadic retribution for Communist violations. In turn, the Communists claimed retaliatory strikes were truce violations. In any event, the American companies were gradually returning to the United States. On 5 April 1974, the Provisional Government of National Union was formed. On 27 March 1975, the Communists attacked the Hmong guerrillas and families still on the Plain of Jars, sparking the 'Hmong Diaspora' and the exit of many Lao that had worked with American interests. The Communists took power on 2 December 1975, when they established the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

## UPCOMING REUNIONS

### Sixth Annual Reunion of the 119th Assault Helicopter Company

**When September 15-17, 2020**

**Where: Radisson Branson Hotel,  
Branson Missouri**

**Contact: Spencer Gardner at  
Spencerhgardner@gmail.com for details**

### 134TH Assault Helicopter Company Reunion (Devils and Demons all years)

**When: SEPT 16 -20, 2020**

**Where: Clemons, NC**

**Contact: Terry Branch  
HellsHalfAcrc134@GMail.com  
Ph: 336-998-6136**

### 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**

### 192nd Assault Helicopter Company Reunion

**Our Reunions are open to all who served  
in the 192nd no matter what you did.**

**Where: The Crown Plaza Hotel, Charleston SC**

**When: November 6-9, 2020**

**Contact: Dennis Javens for details  
Dennisjavens43@gmail.com  
805-903-3967**



# NEW KIA DISCOVERED

VHPA member Barry Geller has discovered that we had a KIA mislabeled as DAT (died after tour). Barry is a long-time volunteer updating DAT records and has added hundreds of corrections and obituaries as he works his way through the alphabet of those of us who have died. These obituaries are then added to our web site at <https://www.vhpa.org>. He just finished working on the S, T, U records and found that DAT U.S. Air Force MAJ Edwin N. Troxel was killed in Laos on 2 August 1971. MAJ Troxel was in our database because he had a helicopter pilot MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) with no other information. A previous SSN deceased database search discovered that he died in August 1971 so he was listed as DAT.

With Barry's discovery, a search of the Coffelt online database, which is now the official source of Vietnam War KIAs at [www.coffeltdatabase.org/index.php](http://www.coffeltdatabase.org/index.php) indicated that MAJ Troxel was killed in a T-28 fixed wing accident in Laos flying for the 317 SOS (Special Operations Squadron) which is an Air Force fixed wing unit. Since MAJ Troxel has a helicopter MOS, we then contacted Jim Burns our U.S. Air Force helicopter pilot expert and Jim confirmed that MAJ Troxel flew Hueys with the 20th SOS Green Hornets in 69-70 on his first tour. This confirmed MAJ Troxel should be listed as a helicopter pilot KIA. He now brings our number of KIAs up to 2,167.

As a member of the Coffelt team, we receive frequent KIA updates which helps refine our KIA records with things like unit, grid coordinates and circumstances of death gleaned from records obtained from the Vietnam Archives at Texas Tech University by long time Coffelt volunteer Ken Davis. Ken was a U.S. Navy fighter pilot in Vietnam. Ken typically adds over 1,000 pieces of information per month to the Coffelt KIA database. It is truly a remarkable archive and recording of all Vietnam War KIAs. This accounting is unprecedented in the history of warfare. We are honored to be a part of this ongoing effort.

Barry also discovered that DAT U.S. Army WO1 Selwyn R. Taylor was killed in Vietnam flying an Army Bird Dog. WO1 Taylor's very thorough obituary indicated he was selected at Fort Wolters to move to fixed wing training at Hunter before completing helicopter school indicating that his record was mislabeled with a helicopter pilot MOS when in fact he

never completed helicopter training. This meant that WO1 Taylor did not qualify for the VHPA so he has been removed from our databases.

As you can see, we continue to refine our extensive data. Another example is that we add a few men each month to our databases as we determine their eligibility. Unfortunately, this is mostly due to obituary information gathered by long-time volunteer Sammie Williams and several VHPA members.

Almost all Army dual-rated pilots who obtained their wings from fixed wing school and later attended a helicopter qualification course are listed in the Vietnam veteran database with a fixed wing MOS with no indication of their dual rating. U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy pilots were all fixed wing rated first which complicates their records. And Vietnamese records, other than some Army flight class information, are non-existent.

Please continue to send us information that you discover that may help with improving our records.

## *Attention to Detail, Continued from page 23*

was doing anything in aviation. After I soloed, he brought in the newspaper article about the parachute incident into the classroom one day and said I needed to find another instructor because he considered me careless and accident prone. I found another instructor and completed my Private Pilot flight training program.

About ten years after completing Army Aviation Flight Training, I was working on a local transition in the Mohawk at the Test Activity at Cairns. After about 15 hours of training I was enjoying Happy Hour at Dottie's Lounge in Level Plains, with my instructor and three others. After a few beers I told this story to the group and my instructor got quiet and didn't say much the rest of the evening. The rest of the crowd thought it was a great story. The next morning, I had a training session in the Mohawk and after completing the pre-flight, my instructor showed up at the aircraft without any flight gear. I made a joke and asked him if he had too much to drink the previous night. He didn't even smile and said he would no longer be my instructor. When asked why he replied that he did not want to be in an aircraft where I was near a parachute. Well, that ended my Mohawk transition since he was the only Mohawk instructor in the unit.



# Restoration of the Cobra

by Tom Westcott



On June 24th, 2019 we received a Bell AH-1F Cobra helicopter, serial # 66-15327 which came into Fairmont on a flat-bed semi from California and was delivered to our local airport by Baarts Trucking. Later that week I received a phone call from the Martin County Veteran's Memorial chairman who asked me to be the team leader for the restoration project. I accepted the position with great honor, and felt it was a good fit from my military training which was airframe repair.

In our first meeting with the Martin County Memorial Committee I introduced myself and briefed them about my past experience with aircraft. With that I told them that I was hoping for volunteers to express their interest in being on the team. An hour and a half after the meeting I had my team put together.

I spent many hours making phone calls to get the refurbishing started. Then I selected my team leader who was an AP&E license holder (Airframe, Powerplant and Electrical), and a pilot. We then got the Cobra moved from the local airport to the building where the work would begin. Once it was there Mitch Jenkins and I made our first trip to survey the damaged Cobra. We discovered that it was used to fight fires in California and it had a lot of blistering, so I got on the phone and got bids for sandblasting and painting. Mike's Sandblasting and Professional Painting was the successful bidder from New Ulm, MN.

Needless to say, it was a highly collaborative effort. My team consisted of engine, rotor, and airframe specialists, along with many other volunteers. We proceeded to drain all the fluids from the engine, repair holes with patches, and found it necessary to make a new nose piece out of fiberglass with the help of Dave Harnier.

The refurbishing has now been completed and the

Cobra is ready to be mounted on a 10' pole at the Martin County Veterans Memorial Park on the 18th of June. We will be having the dedication on August 1st, 2020 to commemorate the new display. It is going to be a very special event, with many dignitaries in attendance and all are welcome.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is a back story for the Upper Midwest Chapter Report. Tom Hirschler*

## A MEMBERSHIP FOR THOSE HONORED FEW



THE  
DISTINGUISHED  
FLYING CROSS  
SOCIETY

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

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



# 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

Under our current circumstances, chapter activities have been reduced significantly. We were able to meet for a June monthly luncheon on the 10th. Thirteen of our members met at the La Hacienda de Los Barrios Restaurant on Redland Road. Mike Law, President, provided the attendees a copy of Robert's article from the American Huey Chapter to the VHPA Aviator and material on the VNCA Museum Building taken from their website. Mike Law talked about getting financially behind this worthy capital construction project. His idea was to pick up pocket money in cash at our meetings, deposit it into the Chapter's bank account, and then periodically (maybe once a quarter) the Alamo Chapter would send a check to the American Huey Chapter where by they could forward the money to the American Huey 369

Foundation. The Alamo Chapter members attending the luncheon collected \$630.00 that would later be sent to American Huey Chapter. If other chapters have not become involved with this worthy capital construction project, they might desire to research the project for possible inclusion.

