



The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association



Graham Stevens and his AH-6 Little-Bird.
Photo courtesy of Graham Stevens.

Cover story... page 8

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

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*Art Jacobs ~ VHPA President*

Part One: 2020 In the Rearview Mirror

First of all, I hope that everyone had a very peaceful Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's with your family as best you could under the circumstances. Between the pandemic surge, the economic volatility and uncertainty, the life-styles adjustments we have had to make, and the crazy run-up to the Presidential election, we no doubt have been looking forward to this year finally being over, and the prospect that 2021 will finally bring us some stability and normalcy. This Thanksgiving at our house, immediately after the dishes were cleared from the table, we

were hauling out the Christmas decorations. I know what was driving the urgency. The tree, the lights, the decorations, and the stockings were a way to transform the atmosphere – to get into the spirit – and to remind us of the importance of family. It was also a way to signal that these 12 months of 2020 would at last be over. An early sign of good fortune for 2021; we can now look forward to receiving an effective vaccine, and feel more confident that the Charlotte reunion will take place!

Part Two: Brothers-in-Arms

In collaboration with Mike Law (the hardest working guy in the VHPA) and The AVIATOR Magazine, I'm pleased to announce that we would like to make 2021 the year that in three separate issues that we feature the Air Force, the Navy, and the Marine Corps helicopter units and pilots. The VHPA has always welcomed members from those three branches, we have always wanted more members from those branches, and whenever we have received material in the way of photographs and articles, we have always published those in the magazine. Having said that, we are

often viewed as an Army-centric military veterans' organization. We accept that observation (and for some, a valid criticism). Even though the majority of Vietnam helicopter pilots were Army, we want to make a more deliberate and concerted effort to feature the other branches. Please, if you have pictures, unit histories, or stories, please send those to Mike Law who will be acting as the librarian for this project. If you have any questions about what to send, or how to send it, just get hold of Mike at: mglaw@earthlink.net and he will assist you.

FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL, HOTEL AND REUNION REGISTRATION FOR R2021 WILL NOT OPEN UNTIL MID MARCH. WE HOPE TO HAVE MORE DETAILED INFORMATION IN THE MARCH/APRIL ISSUE OF THE AVIATOR. YOU WILL FIND BASIC PRELIMINARY INFO IN THIS ISSUE. THE REUNION PAGE AT VHPA.ORG WILL BE UPDATED AS SOON AS WE CAN GET MORE DETAILS SO PLEASE VISIT THE WEBISTE FOR YOUR MOST UP TO DATE INFO. AN EMAIL BLAST WILL ALSO BE SENT AS SOON AS WE HAVE MORE DETAILED INFORMATION SO BE SURE TO CHECK YOUR EMAIL.

REMINDERS:

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

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

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

Sherry Rodgers
VHPA Office Manager



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***** With the ongoing pandemic, Hotel Reservations and Reunion Registration will not be open until Mid-March. *****

\$129 + tax over these dates of 29 June – 2 July, 2021 **BASED ON AVAILABILITY**
(VHPA room rate availability limited pre & post reunion dates)

Cutoff date for VHPA hotel rate is 28 May, 2021

PLEASE consult www.vhpa.org for the most current Reunion information and details.

VHPA 2021 PRELIMINARY REUNION SCHEDULE

**Tuesday
29 June**

Mini Reunions
Vendor Room
Early Bird Reception

**Wednesday
30 June**

Golf
Vendor Room
Welcome Reception

**Thursday
1 July**

Gold Star Breakfast
Quilters Show & Tell
Vendor Room

**Friday
2 July**

Memorial Service
Business Meeting
Spouse Event
Closing Banquet



Billy Graham Library

VHPA guests will journey through history, exploring one of the most influential voices of the 20th century, Billy Graham. The Billy Graham Library is 40,000-square-feet including state-of-the-art multimedia exhibits, films and memorabilia, where VHPA guests can relive the historic moments of his and wife, Ruth, life. Enjoy touring his restored family home and spend a time of reflection in the Memorial Prayer Garden.

Nascar Hall of Fame

150,000-square-foot of interactive, entertainment attraction honoring the history and heritage of NASCAR. The high-tech venue, designed to educate and entertain race fans and non-fans alike, includes artifacts, interactive exhibits, and a 278-person state-of-the-art theater.



Vintage Vineyard Tour

Be whisked from Charlotte, NC and taken to Yadkin Valley Wine Country, NC. This all day tour will be led by an expert tour guide that will be able to answer any questions for our guests and give an overview of the art of wine-making. VHPA Guests will enjoy wine tastings from multiple wineries and lunch will be included.

Comedy City Tour

Board this private VHPA funny bus to explore Charlotte's most interesting neighborhoods, historic places, and landmarks on an ADULT'S ONLY comedy tour with hilarious live commentary. Enjoy BYO beer and wine as you ride through town, and get a funny, local perspective on life in the city. This is a comedy club on wheels with bits of sights and history and voted one of the top things to do in Charlotte.



Quilters Show and Tell

Let's all be Optimistic! The 2021 VHPA Reunion is being held in Charlotte, NC. I am being optimistic that we will be able to get reacquainted with each other and share the projects we have all been working on this past year.

Requesting blocks and/or completed quilts for the 2022 reunion in Tampa, FL.

For those who are interested in donating blocks and/or quilts or who need to be refreshed on the requirements of the blocks:

1. Requesting fabric be quilt quality.
2. Colors of the block/quilts shall be red, white/cream and blue.
3. The blocks shall be 12 and one half inches square, unfinished

4. Prewash all fabrics as some may bleed, particularly the red and blues. Retain will set the color, obtainable at most quilt shops.

5. Blocks can be of any design that inspires you.

The Quilters Show and Tell is not limited to just quilters and those who are recipients of the quilts. The program is open to everyone who are the least bit interested in the quilters creativity and what they can accomplish. When signing up for the reunion, please consider signing up to attend our program. Our door is open to everyone.

See you in Charlotte, NC.

Kathleen Sherfey

12420 W 53rd Terr ~ Shawnee, KS 66216

klskcms@aol.com

913-631-6811

2021 VHPA/ QUAD-A Scholarship Application Time Just Around The Corner!!!

Got a descendant getting ready for College or already going? Could he or she use some extra money to help cover expenses? Now's the time to start thinking about applying for one of the twelve \$2,500 VHPA Scholarship awards to be given out in August 2021, administered by Quad-A. And, since our awards are handled through Quad-A, our applicants are eligible for all the Quad-A awards also. Last year 111 VHPA descendants applied for the 10 VHPA scholarships, ten received the \$2,500 awards and another 39 received an additional \$66,500 of Quad-A awards. That's a great return for partnering with them. One award per applicant per year

Our descendants need to notify Quad-A , in writing, of his or her intention to apply for a VHPA Scholarship NLT April 30, 2021. You can find contact information on the VHPA website. Quad-A will have the VHPA Scholarship Committee verify the eligibility of the applicants and then send the approved individuals an application. **ONLY DESCENDANTS OF VHPA MEMBERS CAN BE AWARDED ONE OF THE VHPA SCHOLARSHIPS!!!**

Two requirements on our end. The Sponsor ("you")

must be a dues current member of VHPA at the time of the application and either the applicant or the sponsor ("you") must be a dues current member of Quad-A. (This is required since Quad-A handles all the logistics concerning our Scholarships.) Please understand the descendants of Helicopter Pilots killed in Vietnam, descendants of Helicopter Pilots who flew in Vietnam and died prior to the formation of VHPA in 1984 and Helicopter Pilots who have passed away and were dues current members at the time of their passing are also eligible for our scholarships.

These are MERIT scholarships not NEED BASED.

If you have any questions feel free to contact Tom Payne at ka5hzd@att.net or Mike Sheuerman at msheuerman@tx.rr.com or 214-802-4244 Cell.

*Good Luck to all the applicants!!!
Hope we exceed \$100,000 this year.*

Tom Payne

Scholarship Committee, Chairman

Mike Sheuerman

Scholarship Committee, Fundraising

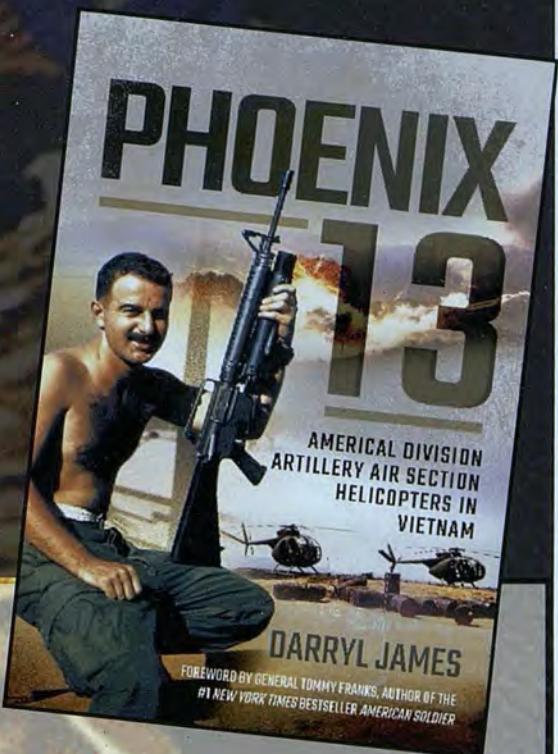
An Introduction by General Tommy Franks, author of the New York Times Best Seller, American Soldier:

A compelling collection of Vietnam helicopter true stories about the aviators in America's Artillery Aviation Section in '68 and '69. Flying alone, the scout pilots told their exploits to each other daily to learn and to survive from their collective experiences. Hazardous missions are intermixed with occasional humorous details of their off-duty shenanigans. The stories describe the brotherhood that develops between soldiers during combat. From these stories, the author, a decorated former Army aviator, describes his journey through Armor school, flight school and Vietnam.

*General Tommy Franks, Retired
Former Commander in Chief, United States Central Command*

PHOENIX 13, by Darryl James, published by Casemate Publishers
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Friends of Vinh Son Orphanage (FVSO), Kontum, Vietnam

Patrick Leary, FVSO President and VHPA Life Member



Because of your generosity, the orphans of Vinh Son continue to wear a smile despite a year with a deadly pandemic and widespread flooding caused by typhoons.

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, located in the Kontum and Pleiku regions of Vietnam. FVSO provides annual dental care, food, shelter, medicine, and education. All donations support the children and their caregivers. Because FVSO is a non-profit organization, your donations are tax deductible. Monthly newsletters tell our story, available on-line. Contact us any time. Your support is always greatly appreciated.!

For more info, contact FVSO

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

Web: FriendsofVSO.org

Email: FriendsofVSO@gmail.com

GOD'S OWN LUNATICS

by Graham Stevens

(originally published in the 1st Quarter newsletter of the Combat Helicopter Pilots Association)

Reprinted with the permission of the CHPA.

Because of the origin of the phrase, you might think that tag is reserved for Vietnam helicopter pilots. And you would be wrong.

Joe Galloway, a correspondent legendary among Vietnam vets, speaking on behalf of the grunts he traveled with and learned to love, was expressing their admiration and respect for helicopter crews in combat. "God's Own Lunatics," he said, referring to gunships coming to help, Dustoff or Medevac, or a ride out of hell coming to take their brothers home, announced early by the distant, escalating thumps of "wop-wop-wop," undeterred by the fire they took approaching the LZ.

Every war is different, has its own flavor and norms and mores, its own operating style, its own expectations of each other, its own lingo and setting and tactics. So, I don't know everything you experienced in other wars, but I do know this. Whenever and wherever you flew helicopters in combat as pilot or crew, you were exactly what Joe meant when he said God's Own Lunatics.