In addition to a donation being made to the American Huey 369 Foundation, a collection was taken for the Vietnam Center and Archive at TTU building fund. The total amount collected was \$560.00. With no other business needing to be discussed, the luncheon was concluded. A luncheon or business meeting was not planned for July. A quarterly business meeting will probably be planned for August. As always, we hope and pray that all of our members in VHPA will remain safe and enjoy our senior years.

Mike Patterson

## AMERICAN HUEY CHAPTER

Our typical flying season (April – October) is spent participating in 15-18 patriotic/veterans events in several states. Though we are an adjunct activity, our inclusion often enhances attendance. As we all know, the sight and sound of a Huey turns heads like nothing else.

Since our first season in 2008, we have flown in events at several locations in 11 states – with many becoming annual partnerships, especially in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan. With support from thousands of veterans and patriots, we have been blessed in executing our mission of preservation, education, and paying tribute to all veterans and patriots.

With the pandemic having cancelled our first five events in April, May, and June, we were delighted to attend the July 25th Fly-In/Drive-In at Peru Municipal Airport and conduct membership flights. Our remaining events are:

September 12th - Rotors Over Mentone - Lawrence D. Bell Museum - membership flights available, weather permitting - Mentone, IN

September 14th & 15th - Howard Co. Vietnam Veterans Sand Box - Eads Farm, 4282 S. 800 E., Greentown, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting - Greentown, IN

September 18th, 19th & 20th - Bringing the Sound of Hope - Eads Farm, 4282 S. 800 E., Greentown, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting - Greentown, IN

### July 25th Fly-In/Drive-In at Peru Municipal Airport ~

Finally! After a long flying drought brought on by the pandemic, 30 volunteers supported our first event of the season at the Peru (Indiana) Airport. Twin teenager Core Member Volunteers Tommy and Joey Victor (newly christened private pilots) did their first Airport Fly-In, arriving from

## Moving has begun ~



Reduced flying events has not reduced opportunities to work. With the new 60' x 140' Storage Building recently completed at the site of the future American Huey History Museum, moving has begun of aircraft, equipment, parts, etc., from the pole barn downtown and the temporary hangar at Grissom Air Reserve Base.



A VN and MI ARNG veteran Huey got the honor of being the first occupant ...



Yellow Bird is freed from behind a wall of M/R blades, trailered, and enjoys a short road trip ...



...to her beautiful new home ...



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



President Canfield paused at Peru to pose with two stalwart chapter members: Mark Hopkins and Ron Baber.

**Stalwart kudos also to Wright Hickenlooper, our Chapter Photographer who provided all of the pictures in this article.**

Cleveland in a Piper Archer, and bringing their dad, Mike, and their former CFI (a USAF veteran).

## Museum Fundraising~

As mentioned here in the July/August issue, the Air Force recently dropped a bomb in our neighborhood: our temporary museum/hangar facilities are among a few buildings deemed too close to the runway and must be removed. No date has yet been given. Thus, it is prudent to expedite construction of the American Huey History

Museum – now planned for 2021. More information about the project and our long-running fundraising efforts are detailed in a 2-page ad elsewhere in this issue.

Revenue from our chapter dues (\$25, annual) has allowed us to donate \$2,000 toward the project and also to purchase bricks that will memorialize the names of several veterans that left us too soon.

**Robert Fureigh**  
Secretary-Treasurer

## GEORGIA CHAPTER

The virus is still impacting our activities, and the ability to have a full membership meeting. The Georgia Chapter did have a meeting on July 18, 2020 in our new location, and we did have a good turnout. About a dozen aviators showed up to share old war stories, and a few new ones.

Steve Masak gave us a travelogue of his recent trip to the Republic of Vietnam. It is a tour that caters to veterans of the Vietnam War and he had photos from his 60's tour to compare with the tour this year. Very stark differences in the landscape. If anyone would like to take the tour next year, get in touch with me.

The new meeting place was given a "top" approval by the members that met, and are looking forward to having "non" Covid gatherings soon.

I have not been informed of any of our members afflicted with the Virus yet, so we are pressing on.

Our next meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2020 at the Come N Get It restaurant. Ya'll are welcome.

**Chuck Stoudt, President**



Social distancing.



Steve Masak.



## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

The Michigan Chapter has had to pause most activities due to the Coronavirus and subsequent restrictions attempting to keep our members safe. But there has been an exception. On June 17th, Mark Benjamin restarted his monthly lunch gath-

erings at a new location – the Hotel Indigo in Traverse City. For the inaugural gathering, he reported a nice turn out in a beautiful spot for the lunch. They ate on the top deck of the hotel with a view of West Grand Traverse Bay. Several wives joined the festivities along with new member Richard McGuire and his wife Doreen.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

On July 1st Mark had lunch again at the Hotel Indigo in Traverse City, joined by some friends. He wrote that they had a great time at lunch and the view of West Bay is spectacular. Kim and John Lefler graciously offered to assist with garden maintenance at the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Monument on Front Street. Mark welcomed them to this effort and said others will be joining in.

Mark noted that there were many stories told about events that occurred to each of us in Vietnam. Paul Fitzsimons, Ron Hofmeister, and John Lefler were not aircrew but it was heart-warming to hear of their memories and the respect they have for all heli-



L-R Bob Matlis, Barry Witt, Don Pond (in the middle), Walter Topp, John Lefler, Doreen McGuire, Richard McGuire, Shirley Benjamin, Paul Fitzsimons, and Fritz Barrett.



L-R Denny Klein, Paul Fitzsimons, Ron Hofmeister, Kim Lefler, Bob Matlis, John Lefler, Mark Benjamin.



Couples Linda and Clay Maxwell, Doreen and Richard McGuire, Mark and Shirley Benjamin.

copter crew members.

Social distancing was observed during the meal, but they did get together for the group photo.

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

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

Submitted by Rich Deer, President

## NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

The COVID thing that surely you've all heard about, has restricted many of our regular activities. We haven't been able to meet and we have supported no displays since March.

With plenty of time on our hands, a few members North Alabama VHPA (NAVHPA) got together and completed much needed work on our hangar facility for BUC-3, our UH-1C/M gunship. We met in June to complete our first task, which was to install a dozen wind anchors to tie the hangar securely to the ground in the event of high winds. Due to some asphalt and rocky ground, the anchors were the type used in asphalt and required a power driver. The Chapter rented a power driver and all anchors were set. We had to drill holes into the building side supports to secure the anchors to the building with bolts. After several hot hours, we were sure that BUC-3's hangar was firmly secured to the ground.

We also attached a plaque to both sides of BUC-3 that was provided by the 170th AHC Association.

The second task was to move all our parts, supplies and shelving out of our temporary facility at the Meridianville Executive Airport in Meridianville AL to BUC-3's hanger. A half dozen members, four trucks and one 'big' trailer got the job done later in June.

On Monday, 6 July, four NAVHPA members (Don Bisson, Bob Monette, Sam Maki, Marshall Eubanks) took a trip to the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) located at the Atlanta Motor Speedway, Hampton,



L-R: Bob Monette, Rick Davis, Les Haas, Gil Fluhr and Marshall Eubanks installing tiedowns for the Buc-3 hangar.



Finishing up transferring equipment to the Buc-3 hangar from Meridianville. L-R: Gil Fluhr, Les Haas and Don Bisson.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

GA. The purpose of the trip was to return some loaned Charlie Model Huey Gunship armament system items and to loan the AAHF the Mini Guns and 7-Shot Rocket Pods from our M-21 Gun System. One of the AAHF aircraft will be fitted with the gun system for use in a movie. Filming of the helicopter gun system scenes is scheduled for late summer/early fall.



Several flyable Hueys are just some of the aircraft at the AAHF's hangar in Georgia.



Hot enough for you?

NAVHPA members take a break from removing parts in the Georgia sun. L-R: Sam Maki, Marshall Eubanks, Don Bisson and Bob Monette.

In addition to the several flyable Hueys and Cobras, the AAHF has nearly a dozen parted out Hueys. The AAHF Director of Operations, Ron Disney, was more than gracious and allowed us to obtain some needed parts for Buc-3. These included doors, marker lights, a green House and door glass. Additionally, we obtained horizontal stabilizers, a chin bubble and door pins for a Huey for one of our members, Ernie Megli, to give to Falkville, AL for their permanent display Huey. Of course, we had to remove all parts in the oppressive Georgia heat and humidity.

Two NAVHPA members, Marshall Eubanks and honorary member Julie Kink, along with Julie's husband, Medal of Honor recipient LTC(R) Mike Sprayberry, are on the Alabama Gold Star Families Memorial Monument (GSFMM) Committee. Marshall is the chair; Julie is the co-chair and Mike is the advisor. Two other members are Huntsville Madison County Veterans Memorial (HMCVM) Foundation chair, BG(R) Bob Drolet, and the HMCVM Foundation administrator, Jennifer Henken.

This Gold Star Families Monument is a joint project between the Alabama GSFMM Committee

([www.facebook.com/Huntsville-Madison-County-Veterans-Memorial-153547661445006](http://www.facebook.com/Huntsville-Madison-County-Veterans-Memorial-153547661445006)),

the HMCVM Foundation ([www.hwwmohf.org](http://www.hwwmohf.org)) The facebook page is: the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation (HWWMOHF) ([hmcvm.org/wp/](http://hmcvm.org/wp/)), and the City of Huntsville. The Monument will be located in the HMCVM area and both Monument and Monument Plaza are under construction and will be dedicated in mid-October 2020.

In 2010, Iwo Jima veteran and Medal of Honor Recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams formed the HWWMOHF. Its mission is to honor, recognize and serve Gold Star Families and their fallen heroes. One way they do this is by assisting in the establishment of Gold Star Families Monuments in communi-



Front of the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument to be dedicated in October 2020.



Marshall working in the forward battery compartment of a Huey.

ties throughout the United States.

To date, the Foundation has assisted local Committees in placing 60 monuments representing 47 states. There are also 77 monuments in varying stages of completion. This will be the first Gold Star Families Memorial Monument in the State of Alabama.

The Monument is made of black granite and has four panels. The front bears the words, "Gold Star Families Monument, a tribute to Gold Star Families and Relatives." The other side tells a story through the four panels with the themes Homeland, Family, Patriot and Sacrifice. At the center of the monument is a silhouette representing a Loved One who lost their life serving our country. The monument stands 7'5" tall and is just over 13' long. This Monument demonstrates to Gold Star Families that their community cares for them and appreciates their sacrifice while also honoring the ultimate sacrifice paid by their Loved Ones. It will be a place where Gold Star Families can come to remember, reflect, pray, and honor their fallen family member. The mother of Marine Private First-Class Bruce Wayne Carter, a posthumous Medal of Honor recipient said: "Dying for freedom isn't the worst thing that can happen. Being forgotten is."

The North Alabama Chapter meets in Huntsville, on the 2nd Tuesday of most months at 6:00 PM (1800). We intend to meet again in person as soon as we are permitted to do so. Stop in when you get a chance. If you live in the North Alabama and



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Middle Tennessee area, we want you to join our chapter. You can contact us at [navhpa@gmail.com](mailto:navhpa@gmail.com). Our web site is <http://www.na-vhpa.org>. Come on out!! We know all those

war stories need to get out of your system. We have each heard all of ours. We need new ones.

**Ralph Weber, July 31, 2020**

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

We continue to hold our meetings via "Zoom" video conferencing. We continue to gain participants to the new media. Some have had audio and visual problems, but luckily a call-in number is provided, and members can and do call in. At this writing we are all safe and practicing physical distancing. Hopefully, we will all remain healthy.

Not only has the epidemic had a resurgence in many geographical areas, the social upheaval has provided additional impetus to stay home with civil discord continuing across the nation. I'm still being hopeful that a treatment and vaccine for the corona virus will be developed soon. In the meantime, Stay Hopeful, Stay Safe, and above all Stay Healthy.

Upcoming Activities: We hoped that we would be able to

attend a few events with our Museum toward the end of the year but, alas, it is not to be. We cannot provide a safe environment for our members or the public within the confines of the Museum. Any upcoming activities will be announced on our Web site: [www.RMCVHPA.com](http://www.RMCVHPA.com)

Meeting Schedule and other Information:

We have suspended all meeting and activities except for video and telephone conferencing. Visit our Web site at [www.RMCVHPA.com](http://www.RMCVHPA.com) for any updates. 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**

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

Not much going on here on the west coast - we are all riding the Covid roller coaster up and down weekly, so get-togethers or other events are not happening. A couple of us are still attending the unclaimed veterans' services at Riverside National Cemetery every month. At first the National Cemeterys

stopped all services or modified services restricted the number of individuals attending. Now, it's almost on a weekly basis as what will take place.

We remain hunkered down and or virtually alert (situational awareness of our surrounding) if we need to go somewhere.

**Jim Davidson, President**

## SOUTH MISSOURI CHAPTER

The South Missouri Chapter of VHPA held its 2nd quarterly meeting on June 13 in Fair Grove, MO. The meeting took place on a beautiful day in the city park where social distancing was both possible and practiced, except for a very short time to take a group photo.

With the resignation of the Vice President, John Sorensen agreed to fill out the remainder of his term and become president for 2020-2021. Don Merritt was elected to become VP for that term and become president-elect for 2021-2022.

President Ron Clifton and Treasurer John Sorensen displayed a quilt made by their wives. It is 58" by 78" and is up for raffle. Tickets for the raffle are \$5 each, 3 for \$10, or 40 for \$100. All proceeds from the raffle will go to the scholarship fund for College of the Ozarks. Anyone wishing to purchase tickets is to contact John at 417-759-7487 or [jsore65648@gmail.com](mailto:jsore65648@gmail.com).

The featured speaker was Rocky Griffin. Rocky trained astro-



**Chapter Group.**



**Quilt to be raffled.**

nauts for many years, although he never went into space. His assignments took him to Arkansas, Alaska, and the Johnson Space Center in Houston. He was also involved in work with the counter SCUD mission. He provided an informative and entertaining summary of his career. He was provided a

very nice quilt as a token of appreciation.