When I think back to my first Vietnam tour as a green Cobra pilot, I am reminded of the opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

I was a 21-year-old, trying to figure out the chaos and contradictions called Vietnam. Many of us felt this way.



Original Night Stalkers Patch, created by B Co 229th(160th) Safety Officer CW3 Jim Weisen (sp?). The patch was approved by then Commander Mike Grimm.

We were the new kids on the block when initially assigned to our combat unit. The "old guys" had nicknames for us - newbies, FNGs etc. - but soon we would be the "old guys." You simply became one, or your luck ran out and you didn't. That's the reality of war.

Every helicopter crew generation from Korea to today has earned Joe's moniker. Each of you had your own adventures doing your duty in Iraq or Afghanistan, or South America, or God knows where else, doing crazy things like flying with NVGs.

Each of us signed up. I could tell a long story on my own journey from having to join or get drafted in 1968. Losing your draft deferment back then had consequences. I had no idea then I would become one of God's Own Lunatics.

Whether a Warrant or Commissioned Officer, new pilots in Vietnam all started green with a lot to learn, like this, put into words of his own style by a friend. "You wanna' know what I think? It don't really matter what I think. Once that first bullet goes past your head, politics and all that shit, just goes right out the window."

Helicopter crews in Vietnam went through some major battles with more excitement than we wanted, like Dak Tho 67-68, Tet of '68, Cambodia Incursion '70, Lam Son 719, An Loc 1972. These were touchstone battles of the war, but in between major battles the daily life in every unit brought tests of our skill and courage, sights, sounds, smells and horrible and wonderful memories that would change us for the remainder of our lives.

After Vietnam, I was privileged to be a founding member of the 160th, and I had the thrill of flying in an under-rated hot little skirmish in Granada named Operation Urgent Fury. President Reagan pulled the trigger to interrupt the Commie trouble-making in Granada, and to rescue about 600 American medical students there at

risk of becoming hostages. I was the lead AH-6 Little-Bird Gun pilot. We had four AH-6C Little-Bird guns and six MH-6 slicks with crews, delivered to the Granada runway by C-130s, each carrying two of our birds.

The Grenadians and Cubans had blocked the runway with bulldozers, so ahead of us Rangers had to do a hop and pop - below 500' with no reserve chute - to land and secure the runway. They hot-wired the dozers to drive them out of the way. When we started offloading, a sniper popped a few rounds at us but the Rangers quickly took care of him. We prepped the aircraft, cranked them up and then we got busy. It wasn't quite a cakewalk.

Several SEAL Teams (not named here for security) were part of the operation. Four SEALs were lost in an airborne insertion with boats in a rainstorm, bodies never recovered. A SEAL from one of those teams who was not there but knows the history, says the deaths were not caused by weather, but by inadequate flotation for the heavy loads the SEALs were carrying. He said it was a lesson learned in lives lost that led to quick-release design in SEAL gear for ditching heavy equipment, as necessary.

One of the SEAL missions was extraction of the Governor, but after arriving at the Governor's Mansion they were surrounded by a superior force of Grenadian and Cuban troops and held off several assault waves including BTR-60s, a big eight-wheeled Soviet APC with heavy machine guns.

My team was tasked to take two Little-Bird guns to the Governor's Mansion to relieve pressure on the good guys and try to get the Governor out. We never got there. As we passed the Radio Free Grenada building at about 100', I didn't know a SEAL Team was pinned down there, and I looked down to see a BTR-60 uncomfortably close with a shit-load of Cubans. And then the fun started. My windshield shattered, and my tip path



AP photo, (CHT3) GRENADA Oct 27, Ä SMOKE FROM BURNING BUILDING ,Ä Smoke rises skyward from a burning building in the town of Caliste as members of the 83rd Airborne and students wait by helicopters Wednesday. (AP LASERPHOTO) (1k503520str-Jed Downhill) 1983

Photo and caption courtesy of Graham Stevens.

plane went to shit. I broke left and got on the deck, slowed down to about 20 knots and egressed back over the water. I thought about ditching, but, hey we were still flying, so I limped it back to our base at the end of the island, shut down, and listened to the whish/whish of the blades with all the holes in them. The blades looked like Swiss cheese. I had one hit on the blades just behind the D-spar on the leading edge. A half inch closer and the blade would have come apart.

When the bad guys engaged me, the gun noise of the BTR-6 trying to knock me down was a distraction the SEAL team needed to slip out the back door and E&E to the coast with their wounded. The SEALs found a small boat, handy for them to complete their escape with bad guys hot on their tail. They managed later to call into the command center, and at midnight we launched a MH-60 and my two guns to go get them. I hadn't slept for over 30 hours and knew at age 34 I was getting too old for this cat-and-mouse young man's game called combat.

The Blackhawk found them about a half mile offshore, dropped a repelling ladder and the SEALs began to climb up to the 60. If you have never climbed an eight-inch-wide aluminum caving ladder under the rotor wash of a MH-60, I promise you it's almost too much for one man in decent shape, but one of those SEALs gave me the treat of an amazing sight as he climbed that ladder with a wounded man over his shoulder. I had

worked with these guys for years and knew how tough they were, but I still marvel at that memory. They made it, all were recovered and we RTB'd (returned to base).

Later we were on a beach that borders the St. Georges Bay. A Marine Sea Cobra AH-1 had been shot down earlier in St. Georges, and his wingman was high gun cover for the CH-46 that was trying to get onto the island to rescue the downed crew. The Cobra was at about 2000' and probably took hits to his mast, likely from ZSU-23s. We watched the blade fly off, flexure plate and two blades. The Cobra dropped like a rock nose down into the deep water, no sign the crew got out. Worst thing I've ever seen.

I'll spare you my thoughts on recovering the body of a friend from his downed Black Hawk, but I would say Grenada for me was completely different and just the same as Vietnam. In both places some of our friends never became "old guys." They gave their last full measure of devotion as their luck ran out. The youth, the life, the blood, just ran out and they never got to live out their lives, never knew the joy of watching kids grow up and missed so many other things. For those of us who are left, their faces are frozen in our memory forever young, and even though we feel guilty that we lived through it, we know their actions "were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon themselves, their units, and the United States of America." God's Own Lunatics.

Can any of us adequately describe our combat experience when a civilian with genuine interest asks, "What was it like?"

Here's what Hoot said in the movie, Black Hawk Down. "When I get home and people ask me, 'Hey, Hoot, why do you do it, man? What are you? Some kind of war junkie?' I won't say a goddamn word. Why? They won't understand. They won't understand why we do it. They won't understand that it's about the men next to you. And that's it. That's all it is."

And now it's not only the men next to you, it's women, too.

So, be good to each other. We are the ones who lived through it. For those who didn't come home alive we should make the most of it. We should be good to each other and every one of us should be proud to be part of our special club of God's Own Lunatics.



Graham Stevens.



Full color. 20" x 28" limited edition print of Huey SOG LRRP ladder extraction. Standard version as shown, \$80.00 ea. **Customized** version with markings of your choice, \$125.00 including postage. Satisfaction Guaranteed.

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1952-53 Heartbreak Ridge & Sugarloaf	



CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR A GENERAL

I arrived in Vietnam about mid-July in 1969. After checkout and local orientation, I flew nighthawk for over a month, then a few months of ash and trash. My Baptism of Fire came about a month after my arrival with a real fiasco that shot my aircraft up pretty good, but that's a story for another time. The Division had two assistant commanders, both one-stars, and a two star-division commander. I was assigned to fly one of the one stars, and we became fast friends. We had a super nice C & C aircraft with all the radios, whistles, and bells, even chrome skid caps. He was a general and did not like to talk on the radio, so he told me to take all his calls, confer with him, and relay the answer back. Great.

When he went on R & R, I was assigned to fly the other one-star, a rated aviator and a pretty-good one. Rated Colonels and above were only supposed to fly with an I.P. After a few days, he settled in after learning each other's quirks. His biggest problem that I had, was he would fly until the 20-minute fuel light came on, land near some troops or a secure (no such thing) village and unit while I took the aircraft to refuel. One day near Christmas we visited several villages where he talked to the leader about Vietnamization. One afternoon we stopped for a visit with the troops at 'Mole City,' somewhere between Trung Bong and Tay Ninh, a real bad place to be at night as they took a real beating from mortars and rockets.

After leaving 'Mole City', we flew along the border and saw a PBR going up the river. We followed until it pulled up to a small island. We circled and landed, obviously in Cambodia. I shut down while the General got out and conferred with the troops on the PBR who turned out to be a Seal Team. After about an hour, I saw him returning to the aircraft, but he did not motion to crank up, so I stayed outside the aircraft, near the crew chief's M-60, nervous about our position and being there so long.

Then came the big surprise. The Seal Team was going 'Cong hunting' that night, and the General wanted to go, 'right down his alley,' he said, just the excitement he had been looking for. He briefed me to come back at 08:00 the next morning and pick

him up, and whatever I did, do not let the C.G. know where he was. He stayed in a friendly village to improve relations with the Province Chief.

Great. How many years do you get in Leavenworth for losing a General? Answers were racing through my mind if he didn't return: Gee sir, he fell out of the aircraft! Gee sir, he was kidnapped by aliens! Gee sir, he was offered as a sacrifice! Gee sir, he caught a ride on Santa's sleigh! Gee sir, he got amnesia and could not find his way back to the aircraft.

After returning to Cu Chi, thank God no one asked where was the General. After a sleepless night, morning finally came and I made my way back to that lone island. What if no one was there? What if the PBR was not there? Should I proceed to look for him?

The prayers I had were all answered when I saw him standing there, looking none the worse for his adventure. He did not say much about his night of glory except that Christmas was now complete.

Merry Christmas to all.

Captain Chester Buchanan (Buck), Little Bear 25.

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One Very Interesting Year ~

I served with Co. A/501st Aviation Company from April 1965 to April 1966 which was, without a doubt, the most memorable year of my life, including up to the present. For reference, I am now 82 years old.

It is necessary to provide a bit about my history prior to entering active duty in the Army in 1964. My entry to military aviation occurred as an aviation cadet in the Air Force. My first assignment after getting my wings was in the Air Defense Command flying the F86 D and the F 101 Voodoo. We flew training missions in the prevailing weather conditions day and night routinely. All missions ended with a formation recovery, thus I was quite proficient in formation flying.

My two assignments in the Air Force offered no opportunity for a reasonable social life, so I left active duty. I transferred to an Army National Guard Aviation Company and Flew the L 19 for a while. From there I returned to active duty and was assigned to Fort Bragg and the 82nd Airborne Division. Helicopter transition occurred in 1964. In April 1965, I deployed to Vietnam with A of the 82nd Airborne.

With the DERO swap, there I was, a Rattler.

I was assigned to Duke Schwim's platoon, and CW4 Shel Foles was my mentor. I was UH-1 qualified, but I had never flown one with a full load. That changed immediately as Shel guided me through the transition. One morning we departed the Snake pit with a bird's eye view of the mortar attack on the Air Force flight line. That was my introduction to incoming fire. I became competent as a Huey pilot, and I flew as Duke's copilot on most of the combat assault missions.

One fine day in June, the company was assigned to airlift the 173rd Air borne brigade to a location north of Bien Hoa. I was flying with WO1 Dunn as copilot. This was his first combat assault. On short final to the LZ, an AK 47 round came through the nose of the Huey. It cut a path through the glare shield, entering my flight helmet at the center rivet location of the visor slide. My visor was down and the round was fragmenting so my visor was peppered with the equivalent of bird shot. The bits of copper and visor material caused quite a bit of bleeding from my forehead. The core of the round exited at the top of my helmet and stopped in the roof of the Huey. The top of the

helmet disintegrated. At that point I had no idea of what had happened. All I knew was my head had snapped back (just like J.F.K.'s had), but there was no pain. I told Dunn to take the controls, the look on his face was one to remember as blood was dripping off my chin. I had to take the controls back to off-load the troops in the LZ. Once the flight was airborne, I told lead what had happened. We returned to the snake pit to check the aircraft for further damage. The crew chief gave me the bullet core. I still have it.

The flight surgeon sterilized a scrub brush to remove as much of "the stuff" as possible. I returned to flight status about a week later. For at least 20-years a bit of copper or visor material would appear on my forehead. Yes, I have a hard head. Why do you ask?

About the end of July, give or take, Major Henderson called a meeting of the two platoon leaders and me. The current operations officer was at the end of his tour. Since they were senior to me by two years one of them had to take over as operations officer. Both wanted to remain as platoon leaders, thus I became the operations officer. The boss agreed with the stipulation that they had to consider me as equal in standing: he did not want any complaints regarding my decisions. All three of us got along quite well, so that was not a problem.

The next four months or so were most enjoyable. We were doing three or four combat assaults a week if memory serves, and the support missions were plentiful. It was a seven-day a week job from dawn to dusk or later, but I had no complaints. Word got out that a junior Captain had the operations slot and many "visitors" flew in and requested transportation to company headquarters. They left without so much as a thank you. I flew the lead aircraft on combat assaults with both platoon leaders. We even got a couple of compliments on our formations from the C & C aircraft.

Time does move on and new platoon leaders arrived as well as a new company commander, Major "Jug" Haid. Not long after, a Captain arrived who was senior to me. He took over operations and I reverted to assistant platoon leader. I did continue to fly the lead ship on combat assaults with some regularity though.

Sometime in January, I learned through legal letters that my marriage had gone off the rails, so to speak. I had to take an emergency leave to salvage my credit rating among other things. No need to go into detail about that. All I can say is the climate difference is considerable between Vietnam and Ft. Bragg at that time of year.

February 20, 1966: the day two of our Hueys collided in a very dusty pick up zone, ending the lives of one pilot and one crew member. The mission was a six aircraft transfer of troops to another location. The accident occurred midafternoon when the last two aircraft were taking off.

"Jug" appointed me as president of the accident board with other company pilots as members. None of us had served on prior boards, but no matter, just go do it. A folder from battalion provided the format: Move out.

We went to the site, photographed the wreckage, and established security for the night. The next day three members were tasked with interviewing the survivors. The rest of us returned to the site. We had our challenge at hand. Both aircraft had burned essentially to floor level, nothing remained but piles of ash and unidentifiable metal.

The aircraft sat at an odd angle to each other. The rear pilot seat armor of one aircraft was still semi attached to the seat frame and had been seriously damaged. We all stood there and scratched our collective heads. Nothing gave the slightest clue of what had happened. Interviews with all the occupants of the helicopters told us nothing, as all were shielding their eyes from the thick dust that filled the interiors of both helicopters. We spent quite a bit of time looking for any clue with no luck.

After a quick break I returned to the damaged seat mentioned above. This time something caught my eye. It was black but had a smooth shape viewed from the top. It was a .45 caliber pistol holster with a pistol in it. The weapon was bent down about 5 degrees in front of the trigger guard. The weapon had been issued to the deceased pilot who was flying the sixth aircraft.

From this evidence we were able to reconstruct the scenario. We determined that number six aircraft overtook number five aircraft at a slightly higher altitude and to number five's right. The advancing rotor blade of number five entered the cabin area of

number six thus causing the damage to the seat armor and the pistol. The resulting chaos can't really be imagined.

When one considers that a more unsuitable PZ area would be hard to find, and none of the pilots had called for individual take offs that would have provided a safe zone for the next aircraft to proceed, the board was faced with a diplomatic issue. The injuries and fatalities made things worse.

With photos and diagrams, we presented our findings in the report. With regard to the injuries and fatalities, the phrase "died/ injured, not as a result of hostile action" was submitted. I held my breath for a week or so, but the report apparently moved on without further ado. Whew.

Several weeks later I was assigned to fly the number six position in a six-ship lift to relocate some troops. A newly assigned Captain was the co-pilot. I think this was his first exposure to Vietnam. At the briefing a Special Forces E-6 showed up with a tactical radio and a rope ladder. He said several ARVN Special Forces might need to be extracted from an area not too far from the flight route. CPT dummy, me, said he could ride with us.

We completed the lift and the Sgt. said they needed extraction. The location was about 15 miles or so to the northwest of our position. We parted company with the flight and observed a squall line at a right angle to the flight route. Too high to fly over and too long to go around, so we had to fly through it. I told the crew to get in from the open doors and we spent about 10 minutes on the gages.

We arrived overhead to find a high hill with a fairly-level area about half-way up the slope. The level area was filled with dead trees about 15 feet high, thus the need for the ladder. Much taller trees surrounded the area, and a stream bed went downhill from our location.

We were then told a large group of V.C. was on the way up, thus time was of the essence. I told the crew chief to help keep the tail rotor clear of the trees. Once we chose to use my left/right rather than his, up came the passengers. Naturally, they all wanted to be first, so the Sgt. had to create some order with the radio. In short order they were all on board. If you have never experienced hovering with people climbing a rope ladder, you just haven't lived.

All on board, I added a little collective and

observed a small decrease in rotor rpm. Dead calm wind condition. Well sir, now what? That stream bed was the only option. I pedal-turned toward the gap in the trees and lowered the nose a bit. We accelerated slowly, I don't recall a single word over the intercom, but translational lift occurred and we could now climb. We cleared the gap in the trees, not a minute had passed when it seemed every popcorn machine in Vietnam was turned on. Of course, there were AK 47s down below. A hasty turn toward Bien Hoa was made. I can say the Sgt couldn't be happier, but I have no idea if he was aware of just what a large puddle of trouble we had just been in. He did keep patting or pounding me on my back every so often though. When I looked back at the passengers, I saw a group of smiling native faces nodding at me giving me a thumbs up.

That night I didn't sleep too well. Company operations had no idea we were enroute on the secondary mission. We had no contact with operations, so there was no back up, as in gun ship support, rescue aircraft, etc. etc. etc. I don't know if they even had the coordinates of the pickup site. We arrived at the snake pit, shut down and went to the villa. Ho hum, just another ash and trash mission. I have no recollection of the young Captain who was on that flight. For all I know he might have turned in his wings the next morning.

This wraps up the year. I have experienced other interesting flying events in both fixed wing and rotary wing during the following 25 years or so, but 1965-1966 tops them all.

*By Robert Thompson, LTC Ret. USA,
Life Member*

~ LOOKING FOR ~

My name is Andy Wilson. I am trying to track down a pilot who used to fly helicopters into the "hottest" LZs according to my dad and would do anything to get the soldiers out of the hot areas when they needed it. He called himself "Captain America." Could you please send a message out to the members of the organization and ask them if any of them know or are "Captain America?" He would have flown in Vietnam in 1970. My dad was with the 1st Air Cavalry during that year and was working in and around Cambodia. Any help you could give me on this would be much appreciated.

Thanks in advance for your time.

Andy Wilson docwilson77@yahoo.com
928-246-5907

Vietnam in December 1967.

He passed away in 1996 when she was only 13 years old, so she didn't get to know a lot about his time in the military, and in Vietnam but would so much like to hear about his military service. On behalf of Amanda. My contact information is copterpilotlck@gmail.com. Please title the subject Amanda/CO Lee.

Thank you.

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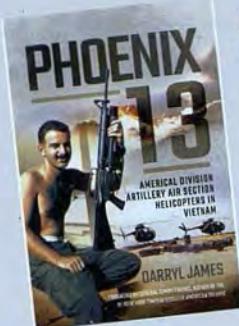
I am a lifetime member, Lee Komich. The daughter of Herman Cleveland Castle is looking for anyone who can inform her about her father's time in the military.

He was a helicopter pilot in the Rattlers and Firebirds of Company A, 501st Aviation Battalion, 71st Assault Helicopter after graduation from flight school at Fort Walters/Fort Rucker in November of 1967 and went to

~ BOOK REVIEWS ~



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



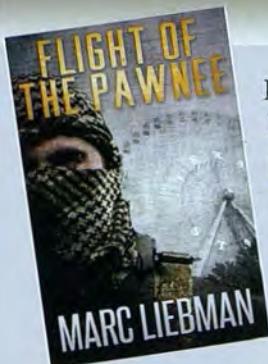
Review of PHOENIX 13,
by Darryl James, published
by Casemate Publishers
1950 Lawrence Road,
Havertown PA 19083, (610)
853-9131 ISBN 978 1 52675
942 9, 169 pages (illustrated), hardcover \$29.95

Darryl James did in *Phoenix 13* what is so very important for those of us who are Vietnam veterans, i.e. write a memoir of his experience during the war. The title -*Phoenix 13* - was the call sign of one of the helicopters he flew for the American Division's Artillery Air Section in 1968 and 1969.

For most of his year in country, James flew the Hiller H-23, a helicopter familiar to Army Aviators of that era. Readers will easily relate to

the stories. For example, his H-23 was attacked by a B-1RD, a.k.a. a bird that smashed through the windscreen and coated the priest who was his passenger with feathers and bird goo. In the Navy, carrying chaplains from ship to ship are called holy helo missions and James' case, God was looking out for both of them. The bird did major damage to the helo but luckily no one was hurt and James landed safely. Another time, he returned to base with the tail pylon full of bullet holes. He had no idea he'd been shot at much less being hit. There is also a humorous, non-aviation story about a midnight requisition, something probably every reader of *The Aviator* has done. *Phoenix 13* is a very enjoyable read that those of who were there will thoroughly enjoy and those who weren't will learn more about what we did in Vietnam.

Aviator Staff Book Review – Tom Kirk



Review of Flight of the Pawnee, by Marc Liebman, published by Crossroad Press, 141 Brayden Drive, Hertford, NC. 27944, ISBN: 9781952979729, \$17.99 paper copy eBook - \$4.99.

Flight of the Pawnee is a contemporary intelligence/terrorism novel and both a story as well as a cautionary tale. Derek Almer, a Naval Reserve Helicopter pilot is contracting with the CIA, when he sees some disparate pieces of a puzzle. The US intelligence arms fail to see the same "dots" Derek is connecting. Of course, he knows historically, this type failure has resulted in notably Pearl

Harbor and the World Trade Tower tragedies. The apparent coalition of terrorists, a Mexican drug cartel and a powerful street gang sets Derek on a self-assigned mission to thwart an event which could be more horrific than the precedents.

Once the action starts, it is non-stop. Even Derek's fiancée becomes part of an ad hoc team hoping to avert tragedy. The desperate race against time plays out in multiple locations and features a small, but talented and determined team. Derek's fears finally gain some traction – but is it too late? The suspense starts early and continues until the final pages. As is the case in Marc's prior work, the characters and scenarios are unique. The only aspect making this a fictional account is the sobering thought it has yet to be attempted (to our knowledge). *Flight of the Pawnee* is a great read.

This Will Never End!

All names, including Otto's, are fictitious.

Upon arriving in Vietnam during the 1968 TET offensive I was assigned to an Assault Helicopter Company. When I reported for duty the commander explained his unit was comprised of two lift platoons and one gunship platoon. He asked, "What platoon would you like to choose?" "Well sir, I graduated from Fort Rucker's gun school. So, the gun platoon, I suppose." "Oh no, I don't assign anyone to guns with less than three months in-country." I said to myself, "If I didn't have a choice why did you ask me?"