**By Ralph McClurg**



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## UPPER MIDWEST CHAPTER

The Upper Midwest Chapter was represented by nine members at the dedication of the Martin County Veterans Memorial in Fairmont, MN on Saturday, August 1. The crowning jewel of the memorial is Huey Cobra 66-15327, whose last combat flight was 13 February 1971 with the 7/17th Cavalry during Lam Son 719. She was hit by 51 cal. fire (across the fence) which took out the hydraulics system. Through skill and some luck (seems that there is always some luck involved, sometimes good but sometimes bad) the PC, 1Lt David Stinson was able to get the aircraft headed back toward Vietnam and conducted a perfect running landing on a dirt road. Fortunately, there was an ARVN patrol nearby that took the initiative and secured the crew and aircraft. The crew was extracted unharmed and the aircraft was recovered. Unfortunately, Lt. Stinson's gunner, WO 1 Stephen Wilton, succumbed to agent orange-induced cancer not many years after his return to CONUS.

Aircraft 327 won a free trip back to "the world" for rebuild and lucked out with an early drop. After that, her history become a little murky. The aircraft ended up as a civilian in California flying night fire suppression missions (wildfire not enemy fire). The aircraft was in awful shape when the memorial committee won her in a lottery for their centerpiece at the memorial. You may not be able to tell from the photos, but it looks like it just rolled off the assembly line in Ft. Worth. The restoration crew did a fantastic job and they did it all in a single year. The committee did a terrific job of constructing the memorial grounds and more work is envisioned to complete the memorial including statues of soldiers from WW I through Iraq and Afghanistan.

Special thanks go to Chapter member Dave Schmitz and friend Barry Hammerback, co-owners of a flyable H model that brought appropriate sound effects to the parade. It was a great weekend starting with a cookout Friday night with porkchops on a stick, fresh sweet corn, and appropriate beverages. Pontoon boat rides on the lake topped off the evening. On Saturday morning was a parade ending at the memorial site and the dedication ceremony of the memorial followed. The fairgrounds activities featured information tables on Veterans assistance programs, Vietnam Service lapel pins, veteran's homelessness programs and other items of interest to veterans.

Hats off to the Restoration Committee members, the County Commissioners and all those volunteers that



Cobra # 327, Star of the Show.



Cobra # 327, Star of the Show. 7/17th Cav vets including our Dick Staiert, and Jim Crigler. Also, our Dale Dobesh who was on their float, but not 7/17th.



Upper Midwest chapter members Bob Rohlfson, Wendell Peiper and Neil Powell.



Another Antique.



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brought 327 back to her glory. Thanks to Neil Lee, VHPA life member, who put us in contact with the committee and got the ball rolling for our participation in this great tribute to the service of all Vietnam veterans as well as all the other veterans of Martin County.

It was an honor to be invited to participate in this great tribute.

Article and Photos by Don Abrams

*Editor's note: I have been communicating with this group for many months on various aspects of the plan. A prior arrangement precluded my attendance to the dedication. I think the work done and the spirited participation is praiseworthy. We can feel proud that such an iconic symbol is in place to honor our brave cobra crews. ~Tom Kirk*

## Washington State Chapter

Our first general meeting for 2020 was held at the Tulalip Casino and Resort on February 15th. Thank you to chapter member and Tulalip Tribal Council member, Mel Sheldon, for hosting our event and securing hotel rooms for our membership at a discount rate for Valentine's Day! Our President, Dave Swanson, called the meeting to order with the pledge of allegiance and an opening prayer by Pat Staeheli. He read into the minutes, our previous meeting's minutes which were reviewed and accepted by the members present. Our chapter Treasurer and National Executive Committee Member, John Shafer, brought us up to date on our financials and reported that the chapter is in good fiscal shape. John stated that we have 45 current members and 76 life members in our chapter. He provided us with the next several years' reunion locations. John encouraged anyone interested to submit their names for the National Committee positions coming open this year.

We welcomed our newest chapter member, Dr. Bill Reeder to our group. Bill served 30 years on active duty and has published a book about his experiences as the last American soldier taken prisoner in South Vietnam, titled "Through the Valley – My Captivity in Vietnam." You can see Bill give a lecture about his experiences as a POW by going to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO29Lc3V\\_IM&t=1087s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO29Lc3V_IM&t=1087s). Bill, we're honored to have you in our chapter! We also added three new members at this February meeting.

The next order of business was the nomination and selection of new officers. Dave Swanson will continue as chapter President. Alec Broman assumes the position of Vice President and Doug Decker is our new Senior Member at Large, serving as our Director for Programs and Planning. Our Mid Term Member at Large is Steve Lodwig, who will serve as our Director of Membership. Ron Riley agreed to become our Junior

Member at Large, serving as our Director of Communications. Bill Vaughn and Rick Walker remain as our Webmasters ([vhpawa.org](http://vhpawa.org)). John Shafer continues as our Treasurer. Following the election of new officers, Dave Swanson was presented a plaque in recognition for his outstanding service to our chapter. Thank you, Dave, for all your hard work and the rest of you guys who agreed to step up and serve the chapter!

Our next meeting was to be held Saturday, June 20th, during the Olympic Air Show at the Olympia Airport, however, it had to be canceled due to COVID 19 restrictions. We intend to hold a membership meeting in Eastern Washington in September, however, that meeting is pending COVID 19 restrictions. Details for the meeting will be posted on our website. The Auburn Veterans Day Parade is scheduled for Saturday the 7th of November.

Our state chapter is an active veterans group and we invite all Vietnam helicopter pilots to join us and re-connect with those that you served with so many years ago. Finally, thanks to the many members who put in the hours to make our state chapter a success. Your efforts are greatly appreciated!

Steve Lodwig will be moving to Kentucky and has asked to be dropped from our chapter membership. Thank you, Steve, for the many years you have served this chapter.

Dave Swanson, President  
Submitted by: Steve Lodwig



Members who attended our February meeting gathered for a group photo in foyer of the Tulalip Casino Resort.



*Beginning with the September/October 2020 issue of the Aviator, we are recognizing VHPA Life Members in the same manner as in the printed Membership Directory, with an asterisk.*

**\*Adessa, Anthony J.** USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 58-1; RVN: 65-66 25 INF, 66 197 AHC, 69-70 AN KHE AIRFIELD, 70-71 HHC/223 CAB; LM, DFC (3 OLC), BS, MSM, PH; Callsigns: Diamond Head 5/Griffin 6.



Anthony John Adessa was born in Newark, NJ February 22, 1932 and died on June 18, 2020. Joining the US Army upon graduation in 1953 from the University of Alabama, John Adessa served his country with distinction. While commander of a large US Army Helicopter Battalion on his third combat tour Anthony flew most every mission, living his motto "Never ask anyone to do what you wouldn't do yourself."

The Colonel served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon, Washington D.C. and later as the Director of Combat Development, Ft. Bliss, TX, retiring in 1978.

He is survived by his wife, Emma.

**Anderson, Richard K.** USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 60/61QC; RVN: 64 57 MED DET, 64-65 61 AVN, 68-69 254 MED DET, 69 45 MED CO; Callsign: Dustoff.



Richard "Dick" Kenneth Anderson was born on November 1, 1932, in Omaha, NB. He died on September 20, 2016, at his home in rural Kimballton.

He attended Omaha schools and graduated from Omaha North High School in 1950. Dick enlisted in the Army National Guard and eventually entered the U.S. Army, serving in the Korean

Conflict. He was trained in fixed-wing aviation, attended officer candidate school, and later took helicopter training.

Following his retirement from active service, Dick farmed and then worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 15 years. He then stayed active by working at local gas stations, where he enjoyed visiting with people.

Dick was a member of Elk Horn Lutheran Church. He was an avid singer and was a member of the church choir and Western Iowa Arts Association. A member of the American Legion Post #322, Elk Horn, IA, and the Harry Albertsen AMVETS in Kimballton.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Mary Ann.