The Major peered out the quonset hut window. "Do you see that Huey idling on the tarmac?" "Yes, Sir." "You need an in-country orientation. Leave your gear and get on board." I double-timed to the aircraft. While climbing into the right seat of the B model Huey the crew chief handed me a headset. After the obligatory introductions we pulled pitch and joined a flight of slicks and two Charlie model gunships circling overhead.

This did not resemble any in-country orientation I could imagine. I know this is my first trip to a war zone, but this has all the earmarks of a combat assault. Still, I'm not worried because I'm sitting there in fatigues; no gloves, no flight helmet, no chicken plate, no gun, and no water. What could possibly go wrong? We inserted two loads of ARVN infantry then shut down in the staging area. Most crews went to sleep. Five hours later some guy by the lead aircraft made circles with his hand above his head. I woke the AC, Mr. Mute, "I think they want us to crank up."

After dropping off the ARVNs we headed home. Mr. Mute hadn't spoken to me since our introductions that morning. When our airfield came into view he suddenly said over the intercom, "That completes your in-country orientation."

"Okay," I replied. Silently, I thought, "Let me get this orientation straight. I follow the helicopters in front of me. I pick up the troops and I drop off the troops. Jeez, I hope I don't forget anything."

During this time, our compound was basically under siege. Besides the almost nightly shelling there were snipers positioned at each end of the runway. We developed a pre-dawn routine. Under the cover of darkness all

crews would run, dodge or crawl to their assigned aircraft. There were no pre-flights and no lights. It was just turn and burn, and low level away from the airfield as fast as possible.

Climbing into the darkness one morning I asked my fellow pilot, "I have a question. I'm not a tactical genius, but why do we fly miles and miles to hunt for Charlie when we know where he is? He's surrounding our post and he's shooting at us." The pilot replied, "We can't shoot back. The province chief must grant permission to return fire. He has never done that since I've been here, and I predict he never will." "That's nuts!" I exclaimed. "Welcome to Vietnam."

CWO Short stopped flying before I joined the unit. He was highly respected. So, when he spoke, I paid attention.

A few days before Short was due to rotate back to the 'world' he pulled me aside and said, "Listen up Newbie. You know we get attacked almost every night. I don't care where you are or what you are doing. When you hear that first round, hit the deck and stay there until it's over. Do not try to make it to the bunker under any circumstances. Do you understand?" "Yes sir."

A couple of nights later we got hit with rockets and mortars again. I did exactly as instructed and hugged the ground until it was over. I went outside to assess the damage and help in any way I could. About 20 yards from my hooch a small crowd was gathered around what looked like a body on the ground. I asked, "What happened?" "It's Mr. Short. He's dead. He tried to run to the bunker and a piece of shrapnel cut his head off." I thought, "We're all gonna die."

Our platoon had a mascot, a live otter, named Otto. Someone had cut a 55-gallon drum down 75% and placed it in the officers' shower. It was always full of water. Otto would jump into the drum. He would drive under water and swim round and round as fast as he could. Lying on the floor was a water hose. Otto would surface and stick his head above the tub and someone would spray him in the face. He would dive under water again, swim around and around, stop, stick his head up and get sprayed. Otto never tired of this game. With his

little wet head and sad eyes peeking over the rim he was always begging you not to quit playing.

Not only was Otto the best swimmer on base he was the biggest drunk. Our platoon had a lounge and Otto wasn't fussy when it came to alcohol. He would jump onto your lap and help you finish whatever you were drinking. After he got totally inebriated, Otto would stagger to the nearest corner and pass out — in true aviator fashion.

We received a new platoon leader, Captain Butcher. I never met him, or even laid eyes on him. While getting settled he made multiple trips in and out of his quarters. On one of those trips the Captain left his hooch door open. Otto had full reign of our AO. He was never in a cage nor on a leash. When Otto happened upon the open door, he went inside and made himself at home. Butcher returned and apparently did not approve of the uninvited guest. He snatched the otter by the tail and repeatedly slammed Otto's head into the concrete until he was dead. Captain Butcher threw the lifeless body out into the common area. WO Animal was the unofficial owner of Otto. I do not know how he achieved this distinction, but nobody disputed it. When Animal heard what happened he went looking for CPT Butcher and he found him. I did not witness the fight but, was told he beat Butcher senseless and it took three guys to pull him off. The Captain was immediately medevaced off the base and never returned. No charges were filed against Mr. Animal and the incident was never mentioned again.

TET finally ended. We still suffered some losses in the field; but things got a lot quieter around our base camp. Then an extraordinary event happened. A flight school classmate of mine joined our platoon. WO Pappy's Vietnam tour was delayed a few months because he attended AMOC. I was so excited to see him again.

Mr. Pappy was an E-7 when he volunteered for flight school. When our class transitioned from Fort Wolters to Rucker, he moved his family into an off-post house trailer. A few weeks before graduation he invited me to a Sunday cook out at his house. I felt extremely privileged after learning I was the only one he had invited. He and his family could not have been more gracious and hospitable. It was the best day I had since joining the Army.

I helped Pappy get settled and get familiarized with our base. Afterward, we meandered to the Officers' Club. As

luck would have it there was a live band that night. It was the first live show I saw in Vietnam. Some may call it entertainment; I didn't understand one word. Later, we said our, "Goodnights. See you tomorrow." Drifting off to sleep I felt things were looking up. I finally had a buddy to share this nightmare. As soon as I landed the next day, I went looking for Pappy. He wasn't in his room. I checked the lounge - no Pappy. I approached a couple of guys seated at a nearby table. "Have you seen Pappy?" "Pappy who?" one answered. "The new guy. He came in yesterday. You know the old guy." "Oh, that guy. He's dead." "What the hell do you mean dead? He didn't go anywhere."

"He had a check ride this morning. They were doing low-level touch and goes. When your friend started to turn on final the main rotor blade caught a tree. The helicopter slammed into the ground and burst into flames. It was a miracle the IP got out. What's-his-name was trapped and was burned alive."

*As I turned to leave, I muttered to no one in particular,
"This will never F&%ing end!"*

Bob Eustice 67-23B

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FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS

"Fasten your seatbelts" emanated from the overhead speakers, "we are on final descent to Saigon." I thought to myself, "now that is an appropriate comment as you enter a war zone." The plane rolled to a stop, the doors opened, and the cabin filled with an atmosphere I was not familiar with. It was warm, muggy and salty with an underlying odor I would equate to an outdoor privy. I had been sardined into a tin can with wings for the past 24 hours, so it was a pleasure to stretch my legs as we disembarked the plane. Walking across the tarmac, sweating and looking through the hazy air at this new country, I was expecting bullets to fly at any moment. A little queasy and uneasy but still there was excitement at finally actually being in this "Walter Cronkite 5 o'clock news" story. I was 30 hours away from anyone I had ever known. And knew I would not see my son or pregnant wife for a year.

"It's not the first time you have been alone, I told myself, it will be a new life experience you have been training for over the last 1-1/2 years." We were transported to Army headquarters and delivered to temporary billets, which were large tents with four-foot wood sidewalls and wood floors. Hot, miserable, with no air-conditioning and no water, just cots and not bulletproof. They looked like the church-camp tent structure we went to in the summer in Montana, just bigger. We grabbed the first available bunk and settled in, waiting to be called to go the next leg. The cadre then briefed us on emergency procedures for incoming shells and showed us where the sandbag bunkers were situated. We knew this would be temporary and besides we aren't in the jungle!

Most of the soldiers were not assigned to any specific unit prior to arrival and were anxiously waiting to find out where they would be going. I had orders, so I was just waiting for a ride to my unit. It took two days to get a plane ride out of Saigon, which surprised me, but long enough for me to get a little

more uneasy as all the discussion focused on avoiding going to Pleiku and especially not to the 57th AHC as it was the only place or company experiencing combat in Vietnam. I had been given orders at Ft Rucker for the 2/17th Cav in Pleiku but had no idea where that was. I thought, "why didn't I look at a map of Vietnam so I would know where I was going to be, God willing, for a year?" Well, my DOD orders assigned me to Pleiku but on the good side I was assigned to the 2/17 Cav unit and not the 57th.

Over the next three days, I got an aerial tour of Vietnam. First, we went to Cam Ranh Bay, spent a day, then a day at Tuy Hoa and finally over the infamous Mang Yang Pass to Pleiku. Camp Holloway actually, where a Warrant Officer named Charlie and I arrived at 5:00 in the afternoon and found it was too late to sign into the battalion headquarters. They closed up for business. Huhh? I thought this was a war zone, 24x7. What now? Where do I sleep? eat? Am I going to be AWOL in a combat zone?

The Battalion clerk led us to a huge mound of sandbags, then through a network of sandbag voids to some sandbag spaces with sandbag benches to spread a sleeping bag, and said "come back to headquarters in the morning and we'll sign you in." Now, we had been flying in a military Chinook and mind you, they don't have stewardesses or serve meals like the airlines do and we didn't know where or even if there was an "O" Club that we could get a meal. The mess hall had closed also. We were not liking this combat experience very much. I pondered these sandbag billets and considered that this is pretty much what my worst nightmares were and figured this must be why you don't want to go to Pleiku. I wasn't looking forward to a year in sandbags.

Charlie and I started visiting and exchanging information about each other. He was from Dallas and wanted to go back to live his life on welfare. I thought he was making light of the situation, but he

went on about being second generation welfare family and felt he needed to follow in his parents' footsteps. I started kind of liking him and we became pretty good friends after that.

We considered our plight. In addition to no meals and since we hadn't signed into our company yet, we didn't have any combat gear which meant we didn't have sleeping bags, so it looked like we were just going to sleep in our clothes.

About an hour passed and we heard these footsteps coming down a sandbag corridor someone yelling, "where are the new pilots?" We responded, "over here" and a Major W. showed up and said, I'm your new Commanding Officer, come with me and we'll put you up in your permanent quarters, get you some blankets and food. Food and not spending the night in these sandbags sounded good to us, never thinking about asking him which unit he was from. We grabbed our bags and followed him out. I don't think either of us could have found our way out of that maze of sandbags by ourselves anyway. The Major then asked which unit we were assigned to and we said the Cav. He said, "I'll help you get signed in first thing in the morning." "Yes, Sir."

When we got to the Billets, we found a series of wooden structures above ground that had some appearance of civilization. Separate rooms with a door and a window, a wooden floor with a regular army bed, a closet and electricity. Albeit they looked like they were constructed out of ammo boxes. This is better, not as good as the ones in Cam Ranh Bay or Bien Hoa, but a far cry above sandbags.

In the morning, the Major escorted us to Battalion headquarters and asked us to wait for him while he talked with the Battalion commander. He proceeded into the Colonel's office for about 15 minutes. When he returned, he said, "You are now assigned to the 57th Assault Helicopter Company." Say what? My orders are for the Cav." He responded, "you've been transferred to my unit. We need helicopter pilots and haven't had any replacement pilots for six months. You are now Gladiators."

We had been "shanghaied" into the 57th. My worst nightmare comes true. I hoped that God knew what he was doing.

I was scheduled for my in-country check-ride flight the next morning (day 2) with Captain L. The company had only one instructor pilot and an IP was required to be the pilot for a General, so my orientation flight would be combined with the "General's" mission. But not to worry, it was the safest mission the company had, since the General was not allowed to fly into actual combat. He was too valuable to be exposed to potential combat injury. At least that is what the IP told me.

Rising at 05:30 I did my daily three S's, donned my flight suit for the first time since receiving my wings at Ft Rucker AL, grabbed some breakfast and coffee at the mess hall and headed for the flight line at 7:00 with my combat gear, helmet, revolver and chicken plate where I met Cpt L. I, the Peter-Pilot, was responsible for the pre-flight of the ship while being observed by the Company IP to determine my capability. I was eager to fly this "H" model, it was bigger and more powerful than the "B" models I had flown during training, but the parts were all the same. I met the crew chief and door gunner and began the preflight inspection of this UH-1H nicknamed "Slick", in full combat dress for the first time. Man, it looked just like the one from Flight School except it had two mounted 60 mm machine guns and could haul four more people. No additional armor plating, same old thin aluminum skin and Plexiglas windows, nothing to stop a projectile of any size. Scary!!

The aircraft was parked between two short five-foot walls of sandbags encapsulated with PSP metal, called revetments, for protection against flying debris from bullets and exploding objects, like grenades and mortars etc. Every so often, the IP would give me some advice as to what to look for that was different for a combat scenario than was taught at flight school. One such item was to remove the fuel cap and see if a grenade had been placed in

the filler tube. Captain L. explained that the NVA-Charlie would sneak to the aircraft at night and put grenades in the opening which would explode somewhere during the flight, destroying the helicopter and crew. Then we climbed in and strapped the seat belts around our body and chicken plate and went through the pre-flight checklist.

Starting the engine was the job of the Peter Pilot since the idle escape button was on his collective. Noticing the starter was not fully rolled off but was at the start position just below the idle lock, I started the turbine. When the gauges were stable at idle, I increased the engine to operating speed at 6600 RPM. We were ready for flight in Vietnam. Reality was beginning to set in. Is this when I start counting my 17 Day life expectancy?

CPT Larsen carefully lifted the AC from the revetment and quietly explained that rotor wash inside the revetment could cause the AC to jitter around and hit the walls, so it was the experienced pilot's job to move it out. It was good to be flying again; it had been 45 days since I last flew. Then we were off climbing above Vietnam over Pleiku City seeing it from the air for the first time with such an unlimited view. It wasn't a huge city but seemed to be a little busy. I wondered if the people down there were friendly or VC and how you could tell them apart. The only vehicles were the three-wheeled Lambretta 5000 motor-scooter bus and army vehicles. The Vietnamese did not have very many cars.

As we flew, I was given a quick aerial view introduction to II Corps by Captain L. It was a valley between mountain ranges to the east, north, and west with flat land to the south and southwest. A lot of scrub trees, to the immediate west, but none of the triple-canopy stuff I had heard so much about. Finally, farmlands to the south and around the city itself. Just North of Camp Holloway was Pleiku Air Force base and then a Lake called Ben Het. We had to be at the II Corps General's Pad by 08:20 so we would be ready if he wanted to go somewhere. Nestled between Pleiku Air force Base and Pleiku was

the II Corps headquarters. As we approached, I noticed the landing pad was enclosed by a four-foot wire fence but didn't have any other protection, located about 50 yards from this long, two story World War II looking building with a central porch. I guess I expected walled compounds since this was a combat zone, at least Concertina wire. I couldn't see any military protection, not even a guard post at the entrance. CPT L. touched down on the PSP landing pad and with that we were at II Corps headquarters.

I was shown how we would always prepare the ship for emergency take off after shut-down, rolling the throttle to the idle spot and then just below the shutdown release with everything set for start mode. "Even though we won't need to be in a hurry today," we would always do this whenever we shut the helicopter down. It wasn't windy, but we still tied down the main rotor; the crew chief and door gunner would remain with the aircraft. CPT L. and I then went up to II Corps headquarters and he sent me to get some coffee while he checked in with the General's Aide to see if he had a mission planned today. The coffee room was full of UPI and API reporters standing around next to a bunch of radios and phone lines. As I reached for the coffee, I heard this freight train heading our way, and then it passed overhead. "KABOOM!"

What was that I asked, but no one answered. I stuck my head out the door into the hallway, another freight train went overhead and exploded. "KABOOM!" Several heads were looking up and down the hall and then everyone headed towards the exit. I looked and didn't see CPT L. anywhere. "KABOOM!" Having never experienced anything like this I followed everyone down the hall. As I exited the end of the building I watched as everyone was going inside a single bunker. My Army training always taught me that we shouldn't all go to the same place, so I walked to the front of the building looking for another bunker location. On the front stoop was CPT L. When he saw me, he yelled, "let's get out of here!" That sounded real good to me. Sitting in a

bunker you have no control, you are just a “sitting duck” waiting to be killed. So, we ran to the helicopter to become a flying duck.

We jumped in and I started to put on my helmet while the CPT immediately started the helicopter, I had just gotten my helmet on when he yelled, “You Got It.” I didn’t have my helmet strapped on or seat belt on yet, but I took the controls anyway. Rotor and engine RPM were still increasing, “it’ll fly at 6000,” he yelled over the noise. With that, I started pulling the collective and lifted off the ground while the turbine was just passing through 6000 RPM. (Normal was 6600). The RPM actually began to catch up even though I was increasing the lift. Watch the fence I was thinking, be smooth as extra movement of the rotor would lose lift and you don’t have much of that at this RPM and you’ll hit the fence. This was not flight school anymore and I was too excited to be nervous. Just as we approached the fence the helicopter “fishtailed” like I had shoved the pedal dramatically to the right or left, this caused us to settle slightly but by then I had RPM and was over the fence. Cpt L. yelled, at the same time as I yelled, “what did you do?” By then he had his helmet on and was buckled in his seat belt, so he took the controls. I think he was ready to flunk me at that point. I finished strapping in, put on my gloves and fastened my helmet. Once I was settled, he gave me the aircraft back. The idea of flying in the same skies as rockets wasn’t my kind of fun but seemed a little safer than sitting there waiting for one to find me on the ground.

“What were those things,” I asked. “One Deuce-Deuces,” (meaning 122 mm Rockets) he replied. They are like bottle rockets he explained, they set them up on tripods, aim them in the general direction, light the fuses and run. We flew around looking for the place of origin, but didn’t see any new smoke or rocket trails. After a little while, I asked if I could smoke a cigarette, stating, “I’m not used to this s--t.” There was laughter amongst the crew and then they said, “neither are we, you never get used to it.” After

20 minutes or so, we contacted HQ and they indicated the rocket attack had stopped, so it was safe to return. We flew back to II Corps and landed on the same pad. It was then we understood the sudden twisting of the helicopter at takeoff. A rocket landed about 20 feet from the pad as we were leaving. A hole about five-foot-deep and 10 foot across was now just to the right side of the pad area. About two seconds slower and we would have been toast. CPT Larson let me off the hook for bad control on takeoff. As we walked to the front of II Corps, we noticed all the glass on the east end was broken and shattered, and another brand-new hole about 10 feet from the corner where I stood just before running to the helicopter to leave. Had that rocket landed a few minutes earlier, I would have been toast.

Well, the General decided to stay on post the rest of the day, so after a few uneventful hours of sitting around, they released us to go back to base. One autorotation later and a shot at putting the H-model in the revetment, I had successfully completed my in-country check ride and as a bonus I had my own “War Story.”

This was the safest mission in II Corps? I couldn’t imagine being lucky enough to get out of Vietnam alive at this rate. Day One was over. But the war stories weren’t!

God showed me He knew what he was doing. Twice in one flight.

by Duane Oberquell

THIS COULD BE WHERE YOUR STORY STARTS!

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor

Reading Doug Moore's article about defoliation measures in RVN brought back memories. It was not only the USAF who flew that type mission. Operation "Shu Fly" was a Marine element located at Danang whose purpose was to support the ARVN throughout the I Corps area. In the first part of 1963, HMM-261, an H-34 squadron, was its main component. As a pilot of that squadron, I flew at least one mission in an H-34 rigged up with a spray rig, inside the DMZ.

M.V. Statzer COL USMC Ret.

Originally written years earlier, in this version, Rick Roll has appended the piece with an update about reuniting with his rescuer, in 2007. Ed.

Army Pilot Reunites with Navy Pilot who rescued him in Vietnam!

As a US Army 1st Lt. I flew an OH-23G for John Paul Vann, the protagonist of Neil Sheehan's "A Bright Shining Lie," for the last six mos. of my tour; 7/67-12/67. Prior to flying for Vann, I had flown "Charlie" model gunships & Raven scouts for "D" Troop 3/5th Cav.

In Oct. of 67, Vann sent me on a highly classified mission to Can Tho, deep in the Mekong river delta, to pick-up a South Vietnamese Army Col. & fly him to Saigon. Enroute to Saigon, right after crossing the Song River and less than a minute after I tuned to the Dong Tam firebase frequency, the engine of my Raven failed catastrophically. I made a successful "0" groundspeed autorotation to the center of a rice paddy that was submerged under 1' of H2O. We ended up, sitting dry as a bone, in the middle of the paddy. All we had for personal protection were a half dozen HE grenades and a 9mm Swedish K submachine gun. During the very rapid autorotative descent I recall making a 180 degree turn & checking my airspeed for 60mph but I remember nothing about the flare & pitch pull; a credit to my flight school training. I had broadcast multiple "May Days" on the way down & in less than 10 minutes, a solo US Navy "Seawolf" UH-1B "gunship" shot an approach to our

right-hand side to pick us up. After I pulled my radios, I don't think my boots got wet as I raced across the rice stalks. The Seawolf flew us back to Dong Tam, a US Army Col. grabbed my RVN Col., & I hitched a ride on an Army Caribou back to my base at Bear Cat.

Ever since that day I have had a deep need to find and thank that anonymous pilot & his crew. In 1999, better late than never, I posted a message on the Seawolf Association's website in an attempt to locate my savior.

Eight years later, much to my great surprise and pleasure, on 4/20/07 I received a letter from Commander Mike Stock, Seawolf 62, informing me that he was the pilot who had picked me up on 10/17/67. I called him immediately and talked to his wife, Barbara, and learned that he was on a corporate flying trip and would return on 4/22. I then asked her what was Mike's favorite "adult" beverage and she told me he enjoyed Chardonnay wine. After hanging up with Barbara I arranged to have a twelve-bottle case of Kendall Jackson's finest "Vintage Reserve" Chardonnay FedExed to the Stock residence in Traverse City, MI.

I called Mike on the 22nd and, as you might imagine, we had a great conversation. He's now retired from the Navy and, after flying multiple aircraft, helos & fixed-wing, literally all over the world, has settled in MI. He flies DeHavilland Beavers on floats in Alaska during the summers; a real "pilot's pilot" to be sure!

During this 1st conversation I learned, for the very first time, the details of Mike's side of this event. He was alone in his Navy UH-1B at Dong Tam (approx. 10 miles east of my location) hovering a short distance to refuel, when he heard my radio transmission, and knowing that I was going down in "very nasty Viet Cong territory," pulled pitch and went searching for me; just himself & his crew chief. His 7.62mm pylon mounted M-60s were still wrapped in their protective canvas coverings. He worried enroute, that the covers might fly off and hit his main or tail rotors but he knew he had to get to me and my passenger very quickly. He saw my flare, I had forgotten I had even fired one, and made the pick-up.

On his way in, he told me he saw multiple armed VC

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

moving towards my location along the paddy dikes; some within 100 meters of my position. After dropping us off at Dong Tam, he manned his helo with the rest of his crew, teamed up with two Army gunships, and headed back to the paddy to fend off the VC until an extraction team was dropped in to secure the area and pick-up my chopper. While the extraction crew was doing its work, it was mortared by the VC but neither the extraction team nor the Army platoon securing the area were hit; much to my relief.

Hearing this narrative for the first time, 40 years later, made my skin crawl. No other aircraft had responded to my "May Day" so if Mike had not been on frequency at that time, I probably would not be alive to tell this story today; I owe him my life. Fittingly, Mike's wife Barbara had told me that he had been awarded the Silver Star for his actions in rescuing me and in assisting with the extraction of my Raven while under fire. I wish I had pinned it on his chest!