**\*Bidigare, Ted L.** USA; Flight Classes: 67-9/68-5QC; RVN: 65-66 565 TC CO, 68-69 A/7/17 CAV, 68-69 B/7/17 CAV; PH.



Ted Bidigare, a resident of St. Clair Shores, passed-away at his home on June 8, 2020. Ted was born in Detroit on January 10, 1943.

He attended Austin High School in Detroit and went on to earn his bachelor's degree from John Carroll University in Ohio. From his time at high school, his military service, and college education, Ted formed and fostered relationships he still maintained until his passing. He held many management positions until becoming the City Manager of Grosse Pointe Woods. Ted was proud to serve the city and was a wonderful asset to the city and surrounding communities.

One of Ted's favorite post-retirement jobs was being the "Nanny" for his grandchildren, a job title he gave himself. Spending time with his grandchildren was very important to him, and he loved every minute.

**Brown, Kenneth D.** USA; Flight Class: 69-13; RVN: 69-70 A/1/9 CAV 1 CAV; DFC (2 OLC), BS (OLC); Callsign: Apache 33.



Kenneth David Brown passed-away July 6, 2020 after a hard fought, four-year battle with esophageal cancer. He was born December 14, 1949 in Hot Springs, AR.

He graduated high school in Denver, CO, began private flight training and started college in the fall. He made the decision to leave school after the first semester and volunteered for Vietnam.

Upon his Honorable Discharge from the Army he made a civilian career of flying helicopters ending with a 15-year stint at Weyerhaeuser Aviation based in De Queen, AR.

The discipline, loyalty, and patriotism he learned in the Army never left him. He was a true Patriot as friends and family will attest.

Ken is survived by his wife of 25 years, Terri.

**Clark, Gary L.** USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 69-23; RVN: 69-70 D/3/5 CAV 9 INF; DFC (OLC), BS; Callsign: Longknife 29.



Gary Clark of Elba and Batavia NY passed-away peacefully surrounded by his family after a lengthy illness on June 12, 2020 at Premier Rehabilitation Center in Batavia. Gary was born April 6, 1946 in Batavia, NY.

He joined the New York State National Guard after returning home from Vietnam until his retirement in 1998.

While a member of the community, Gary also served as Past President of the Kiwanis Club of Batavia, Iroquois Trail Council of Boy Scouts of America, and Council of Probation Administrators for



Western New York. Gary served as Director of Probation for over 30 years until his retirement in 2006. He was a lifetime member of the Stafford Fire Department.

Gary is survived by his loving wife, Denise.

**\*Colvin, John D. III**  
USA, COL Ret.;  
Flight Class: 65-18;  
RVN: 66-67 283  
MED DET, 66-67  
254 MED DET, 68-  
69 237 MED DET, 70-71 54 MED  
DET, 70-71 68 MED DET; LM,  
DFC, BS (3 OLC), MSM (4); Call-  
sign: Dustoff.



John Dorrance Colvin III passed-away July 14, 2020. He was born July 13, 1940 in Indianapolis, IN. John resided in Canyon Lake, TX

John graduated from Norwich University in Vermont and continued on with his education to earn post-bachelor degrees at the University of Southern California, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and the U.S. Army War College. He proudly served his country for 29 years in the U.S. Army.

In civilian life, John served as an official for high school and college sports, as a substitute teacher in Northeast ISD, and as a supervisor for the installation of satellite telephone communications for the British Military in Bosnia.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Olivia.

**\*Coyle, Richard**  
USA; Flight Class:  
67-5; RVN: 67-68  
170 AHC; Callsign:  
Sledgehammer 5.



Richard "Dick" Coyle was born in Schenectady, NY on April 11, 1942 and passed-away on June 1, 2020 in Conroe, TX. Dick attended Conroe High School. Upon graduation, Dick attended

Texas A&M and participated in the Corps of Cadets before transferring to the University of Houston.

After Vietnam, Dick was employed in the insurance industry. He was continuously involved in multiple civic and charitable organizations for the rest of his life.

He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Mary Margaret.

**Cryer, Robbie L.**  
USA, CW4 Ret.;  
Flight Class: 69-9;  
RVN: 69-70 A/5  
TC 101 ABN, 70 3  
BDE 101, ABN, 73  
AMCON; Callsign: Thunder 5.



Robbie L. Cryer passed-away on May 26, 2020. He was born on July 1, 1942 in Brownsville, TX and later resided in Slidell, LA. Robbie was drafted into the United States Army in April 1968 following his education and became an Attack Helicopter Pilot and Fixed Wing Pilot. He retired from the Army in 1994. He then began a successful second career in Logistics as a Military Contractor/Consultant, retiring in 2013.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Julie.

**Doyle, Robert P. J.**  
USA; Flight Classes:  
68-510/68-16.



Robert P. Doyle, age 75 of Yardley, PA, passed-away peacefully on May 30, 2020 at Abington Memorial Hospital. Born in Dublin, Ireland, Mr. Doyle grew up in Long Island NY, moving to Yardley in 1982. He attended St. Francis Xavier in Manhattan, NY, and Long Island University.

He loved aviation and became Chief Pilot for Caesar's of Atlantic City, and later flew for, and retired from, Citigroup. Mr. Doyle was a member of V.F.W. Post #6393 in Lower Makefield.

He is survived by his wife, Rosalinda.

**\*DuMond, Chance A. USA, Ret.;**  
Flight Class: 65-21; RVN: 64-65 330  
TC CO, 69-70 185 AVN.

Chauncey Albert DuMond, Jr., known by most as "Chance", passed-away peacefully on August 31, 2019 at his home in Tucson, AZ. He was born June 23, 1942 in Starlight, PA.

As a young man he studied at Keystone College and Penn State to become a veterinarian but had to leave college when his father died. He joined the Army in 1963 and became an officer and helicopter pilot and served over ten years, including two tours in Vietnam and one in Korea.

When he left active duty in 1973, he used his army training and continued to fly in Iran, Alaska and Colorado, all the while serving his country through the Army Reserves and National Guard until he was called back to active duty and served over ten more years, retiring in 2000. Chance never forgot his dream of finishing college and later in life earned a bachelor's degree in aviation management.

**\*Elliott, Robert W.**  
USA; Flight Class:  
67-17; RVN: 62-63 3  
RRU, 63 7 RRU, 67-  
68 117 AHC; DFC;  
Callsigns: Beachbum  
17/Warlord 17.



Robert Wayne Elliott passed-away peacefully after a long illness on October 16, 2019. He was born on March 15, 1941 in Gause, TX.

Robert graduated from Thorndale High School in 1959. He attended Temple Jr. College. He joined the U.S. Army for his assignment in Vietnam in 1962. Upon completion of his military duties, he entered Texas A&M University and graduated with a BBA in Business Management.

He entered Graduate School and in June 1975 went to work for BorTunCo and was assigned to their project on the



Alyeska Pipeline Project on the North Slope of Alaska. In 1978, he returned to the Houston office of BorTunCo where he became President in 1982. BorTunCo designed and developed a massive rock trencher the "ROC SAW," which was used extensively for pipeline projects in the Middle East. Robert traveled throughout Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, U.A.E, Lebanon, and Egypt. Robert was asked by President Reagan to join a White House mission to Lebanon to assess damage to the infrastructure of Beirut, Lebanon after the civil war. Robert resigned from BorTunCo in June of 1988 and acquired a Subway food franchise in Georgetown, TX, owning four franchises in Georgetown, Round Rock, and Taylor. Robert was also a charter member of Church on the Rock in Georgetown.

**\*Enselek, Donald H. USA; Flight Class: 69-3; RVN: 69-70 B/7/17 CAV; BS; Callsign: Pallbearer 39.**



Donald Enselek of Forney, TX, passed-away on July 10, 2020, in Dallas, TX.

Don was born in 1945 in Northampton, MA. He graduated from the University of Massachusetts in 1967.

After separating from the Army, Don spent the next thirty years working in the petro-chemical industry. He worked in both Colorado and Texas, but most of his career was spent working in a chemical plant in Baytown, TX.

Don is survived by his loving wife of 50 years, Patricia.

**Gallagher, Walter J. USMC; RVN: dates unknown; NCM.**



Walter Gallagher, 79, of Signal Mountain, TN passed on June 2, 2020. Walt grew up in Philadelphia, attended the U.S. Marine Corps

officer's candidate school upon graduating from LaSalle College. He served two tours in Vietnam, was a motor pool officer and then in charge of the perimeter at the Marble Mountain Marine base. Walt then went to flight school and became a heavy transport helicopter pilot for his second tour of duty.

Walt left the Marines in the early 70s and joined a former squadron colleague on the Winter Park Police Department as a patrolman. Using his GI benefits, he earned his Masters in both Criminal Justice and Business Administration and was a graduate of the FBI National Academy. He supported his family by working overtime shifts, teaching at community college, and serving as the commanding officer of the local Marine Corps Reserve. In 1980, he joined the Orange County Sheriff's department as a Sector Commander and was elected Sheriff of Orange County in 1988. He retired from public service in 2011 and spent many hours talking to inmates in local prisons via the Kairos ministry. His pre-deceased wife, Suzanne led him to Signal Mountain, TN where he enjoyed his final years.

**\*Hebert, Levi J. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 57-8; RVN: 61-62 93 TC CO, 68-69 180 ASHC.**



Levi J. "Jim" Hebert passed-away May 20, 2020, at his home surrounded by family. Jim was born December 26, 1926, in Iota, LA. James left Iota for San Diego, the Navy, and WWII. Upon completion of his assignment, he returned to Iota to pursue a higher education. Soon after his first year, he concluded the sedate life of college was not for him and entered the Army as an NCO.

Upon retiring from the military, Jim went on to finally pursue his bachelor's in business. Afterward, with aviation still in his blood, he went to work for Dyn-

corp in 1978. One of Jim's proudest moments came in 2000 when he was inducted into The Honorable Order of St. Michael for outstanding contributions to the Army Aviation community. At 77, he retired from Dyncorp in 2003.

Jim and his wife, Gloria celebrated 67 years of marriage December 18, 2019, a true testament to their love and devotion to each other. Jim was predeceased by his wife.

**Heim, Donald C. USMC, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 4552.**



Donald C. Heim loving husband, devoted father and quiet unsung giant among men, passed-away peacefully in the early morning of July 9, 2020, cradled in the tender and prayerful embrace of his beloved daughter.

Don was born on July 3, 1931 in East Aurora, NY. He received his commission as a Marine Officer on August 3, 1955 and served as an aviator in Korea and Vietnam where he flew fighters, attack bombers, and transport helicopters. He retired from the Marine Corps on June 30, 1980.

He is survived by his wife, Patricia.

**Jackson, Ralph R. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 54-E; RVN: 65-66 A/228 AVN 1 CAV, 68-69 B/228 AVN 1 CAV, 69 HHC 228 ASHB 1 CAV; DFC (3 OLC), BS (2 OLC); Callsigns: Wolverine 1/Wolverine 6/Longhorn 6.**



Ralph R. Jackson passed from this life July 13, 2020 in Oklahoma City, OK. He was born September 11, 1927, on a farm in northeast Arkansas.

Ralph joined the Navy on his 17th birthday in 1944. He served as a Gunner's Mate on an LST during the last month of World War II. Serving in the military became the key theme in Ralph's



life. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1948 and fought in the Korean War, landing at Inchon in September 1950. He progressed through every enlisted rank and was appointed Warrant Officer in December 1951. Ralph became an Army Aviator in 1954 and flew numerous helicopters and fixed wing aircraft for 20 years, amassing nearly 6,000 hours. He retired from the U.S. Army in 1973.

Ralph is survived by his wife, Shirley.

**\*Johnson, Durrell C. USA; Flight Class: 69-27; RVN: 70-71 B/7/1 CAV; Callsign: Dutchmaster 28.**

Durrell Charles "Chuck" Johnson, Sr. of Wayne, OH passed-away peacefully on May 30, 2020 at Heritage Village of Waterville. He was born on November 3, 1945 in Tiffin, OH.

He was a 1964 Graduate of Tiffin Columbian High School.

He was a car salesman at O'Donnell Chevrolet, was owner of Portage Valley Motors in Fostoria, OH and then worked at Jim Ferguson Volkswagen dealership in Findlay, OH. Chuck entered the insurance field as an Allstate Insurance Agent in Bowling Green, OH for the next 25 years. He was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, Black Hawk Association and a former member of the Wayne United Methodist Church.

He is survived by his loving wife of 51 years, Judy.

**Korth, Ronald F. USA; Flight Class: 67-3; RVN: 67-68 335 AHC; Callsign: Cowboy 29.**



Ronald F. Korth passed-away peacefully June 3, 2020 with his family by his side at his home. Ron was born on August 30, 1946 in DeKalb, IL. Ron enlisted in the U.S. Army after graduating from Shabbona High School.

After leaving the Army, his friend, Chuck Hendrickson, helped him get a job as a crop duster. He then went on to graduate from the University of Illinois in 1980 with a Bachelors in Agricultural Education. He taught high school agriculture for a year, then went back to his first love, crop dusting. He was a crop duster for 50 years and was a mentor to many aspiring young pilots along the way. Among his many lifetime accomplishments, Ron worked hard to obtain his Airframe & Powerplant Mechanic and Inspection Authorization certificates. Over the years, Ron totaled more than (sic) 90,000 hours in helicopters. He also found time to teach welding part-time at Kishwaukee College for 20 years.

Ron is survived by his wife of 47 years, Mary.

**\*Marquette, Eugene O. USMC; RVN: 65-66 HMM-364, 66 VMO-6, 67 TAD-TRANS PAC 68 HMM-263, 69 VMGR-152; DFC (2 OLC) Callsign: Mouse.**

Geno Marquette, III died at the age of 85 on November 5, 2018. He earned his BS at Norte Dame in 1955 and was commissioned Second Lt. in the USMC.

When he retired, he went on to have a very successful career as an attorney licensed in California, Texas and Tennessee. He was always first, and foremost, a Marine. Semper Fi.

**McGinness, James J. Jr. USA; Flight Class: 69-8; RVN: 69-70 23 ART GRP; DFC, BS (2 OLK); Callsign: Red Wing 3.**

James J. "Jim" McGinness, Jr. died peacefully on April 28, 2020 at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital in New York after a nine-month battle with cancer. James was born on November 23, 1944 in Malden, MA.

Raised in Troy, NH by his aunt and uncle, James graduated from Troy High

School in 1962 and enrolled at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, NH. To earn money as a young man, Jim would teach swimming lessons in the summer and work as a ski instructor in the winter at local mountains. He graduated in 1966 with a BA in English and worked as an English teacher for a short time before enlisting in the U.S. Army.

After eight years of military service, Jim first worked as a salesman in New York City for The Scott Paper Company and moved into the textile market; he was Vice President first of Gramercy International and then Vice President of The Cecil Saydah Company out of Los Angeles, where he ran their East Coast Division for many years.

Jim is survived by his devoted partner of over 30 years, Rita Kraut of New York.