To bring this story full circle, Mike & Barbara visited

us in Wyoming, DE in April of 2008. Shaking his hand for the second time, the first was through his cockpit window in 1967, was a very special moment for me and my family. Before the Stocks arrived, my eldest son Adam asked me; "—what do I say to a person who, were it not for his heroism, I would not even exist?" My wife Pat & I threw a big reunion barbecue for the Stocks and after the tables were cleared, Mike presented me with his framed "Seawolf Drinking Flag" that he had signed; "We share a bond that few will ever know!" Mike had carried this flag with him everywhere since he left Vietnam in 1968.

Mike and I correspond regularly and we plan to visit the Stocks in IN next spring. As a side note, the Stock's youngest child, Julie, is a US Army Captain and just got back from her second tour in Iraq.

H.H. (Rick) Roll
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A WOC GOES TO LEAVENWORTH

(A Lifetime Subscriber's Contribution)

December 1968-June 1969:

A little black door the size of a shoe box with hinges on the bottom slams open with a huge banging noise as it bounces against a solid steel door. The shock waves startle the filthy, unshaven prisoner awake. A flood of blinding sunlight fills this windowless 45-square-foot cinder-block cell. Once the eyes adjust there are two bowls sitting on the little black door's ledge. Out of a prisoner-to-prisoner respect, one bowl is filled with the best Iceberg lettuce to be found at the Fort Hood Stockade, and the other is filled with fresh cold water.

As the guard shouts insults, the prisoners in "The Box" know to grab and devour the contents of these two bowls in fear that they will be quickly swept away. When they finish, the prisoners quickly place the empty bowls back on the ledge. In defiance of the rules, two Marlboros are placed on the ledge by the orderly as the bowls are swept away. The little black door loudly closes and darkness returns. The Marlboros are placed under the dirty sheetless mattress for now.

It is the darkness which causes the "thoughts." While painted over a dozen times, the graffiti scratched into the walls by a small pencil display the agony of the previous occupants. Hash marks adorn the walls in a futile attempt to count the days. All three "meals" are the same and all are served during ambient sunlight. Circadian rhythm is lost and is replaced with despair.

How did a patriotic Christian kid end up in a dungeon like this? How long have I been here and when will they let me out? Just days before, I refused to plead guilty at my mandatory 30-day trial review in front of Colonel Williams. His response would be confirmed by the JAG prosecutor and defense attor-

ney, and included in the 66 pages of White House conversations regarding my case and now housed at the Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, CA, that were just released to me by Bud Krogh.

Colonel Williams said:

"I don't give a good goddam if you are guilty or innocent, your court martial cost my department \$15,000 (\$111,119.40 in today's dollars) and someone has to pay."

I was the only one to receive a General Court Martial that must be held at Fort Hood. Special Court Martials could be held at Ft. Wolters with the limited sentence of 6 months at hard labor and Bad Conduct Discharge as a maximum, while a General Court Martial can order a Dishonorable Discharge and sentences up to and including execution. My Article 32 hearing at Ft. Wolters provided no "positive defense" per my JAG attorney's advice, and it may very well have been adjudicated by another defendant's uncle. As a result, the three others charged with much more serious and multiple crimes were found guilty at Wolters but were given suspended sentences. One would receive a Bad Conduct Discharge. My sole charge of knowing about it and not reporting it (Article 134), was given the "Big Show" at Fort Hood. What were the

Ft. Hood jury officers expected to believe? Every bias that I must try to overcome while on a jury: "The guy must be guilty because he would not be here if he were not guilty." I testified that I thought the other defendants were kidding and I did not take their plan seriously and that during their planning stages I had been hospitalized for double pneumonia. Later, I would learn that three jurors wrote letters professing my innocence and that the jury discussion exceeded the actual evidence produced, resulting in my conviction and sentence of one year



at hard labor, but with a return to duty, and no punitive discharge. An exceedingly rare decision.

All I ever wanted to do was fly airplanes, fly helicopters, and someday fly jets. I worked at a small private airport and learned to fly a Cessna 150 at the age of 16. Harry Del Rosso was waiting for me to return from service with my commercial "ticket" and IFR experience. But here I am in a dark, dank, rectangular cell equipped only with a filthy toilet, cement floor, filthy mattress, green blanket, Bible, and a golfer's pencil, but the worst is yet to come.

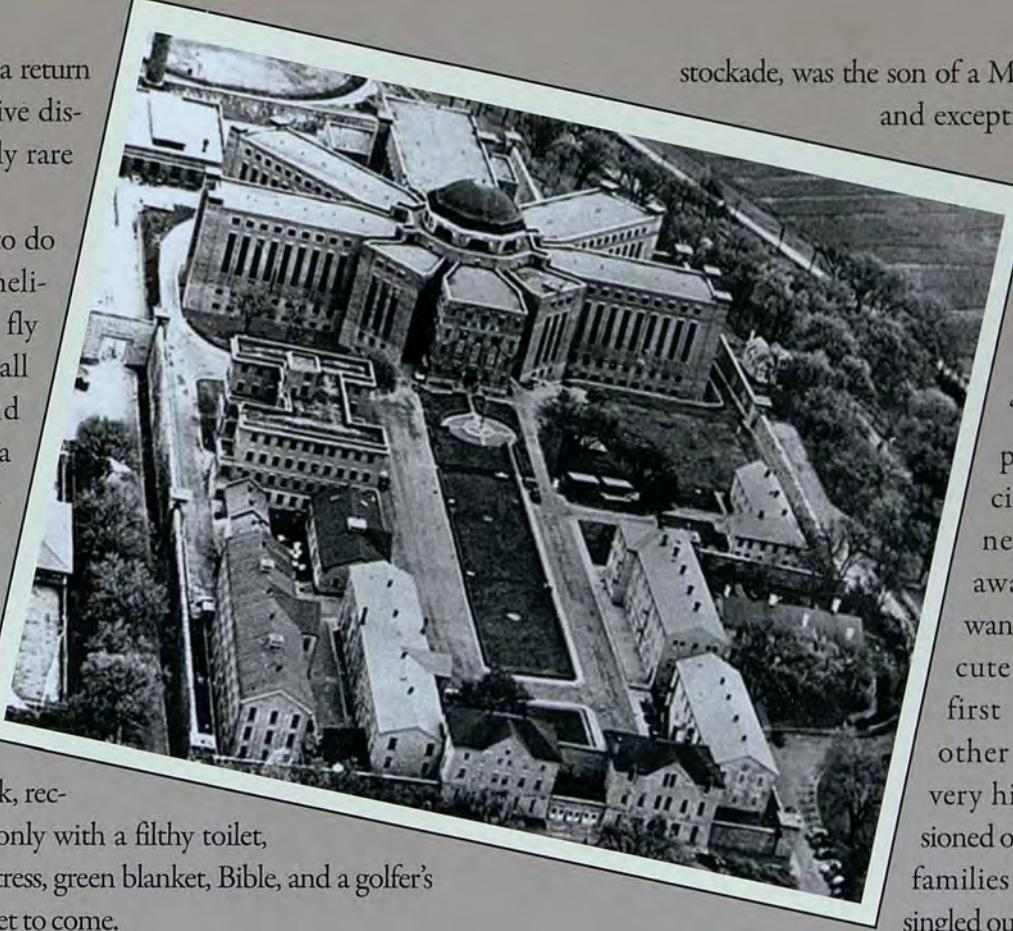
Cell 419, 3rd Wing, Leavenworth Disciplinary Barracks, where I am known only as Prisoner 47779, but also as a despised "officer" by the inmates and guards alike. Here are the worst of the worst. An Alcatraz-like "concrete jungle" of "Wings" which are spokes off a domed ceiling glassed center rotunda. Wings which contain five or six tiers with 20 rows of cells per tier. Nine-by-five-foot cells, with sliding bars, a bunk, toilet/sink, and cabinet. At night, the constant rant of prisoner shouts echoing forever against the walls becomes mind-numbing. Sometimes I can make out their references to me.

I am never safe no matter where I go. I chance it to the library to find books about crusading military defense lawyers like F. Lee Bailey and books that might build my skill set. It is too dangerous to attend the Kansas State University classes offered because even the guards hated me. At 19, with one year of college, I was considered "one of the highest educated enlisted prisoners" at that time and assigned to teach three GED courses including history, English, and math.

The good civilian attorneys seemed to be all former Marines. Luckily, my dad found one who hated the Army, military injustice, and anyone who preyed upon the weak. Make no mistake, apart from my Ft. Wolters Article 32 hearing attorney, my Army attorneys on both sides were the very best, and both sides were on my side. The Fort Hood prosecutor, who drove me in his station wagon without handcuffs or shackles to the

stockade, was the son of a Manhattan DA and exceptionally good.

As my prosecutor drove me to the stockade he said to me: "Tell your parents to get a civilian attorney right away...I never wanted to prosecute you in the first place...The other three have very high commissioned officers in their families so you were singled out."



One year and one week after my general court martial that was held on Friday the 13th of December 1968, on December 19, 1969, I was one of 113, out of over 86,500 courts martial in 1968, to be overturned. The court said one year and one week too late for me:

"The appellant, then a warrant officer candidate, stands convicted of wrongful possession of 4 ounces of marihuana (Sic), in violation of Article 134 of the UCMJ....Upon reviewing the totality of the evidence adduced at the trial on which the government relies, taken together with appellant's testimony and the evidence of his good character, we are not convinced of the appellant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt....The findings of guilty and sentence are set aside and the charge is dismissed."

By the time of my exoneration, I had graduated second in my AIT company and first in my MOS, and I was an E4 grunt in the 3rd platoon, D Troop, 2/17th Cavalry of the 101st Airborne Division. Whoopee-I am now back to Specialist E5, but I want to go back to Wolters and fly. When I asked my C.O. to return me to flight school his response (LTC Blair Craig, a friend of mine to this day who lives in St. Augustine, Florida with his wonderful wife Leslie) said something to the effect that, "we like you and you are a great soldier and we are understaffed as it is," so I asked permission to see the 101st's Inspector General.

The 101st's Inspector General was a "full bird" colonel. He

studied the two-page court order as his jaw dropped while listening intently to my story. At the end he told me he "would look into it and get back to me." Since this was just a few days away from Christmas 1969 at Camp Eagle, he did not call me back into his office until about middle to late January 1970. He told me my story was "the most incredible story of military injustice" that he had ever heard and that I should be proud of how I handled it. He told me something to the effect of, "son, you have ruined some careers and I would not recommend that you return to Texas." His warning was both daunting and disappointing, and I believe I cried alone on my walk back to my rear area compound.

While I was now an E5, no one at headquarters seemed to think that I would ever see the inside of a TH 55 again, but they did run the back-pay paperwork through and for some reason gave me a disability for my incarceration, and my bank account was filled with more money than I had ever witnessed. A few months later, I left Vietnam as a Specialist 5 and was honorably discharged within 14 hours of arriving at Ft. Lewis..

TODAY:

Several of you know me, and my story may shock you. I had the pleasure of interacting with you at the Reno VHPA Convention as the Program Leader of Project Healing Waters and Veterans' First Fly Fishing. We, with world-recognized casting instructors from Trout Unlimited, provided free fly-tying and fly-casting classes throughout the week. I have had many conversations with Marc Liebman, book reviewer, mentor, and author of several extraordinary novels.

In 2002, after purchasing a Vietnam Museum Brick in Mineral Wells, Texas, Jim Messinger (Crane Pilot) took me on a private tour of Fort Wolters. Jim was also there at the Reno reunion, just a few feet away from our fly-tying table, and we had many enjoyable conversations. My living trust will be giving a very sizable amount to the museum upon my death dedicated to the WOC Class of 69-17.