**McQuade, William G. USA; Flight Class: 67-14; RVN: 67 121 AHC, 68 101 AVN 101 ABN; DFC, ACM; Callsign: Flying Tiger 1.**



William Gerard McQuade, "Bill" was born January 5, 1944 in Greenfield, MA. After attending Arms Academy in Shelburne Falls, MA and Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire, Bill enlisted in the US Army.

After serving his country, Bill moved to Fort Smith, AR and spent the next 47 years establishing successful businesses in the pet industry including Wee Pals, Luv Happy Tails and The Whole Pet in Fort Smith and Northwest AR. His compassion for animals reflected in his businesses was matched by his passion for motorcycling and the outdoors in his free time.

Bill is survived by his wife, Janet.





**\*Micol, Victor E. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 59-11; RVN: 63 7 RRU, 65 C/2/18 INF, 65-66 74 AVN, 68-69 48 AHC; LM, DFC, BS, MSM, ACM; Callsign: Blue Star 6.**



Victor Emmanuel Micol Jr. passed-away June 8, 2020 at Providence Hospital in Anchorage, AK. Vic was born in Valdeese, NC on July 10, 1936.

He was the grandson of one of the original Waldensian founders of the town, and he took great pride in his Waldensian heritage. Vic graduated from Francis Garrou High School. After graduating, he attended the University of Tennessee.

In 1958, Vic was commissioned as an Infantry 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. His military career consisted of numerous command and staff assignments. He was stationed in Korea and completed three tours in Vietnam. Vic was a liaison officer to the US House of Representatives and served as an escort for the Secretary of the Army.

His final assignment in the Army was as Senior Army National Guard Advisor for Alaska. Vic was a graduate of the Airborne School, Command and General Staff College, Ranger School, and the Army War College. In 1988, he was inducted to the Infantry Hall of Fame. After almost 38 years of service, Vic retired in 1991 as the last Infantry Aviator.

Following his retirement from the Army, Vic embraced civilian life and joined Alaska Supply Chain International for 21 additional years before retiring a second time in 2012.

Vic is survived by his wife of 49 years, Jane.

**Moore, John E. USN; Flight Class: 66-10; RVN: 68-69 HA(L)-3 DET 4, 69-70 USS CONSTELLATION; Callsign: SEAWOLF 41.**

John Moore was born in Ducktown, TN, on February 10, 1942. He fought a

long and valiant battle with pancreatic and stomach cancer, passing away on May 30, 2020.

He was a graduate of Cal Poly in CA.

Following his military service, he worked for a commercial helicopter operation in Alaska where he met his wife Patti, a Forest Service agent. They moved to Long Beach and Catalina Island, CA and formed Island Express Helicopter Service which they later sold and retired.

He is survived by his wife, Patti.

**Pullum, Donald M. USA, CPT Ret.; Flight Classes: 66-18/66-16; RVN: 66-67 155 AHC, 69-70 AH-1G NETT; Callsigns: Stagecoach 2/Snake 6.**



Donald Morton Pullum of Enterprise, AL passed-away July 16, 2020 at Southeast Alabama Health in Dothan, AL after a yearlong battle with melanoma of the lung. Donald was born September 8, 1941 in Roanoke, VA.

He attended college in Enterprise, AL, Savannah, GA, and Olympia, WA. After retirement, he spent 20 years teaching primary aviation at Fort Rucker, AL. He was a member of the American Legion and Enterprise Ballroom Dance Club.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Kathryn.

**\*Royals, Gerald E. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 57-17; RVN: 65-66 605 TC CO, 66 HHC/765 TC BN, 66-67 56 TC CO, 70**



**HHC/765 TC BN, 70 HHC/1 AVN BDE; DFC; Callsigns: Turtle 6/Straight Arrow 3 & 6/Good Nature/Hawk.**

Gerald E. Royals of Gettysburg died July 6, 2020, at the York Hospital. He

was born June 15, 1929, in Bogota, NJ.

He was a 1952 graduate of and class president at Gettysburg College, and in 1974 he earned a master's degree from George Washington University. He was a women's gymnastics teacher and judge, as well as the head coach at West Springfield High School for the women's gymnastics team for 19 years. He was inducted into the WSHS Athletic Hall of Fame for his service, dedication, and winning tenure as the head gymnastics coach.

**\*Snead, George R. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 67-13; RVN: 68 170 AHC; BS V (2 OLK) PH (3).**



George "Bob" Snead passed-away July 11 in his Prosper, TX home surrounded by family, following a four-and-a-half-year battle with advanced stage colon cancer. He was 84.

Snead served more than 30 years in the U.S. Army, entering the service at the age of 19, and retiring in 1982.

A self-taught cartoonist and artist, Snead went on to study at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, the University of Mainz in Mainz, Germany, and alongside Italian impressionist Salviano Constantin while stationed with the military in Vicenza, Italy, in 1982.

Snead and his family relocated to El Paso in the late 1970s, with his commission at Fort Bliss to serve in air defense. He gained prominence in his post-military career as a celebrated historian of the Buffalo Soldiers – the all-Black 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments of the U.S. Army. Known throughout the El Paso community for his 50-year study and visual retrospective of the once-obscure troops of the 19th century, Snead's research led to the development of his seminal body of work, entitled "100 Years Ago: The Buffalo Soldier Revisited."



# TAPS

[www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/local/community/2020/07/12/bob-snead-elpaso-artist-known-buffalo-soldiers-paintings-dies-age-84/5424225002/](http://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/local/community/2020/07/12/bob-snead-elpaso-artist-known-buffalo-soldiers-paintings-dies-age-84/5424225002/)

Mr. Snead's body of work is too lengthy for this notice. See the link above for a full account.

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

**\*Springer, Bobby W. USA; Flight Class: 62-2W; RVN: 66-67 179 ASHC, 68-69 196 ASHC; LM, BS, ACM; Callsigns: Shrimboat/Flipper 3.**



Bobby Springer passed-away on June 3, 2020 at Rockport, TX. Enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1953 and retired 1976. Bob served two tours in RVN as a CH-47 pilot with what he considered the best people our country had to offer.

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

**\*Ulsh, John H. USA; Flight Classes: 66-21/66-19; RVN: 67 334 AWC; DFC (3 OLC); PH; Callsigns: Playboy 11/Dragon 33.**



John Harden Ulsh of Rock Hill, SC passed-away peacefully at home in his sleep on May 28, 2020 after a courageous battle with cancer. He was born in Mt. Union, PA, on September 28, 1946.

John literally lived his life with his head in the clouds, but he was one of the most grounded men you would ever meet. He began his forty-five-year aviation career in 1966 when he enlisted in the U.S. Army. His courage, integrity, and dedication to duty pioneered strategic flying techniques and saved American lives.

After he completed his service in the military, John went on to fly for Sky Brothers which segued into a 20-year position as the Chief Corporate Pilot for Belk. His extensive flying career came to an end when he retired in 2011 from his role at Belk.

**\*Valabek, Michael P. USA; Flight Class: 67-11; RVN: 67-68 114 AHC; Callsigns: Red Knight/White Knight.**



Michael Paul "Mike" Valabek of Goodyear, AZ passed-away May 21, 2020 in Goodyear. He was born on October 29, 1946 in Baltimore, MD.

Michael graduated from Glen Burnie High School, Glen Burnie, MD in 1965 and attended University of Maryland before joining the Army in 1966.

After his military service in 1970, Michael worked for 40 years in construction sales management, training sales people. He also taught Office of Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) safety training classes across the country.

Michael was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA), the Estrella RC Sailing Club, and a member of the Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Michael is survived by his wife of 53 years, Margaret.

**\*Vest, Asa M. USA; Flight Class: 67-19; RVN: 68 187 AHC; DFC, BS, PH; Callsigns: Crusader/Ratpack.**



Asa Mervel Vest of West Liberty, KY, passed-away May 31, 2020 at the Community Hospice Care Center, Ashland, KY. He was born June 11, 1943 at West Liberty, KY.

He was a retired Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and a farmer.

He is survived by his loving wife, Rita.

**\*Wachter, John J. USA; Flight Class: 67-7; RVN: 67-68 61 AHC, 69-70 196 ASHC; PH; Callsigns: Lucky Star/Flipper.**



John Jacob Wachter, 82, died July 15, 2020 surrounded by loved ones. Mr.

Wachter was a native of Granite City, IL. He relocated to New Orleans over 45 years ago and fell in love with the culture and made the area his permanent home. A veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Mr. Wachter served over 11 years in the U.S. Army as a welder and as a helicopter pilot.

A member of VFW Post 8973, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, Mr. Wachter was proud of his service and committed to supporting veterans.

Mr. Wachter retired as the Branch Chief of the Coast Guard Bridge Administration District 8 after 28 years of Federal Government service.

He is survived by his wife of 12 years, Blesilda.

**\*Webster, Lawrence S. Jr. USA; Flight Class: 67-3; RVN: 67-68 189 AHC, 71 135 AHC; Callsigns: Avenger 4/Taipan 35.**



Lawrence S. (Steve) Webster, Jr. age 74, of Knoxville passed-away on June 2, 2020. He was a 1963 graduate of Knoxville Catholic High School, a member of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus Council #645.

**\*Wooten, Robert D. USA; Flight Classes: 70-11/70-7; RVN: 66 101 ABN DIV, 71 7/17 CAV.**



Robert David Wooten of Winchester, KY, passed-away on June 28, 2020 at the VA Medical Center in Lexington, KY.

Robert was born November 14, 1939, in Rondo, AR.

He is survived by his wife, Judy.



\*Wright, Gerald L. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 66-4; RVN: 66 B/1/9 CAV 1 CAV, 67 D/3/4 CAV 25 INF; Callsigns: Red 27/Charger 24.

Gerald L. Wright, residing in Arizona, formerly of Michigan, died June 5, 2020. Gerald was born November 23, 1941 in Palo, MI. He was a graduate of Carson City High School and Michigan State. He was in ROTC and joined the US Army after graduating. In 1977, he rejoined the Army as a full-time reservist Budget Analyst retiring in 1997.

He is survived by his wife, Sally.

## 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>.



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.

Anderson, Johnny O. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Classes: 66-23/66-21; died on June 23, 2020.

Banks, Herbert USA, LTC Ret.; RVN: 65-66 162 AHC; died on June 1, 2020.

Barkovich, Michael J. USMC, MAJ Ret.; RVN: 64-65 HMM-365, 67-68 VMO-6; Callsign: Emblem; died on May 30, 2020.

Bedsole, William K. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 60-10Q; RVN: 65-66 A/1/9 CAV 1 CAV; LM, DFC, BS; died on July 5, 2020.

Beran, John R. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 69-23; died on June 10, 2020.

Bond, Charles W. USAF; Flight Classes: 60-B, 66-1; RVN: 69-70 37 ARRS; Callsign: Jolly Green; died on December 6, 2018.

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

Dimsdle, Joe USA, CW3 Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-507/68-7 BS (2); PH, MSM; died on July 4, 2020.

Field, Eugene M. Jr. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 64-1W; died on July 4, 2020.

Haynes, Baylor R. USAF, COL Ret.; RVN: 65-66 38 ARRS DET; died on June 9, 2020.

Hess, Boyd G. USA, LTC Ret.; BS; died on July 17, 2020.

Roderick C Heath USA, LTC Ret.; LM, DFC, BS, MSM; died on June 30, 2020.

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

Kelley, Gerald M. USA; Flight Class: 69-32; died on June 22, 2020.

Kerr, Joseph W. USAF; died on June 28, 2020.

Kuyendall, Edward L. USMC, MAJ Ret.; died on July 17, 2014.

Longanecker, Robert L. USA; Flight Class: 69-29; died on July 12, 2020.

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

Mayhew, Jerald W. USA; Flight Classes: 68-523/68-43; died on November 29, 2014.

McCormac, Gordon K. USA; Flight Class: 65-19W; died on March 5, 2020.

Metzinger, Donald D. USAF; DFC, AFCM; died on July 7, 2020.

Moore, Thomas J. USA; Flight Classes: 68-517/68-29; RVN: 69-70 162 AHC; died on June 20, 2020.

Newton, Edward J. USA; Flight Class: 67-16; RVN: 68 170 AHC; died on July 14, 1992.

Nugent, David USA, LTC Ret.; died on May 19, 2020.

Pearson, Clem USAF, MAJ Ret.; died on June 12, 2020.

Porta, Ronny E. USA; Flight Class: 67-8; RVN: 50 MED DET; died on April 17, 2020.

Raupp, Douglas R. USMC, COL Ret.; RVN: 70 HMH-463; died on June 27, 2020.

Solomon, Alvin L. USA, LTC Ret.; died on November 21, 2011.

Stamper, James M. USA; RVN: 65 131 AVN, 66 D/227 AHB 1 CAV; DSM, LM, BS, PH; Callsign: Devil 6; died May 18, 2020.

Sullivan, Dennis V. USN; RVN: HS-2 in 74-75; died on June 5, 2020.

Tarrico, George J. USN, CMD Ret.; RVN 66 HS-6; died on June 5, 2020.

Thomas, Robert L. USA; Flight Class: 69-38; died on June 28, 2020.



# ~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.*



**Blades of Thunder**, by Larry Dandridge, published by Tigers, Vikings & Vipers Publishing, 236 North Ainsdale Drive, Charleston, SC 29414, ISBN: 978-0-578-15637-8, soft cover, \$17.99, hard copy, \$30.00, 410 pages.

The first chapter, "Going Down," sets the stage for a gritty, detailed and well told book about LTC Dandridge's tour in Vietnam that almost killed him, yet he persevered and retired from the Army. *Blades of Thunder* is the story of six men who served in Vietnam and what happened to them. It

isn't pretty, but in many ways typical of Army Aviators and their air crewmen who flew during that war. At times, the stories in the book will make your stomach churn, but they are all worth reading. There are several appendices at the end of the book and "Appendix D – Lessons Learned and Lessons Perhaps Not Learned" is my all-time favorite. Every Vietnam Veteran can probably add to this list. The book was written for one of the noblest causes we can support, raising money for veterans who need help after their service. My hat's off to Larry for writing a great book that **EVERYONE** should buy and read, whether or not they served in the military because their purchase, will in a small way, help our fellow veterans and their families who are in need.



**Taking Fire** by David Porter, published by McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina, 28460, 978-1-4766-8051-4, 175 pages, \$29.95.

If you ever wanted to know the details of what/how Army Scout missions were flown in Vietnam, this is the book to read. Even if you flew them, this is the book to read. Porter provides a lot of insight not only into the what happened,

but the hows and whys scouts flew missions as they did. For a Naval Aviator and fellow rotor-head, the descriptions of the tactics and techniques they used were fascinating. And, I learned a new acronym – BOGSATS. Read the book and you'll find out what they are... David's writing is crisp and to the point so it is an easy read even for someone who has never flown a scout mission or a helicopter. And, yes, there are lots hair raising flying scenes along with the insight. *Taking Fire* is a handbook on how to fly a scout mission and therefore, is a must read!!!

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



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