After Jim had driven me around in 2002 and had said goodbye for the day, I drove and walked the grounds of Dempsey and Downing. I drove back to Wolters and was shooed away by the prison guards, our primary helicopter company area now a Texas prison, for staring at my 4th WOC company area and reliving better days. I also returned to the airport to relive that morning of Friday, December 13, 1968 when we boarded a DC-8 (or was it a DC-3?) for Fort Hood believing that I would return after being found not guilty, and even remembering that my childhood dog, "Sparky", would die

during my incarceration and not see me for the last time at Christmas in 1968.

My brick reads: "I will Always Remember the Class of 69-17." While at Fort Jackson in infantry training, I asked my CO for a pass to attend my flight class's graduation which he happily granted. Attending picnics at Stone Mountain, and staying in the Peachtree district of Atlanta, I chatted with classmates. This made me even more melancholy because they had grown so much and were so confident, while I had stagnated and not grown at all.

My brick also represents "The Odd Couple", which others would call us in Vietnam because George Mason graduated at the top of our flight class, and at the ripe age of 20 was piloting Chinooks out of Camp Eagle. We met at the Camp Eagle PX and chatted frequently while getting our haircuts or buying things for our "hooches." When George read my exoneration, he was incredibly happy for me and said, "You finally got your name cleared up." Sadly, I do not need to look up this date because it occurred just four days after my 21st birthday. On May 5, 1970, when the NVA hit his Chinook with a 37 mm round. WO1 George Mason, promoted to CW2 posthumously, and his crew died that day in a fiery hillside crash while taking artillery rounds to a firebase in the Ashau Valley. I am thankful that my platoon was not called out to body bag him as it was our mission to do so. I have awful memories of body bag missions of pilots I knew at Primary. With his loss, and the 11 fine men in my unit during my final 10 days, brought on a "survivor's guilt" that took many years to overcome.

Other flight school graduates that I met in infantry would include my friend Col. Steven Rausch, retired, of Tennessee, a Chinook pilot. We enjoy each other's company, and we spent a day together at the President Jackson's Hermitage House and Presidential Museum. Years ago, he sent me a TH 55 checklist with airport patterns. He coined the phrase, for me at least, "I can fly any helicopter with a checklist." Someday I will need to fly fish with him on some of that Tennessee "tail water" he tells me about. If we can renew our licenses, I would love to fly a Hughes 500 with him as well. Another friend is Major General Raymond "Fred" Reese, "Fred" to me, who is a 1968 graduate of West Point and who also graduated from flight school. I see Fred every couple of years in Nashville for our Vietnam unit's reunion. Fred lives in Oregon in a genuinely nice portion of that state. My wife and I had the pleasure of experiencing his retirement as commander of the Oregon National Guard in Salem, Oregon a few years ago. Both Fred and Steven are valued

friends of mine and I cherish the time we spend together.

In the end I would graduate "With Honors" from the University of California, Berkeley while acting as the volunteer lead for the Berkeley branch of Swords to Plowshares, where I wrote appeals for veterans. With a successful career and background as a hobby farmer and rancher, I would voluntarily lead groups that taught disabled veterans from all of our wars on the joys and serenity of fly fishing and fly tying while owning a small business and now as I am in retirement. This was how I coped and dealt with the disappointment of not flying helicopters with my buddies for the Army and that survivor's guilt I spoke about earlier.

Thank you for all that you did for us while we were on the ground and in "the bush." The Scouts, Cobra crews, Slicks, and Chinook pilots were some of the finest and they saved our lives

on numerous occasions. A few of them allowed me to sit in the left seat for a short period of time.

And yes, you did fly above the best.

John F. Imsdahl

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EDITOR'S NOTES: Candidate Imsdahl was incarcerated for about six months at Forts Hood and Riley, and Leavenworth Prison, before his release for Infantry AIT at Fort Jackson. While subsequently serving as an infantryman in the 101st Airborne Division, he learned of his exoneration in December 1969.

Those of you who have read *The Final Flight of Curious Yellow* might remember the story *Taking George Home*. The George Mason above is the same George.

Tom Hirschler

Sammie Has Done it Again.

Sammie Williams, a longtime volunteer for the VHPA does weekly Internet searches looking for obituaries for helicopter pilots who served in Vietnam. Her first December 2020 search turned up 2LT Simpson Ray II who was killed in a civilian Piper Cherokee airplane crash near Yoakum, TX on 2 September 1967 along with his wife, Susan, and two other 2LTs all from Fort Wolters, TX. According to a newspaper article found by Sammie about the crash, the other two 2LTs were Michael J. Radulovich and John Gary Popovich. We had Ray in our databases but Radulovich and Popovich were new to us. We needed more information so we asked another longtime volunteer, Barry Geller, for help to determine whether or not the three officers were in helicopter flight school. This is what Barry found, "Simpson and Susan were married in June 1967. Simpson and two of his friends rented an airplane to join Simpson's dad at Rockport, TX for a weekend of fishing and relaxation. They encountered bad weather and when trying to land, the tail of the plane got tangled in some electrical wires and crashed killing all four on board. Radulovich had completed the Engineer Officer Basic Course at Fort Belvoir, VA in April 1967 and was assigned to Fort Wolters in June 1967."

With a flight school start date in June 1967, we started looking for their names on flight class pictures. Luckily, we had their flight class section picture of 67-26 B5 on our web site at <https://www.vhpa.org/orwacpics/67-26b5.jpg>. This picture confirmed all three men were helicopter flight class stu-

dents. Adding 2LT Simpson Ray II, 2LT Michael J. Radulovich and 2LT John Gary Popovich to our died during training (DDT) list it now totals 156. Our thanks to Sammie and Barry for their ongoing efforts to account for our fallen.

Gary Roush

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National American Huey History Museum

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



Sixteen years ago, brothers John and Alan Walker inherited \$55,000. They found a Vietnam Huey on eBay and bought it for \$40K. With the remaining \$15K, they built a pole barn for it. The rest of the story of American Huey 369 and its slow, steady growth in volunteers, support, successes and dreams is well presented at www.americanhuey369.com. Please check out the website for extensive coverage of our history, mission, news, videos, etc.

In the September/October issue of The Aviator was a 2-page ad, similar in appearance to this one. That ad: introduced the organization; described its 16-year evolution; summarized five years of fundraising efforts to build the National American Huey History Museum; mentioned the relatively recent bombshell news that we must vacate our temporary hangar/museum at Grissom Aeroplex; and invited VHPA members to help with this “tactical emergency” by becoming Phase III Museum Founders. While donations of any amount are welcome, Phase III Founder donations of \$1,000 will be recognized by the donor’s name being cast on the Phase III bronze plaque (80” tall), which will be displayed prominently in the museum. A donor may alternately memorialize the name of another veteran, friend, their unit, their VFW or Legion post, etc.

After the ad appeared in the Sep/Oct issue, several VHPA members became Founders. Also, five VHPA chapters stepped up with \$1,000 Founder donations. After pandemic complications subside, more chapters hope to be able to meet and consider memorializing their chapters with a Founder donation. Through November, 2020, VHPA members and chapters that responded with \$1000 Founder donations (including sponsored names/entities) are:

Alaska Chapter, Pres. Lynn Kile

American Huey Chapter, Pres. Chuck Canfield

North Alabama Chapter, Pres. Marshall Eubank

Alamo Chapter, Pres. Mike Clark

California Chapter North, Pres. Ken Fritz

Gary W. Harrell, 116th AHC

Matt McGuire, 334th Attk Hel

Ken Fritz, 176th AHC

Robert W. Frost, 195th AHC

Thomas Payne, RVN 66-67 & 70-71

Combat Helicopter Pilots Association

PO1 Larry Fureigh, US Navy

In honor of: 155th AHC

Skip Budny, UTT Armed, RVN

Howard “Blue” Jackson, Minuteman 12

Pete Nolen, 129th AHC

Rick Hunter, 336th AHC

68th AHC – Top Tigers & Mustangs

To 58,300: Thank You – 68th AHC

American Legion Post 11 (LaFayette, Ind.)

Carl & Kathryn Cox

Crew of UH-1B 63-12915

MAJ Andy Burleigh, RVN

Dr. Jack & Sandy Bailey

Ronald Paré, 121st AHC, 66

Bernie Goldenzweig, RVN

John B. Kurz, CW4 (Ret), RVN

Del Pickett, 236th Med, CHPA

In addition to your name being cast on the 80” tall bronze plaque, your personal history will be preserved on an associated kiosk, where your Vietnam bio information, provided by you on a dedicated form, can be retrieved via a virtual linked website.

The estimated project cost of the museum is \$4 million: \$3 million (includes contingencies) for the 34,000 SF building and \$1 million for an interest-bearing rainy-day account for problem economies (including an ongoing scholarship program for Gold Star children).

More founders are needed ASAP. If you’re interested in helping with this “tactical emergency” and preserving our history and the history of our beloved Hueys, you may use the founder form on the facing page or find it at www.americanhuey369.com

PHASE 3 FOUNDER APPLICATION

HELP PRESERVE THEIR HISTORY TODAY!

AMERICAN HUEY "369" IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION.

[Reset Form](#)

FILL IN PRINT AND MAIL IN YOUR APPLICATION

[Print Form](#)

Prefix: First Name: MI: Last Name:

Street Address:

City: State: Zip:

E-MAIL

Phone (Home): Phone (Mobile):
No Spaces No Spaces

Prior/Current Military:

NO

YES

Last Rank in Service:

Units Served In:

M.O.S.:

Method Of Payment:

Credit Card (Mail In) Visa / Master Card

Check (Mail In)

Money Order (Mail In)

Card Number:

Expiration date:

3 Number code:

code on back of card

TOTAL AMOUNT:

Donation Amount (\$1000.00 or more for each name)

Name:

Maximum 24 spaces per name

Name:

Maximum 24 spaces per name

Name:

Maximum 24 spaces per name

Please Make Checks or Money Orders Payable to: American Huey 369 Organization and mail to address below:

**American Huey "369" Organization
209 South Broadway
Peru, IN 46970**

Contact Us:

John Walker: (765) 469-2727

Email: info@americanhuey369.com

www.AmericanHuey369.com

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

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WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER
David Swanson, President
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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

Unfortunately, our input missed the last edition's publication, so this is a compilation of the previous several months. The Alamo Chapter has resumed our monthly and quarterly luncheons, subject to various restrictions and the willingness of our chapter members to venture forth. After all, we are all in the so called "high risk" category.

On 8 Oct the Executive Council met via Zoom to discuss events scheduled for the remainder of this year and review options for the coming year including the election of two members to the Executive Council. Ray Vaske will assume the club presidency on 1 Jan.

On 28 Oct we enjoyed a great luncheon in at the Adobe Café in New Braunfels, TX. The ladies joined us that day to add a touch of class to what is otherwise a swapping of tall tales. We have another luncheon scheduled on 19 Nov at Gennnaro's La Cucina Restaurant in New Braunfels, TX. The ladies will join us for that luncheon as well.

Our next big event is our annual Christmas party normally held at the Army Residence Community (ARC). Unfortunately, at this point, the ARC is in complete lock down. Not sure if that will change before December so the Executive Council is investigating alternatives. The Barn Door Restaurant will possibly be available as our host venue. We hold our quarterly business meetings and dinners at the Barn Door. It is always a great time with great food.

Another Zoom executive council meeting will be scheduled in late November or December, if we cannot have an in-person meeting, to facilitate officer elections for next year and to resolve membership eligibility. Lots of things to do but hampered by COVID restrictions.

The one real positive event the chapter was able to accomplish was the purchase and distribution of pallets of water that were sent to Hurricane Laura victims in East Texas and Western Louisiana. Vice President Ray Vaske headed up this effort and with the help of one of the major grocery store chains, HEB, and the San Antonio Food Bank, the pallets were delivered to those in need at the time it was



Mae and Presley Orsburn.



Above photos were taken at our luncheon.

needed. Well done Ray and many thanks to the chapter for its support.

A real milestone and noteworthy indeed was the celebration of Alamo Chapter life member Presley Orsburn's 90th birthday and 70 years of marriage to his wife, Mae. Very few folks achieve this milestone, especially 70 years of marriage. Presley was a member of flight school class 54-H and served in RVN with the 4 INF DIV ARTY in 66; 282 AHC in 66-67.

Until next time, stay happy and healthy.

By Michael Clark, Secretary

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

AMERICAN HUEY CHAPTER

Bimonthly issues of The Aviator are shipped in the middle of each odd-numbered month, while reports on chapter activities are due to Tom Kirk (Managing Editor) six weeks earlier, at the end of the previous odd-numbered month. So, for this Jan/Feb issue, the report is due today, November 30. So, in keeping with the two-month scheme, this report covers any interesting stuff that happened after October 1.

Typically, activities revolve around two six-month seasons: (a) early-April through early-October, and (b) the rest of the time. Better put, we have (a) flying season activities, and (b) non-flying season activities.

Thus, one year ago, in the Jan/Feb 2020 issue, this report included remarks and photos related to the last flying event of the season – a favorite: the Fall Machine Gun Shoot at Knob Creek Gun Range, near West Point, Kentucky, October 11 & 12, 2019. If you are intrigued by the sound of 50 machine guns being fired simultaneously, you might visit Knob Creek Gun Range where they do this machine gun thing twice each year – April and October. As an adjunct activity, we've been

fortunate to be their guest for several years.

But we learned several pandemic months ago that our Kentucky friends had no choice but to cancel the Shoot this time, as they had to do for the one in April. Though our 2020 flying season suffered the cancellation of many events, a few survived, as reflected in previous chapter reports. So, we just closed the 2020 flying season with six events completed. As of this writing, the Spring Knob Creek Machine Gun Shoot is scheduled for April 9 & 10, 2021. Fingers crossed!

While October was quiet, we had some action in November. But first ...

Chapter Membership - continues to grow, now numbering 213. Our Facebook page remains an excellent tool for staying connected, fostering camaraderie, generating interest and spreading Huey news. Membership there stands at 1,200.



NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES ~

November 5-8 - Chapter President Chuck Canfield and I flew down to Houston to attend the CHPA 2020 Annual Conference. CHPA = Combat Helicopter Pilots Association. Though I've been a Life Member for a while, I was a conference First Timer. They are a great bunch, and we had a really good time. I'm looking forward to the next one. Of course, many CHPA members are also VHPA members. Having a smaller membership contributed to their ability to hold the conference. Robert Frost (RVN 70-71), Past President/Chairman, lives in Houston and was able to step forward and help in the planning. James Wilhite (RVN 68-69), CHPA President, lives in California and was unable to make it. Dr. Jack Bailey (Iraq, Desert Storm 90-91), Chairman, lives in Alabama and was impressive in his leadership.

Like the VHPA, the conference included a business meeting and a banquet, but a reunion atmosphere prevailed. Thursday and Sunday were mostly travel days, with focus on events of Friday and Saturday.

Friday - Located adjacent to the hotel, the NASA Johnson Space Center offers several interesting attractions. We walked there as a group, and began with an organized tram tour of several facilities around the vast property. Upon return to the main facility, we were free to choose from other points of interest, displays, programs, etc.. This flexibility allowed everyone to choose among myriad options at their own pace and to return to the hotel at their leisure.



Johnson Space Center



Dinner at
Kemah Boardwalk & Bubba Gump Shrimp
Co., Restaurant
& Market



VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Saturday – The business meeting was in the morning; a tour of the Lone Star Flight Museum (all aircraft are airworthy) was in the afternoon; and the banquet was in the evening. The featured banquet speaker was Timothy Kellner, decorated US Army sniper, and featured in the book, “Kill Shot: The 15 Deadliest Snipers of all Time.” Interesting guy.

Other guests included a mixture of Vietnamese family members who had immigrated to the US after considerable, prolonged effort. They came from Saigon (not Ho Chi Minh City) as well as Hanoi. They were there to meet us and extend their heartfelt gratitude for our service. Each of us were given gifts, including traditional Vietnamese headgear.



November 11 – a special event in Lafayette, IN, at American Legion Post 11.

Our Chapter Vice President, Phil Marshall, flew Dustoff with the 237th Medical Detachment in northern I Corps. He has written a series of books (now at Volume XII) that build on his first two books, “DMZ Dustoff Vietnam” and “Dustoff & Medevac Vietnam”, which were published in 2014 & 2015. His series, titled “Helicopter Rescues Vietnam”, series is a collection of stories of helicopter rescue missions as told by those who flew them.

One of the stories in Volume XII concerns a B/1/9 Huey gunship that was shot down near Hue on the morning of the first day of Tet, 1968. The four crewmembers were captured, but two were quickly executed. In the chaos of engagement by other B/1/9 aircraft, the aircraft commander and the gunner fled from their captors and were picked up. It was the gunner’s first mission after arriving in-country! Hue was occupied by the enemy and the battle raged for weeks. The aircraft commander apparently ended up elsewhere and

the gunner never flew guns again.

In Phil’s recently published Volume XII, this story is titled Mission 22. I suggest a subtitle, “How Not to Lose Your Cherry.” How this story surfaced 50+ years later is a story itself.

The gunner lives in Lafayette, IN – also the home of Kathy Cox. Kathy is not a writer, but she is an excellent calligrapher. Phil lives in Ohio – not Indiana. But chapter member Tim Cahoon does. Skipping myriad details: in late October, Phil was invited to speak at Lafayette American Legion Post 11 on Veterans Day. Post Commander Mark Dexter, Kathy and others spread the word around the community about Phil - Vietnam helicopter pilot, accomplished author - being the guest speaker on Veterans Day. The icing on the cake was the arrangement for a beautifully restored Vietnam Dustoff helicopter to land at the Legion post as the accompaniment to Phil’s appearance.

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

American Huey 369 flew in from Peru, 55 miles away. She landed in the parking lot at 11:30am and remained on static display until departure at 4:00pm. A dozen chapter members were involved in the support of the mission, including chapter President Chuck Canfield, who partnered with Phil during the Q&A session



Robert Fureigh
Secretary-Treasurer

CALIFORNIA NORTH CHAPTER

All chapter activities have been suspended until further notice due to the on-going pandemic. We have been in touch by phone and email during the COVID-19 isolation and we're looking forward to a getting together as soon as it's prudent.

This past month, Ken Fritz (Chapter President) has been in touch with many of our active members and for the most part, everyone is doing OK during this pandemic. Our ex-CCN Gunship 563 that was donated to the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) in Mesa, AZ was displayed in a reverse parade in Mesa on Veterans Day. The entrants were parked on the side of the road and people drove their cars past them. It was a solid flow of traffic for three and a half hours; the police



had to finally stop the show at 1400 at the staging parking lot as there were still cars passing by at 1430 hours.

A local TV station recorded an interview about 563's history before the parade. You can look it up with this link:

azfamily.com/goodmorningamerica/eastvalleyparade

After the parade, 563 was positioned outside for a few weeks at CAF Museum in Mesa. When you enter the museum you look right at 563. And she really looks good. They also have a video right next to her, telling the story of the Huey and 563.

Please check our website www.vhpaccn.org for more info and photos of past events.

Dave Anderson
VHPA-CCN Secretary

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



GEORGIA CHAPTER

Twelve courageous Aviators from the Georgia Chapter met for our bi-monthly breakfast at the Come-N-Get It restaurant in Marietta, GA, on the 21st of November.

As always, the food was delicious and the comradeship was superb. The COVID-19 situation has caused an attendance drop in our meetings, so it was especially good to see those men who made the effort to be there. As you can see from the attached picture, we were still able (for the most part) to practice social distancing.

A major concern of many attendees was the health status of the Chapter President (Chuck Stoudt) and Vice-President (Dick Butler). Chuck was recently diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and is currently undergoing chemotherapy and Dick has neuropathy in both legs and is unable to walk. We are hopeful for complete and speedy recovery for both of these men.

After watching a You Tube video of a stirring rendition of the National Anthem by the Army Band played at Ft McHenry, we said the Pledge of Allegiance, had a blessing, and commenced the meeting with each person in attendance giving a short introduction of himself, including when he was in Vietnam and the unit(s) in which he served. Our Treasurer (Gary Earls) gave an update on the financial status of the



Chapter Breakfast on Nov. 21

Chapter and we discussed giving a monetary gift to a local effort to build a Veterans Memorial.

We then watched a You Tube video of an interview with Medal of Honor Recipient COL Bruce Crandall. At the conclusion of the video, we discussed some of the things that COL Crandall had to say and then wound up the meeting.

It is always good to get together with Veterans, especially Veterans with whom we have had common experiences (like flying helicopters in combat). Our next meeting will be 16 January 2021, at 0900 at the Come-N-Get It restaurant in Marietta, GA. The meeting schedule for the upcoming year, along with other information about the GA Chapter can be found on our website ga-vhpa.org.

by Skip Bell

MICHIGAN CHAPTER

Glenn Youngstedt hosted another gathering of the Michigan Chapter in St. Joseph, on Wednesday, October 28. Guest speaker was CPT Pat Hall (Ret). Pat showed videos and photos of his two tours flying Blackhawks in Afghanistan. All the old Huey drivers concluded that flying in Vietnam vs. Afghanistan were totally different. Eleven people attended the meeting to include three pilots from the 128th AHC, Jerry Wright, Glenn Youngstedt, and Mark Benjamin. Special guests were COL Don Alsbro (Ret) founder of the SW Michigan Lest We Forget organization, Bruce Anderson and Matt Davenport.

Member At Large Mark Benjamin hosted another gathering in Traverse City on October 7th and filed this short and sweet AAR: Under the circumstances with the continuing pandemic, it was another successful lunch meeting. Discussion seemed to center around those of us who extended in country to get an early out from the Army. Then went on to people we knew who were POWs and their terrible experiences.



October 7 L-R Don Pond, Bob Matlis, Barry Witt, Ed Canright, Mark Benjamin, Jerry Wright



October 28th Gathering in St Joseph

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Mark held another gathering on November 4th with four members attending. He plans to continue his monthly offerings as pandemic conditions permit.

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



Speaker CPT Pat Hall



128th AHC Pilots Jerry Wright, Glenn Youngstedt, Mark Benjamin

More information on our chapter can be found online at vhpmi.wordpress.com and on Facebook at **Michigan Chapter of the VHPA**.

NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

Due to COVID restrictions and our age, we have not participated in North Alabama VHPA (NAVHPA) group activities since our last monthly meeting in March. We had the opportunity to cautiously support some outdoor events this fall. While these were not 'social' events, members who were able to participate enjoyed the opportunity to get together.

Fifteen members and spouses supported the dedication ceremony of the Alabama Gold Star Families Memorial Monument (GSFMM) on Nov 17. Members manned the four Gold Star Families registration tables, handed out red carnations and memento bags to Gold Star Families, served as escorts and ushers for Gold Star Families. Nearly 600 people, including 200 Gold Star Family members, attended this dedication of Alabama's first GSFMM. NAVHPA members contributed to the great success of this event. This Monument was a joint project between the Alabama GSFMM Committee, the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation, the Huntsville Madison County Veterans Memorial Foundation, and the city of Huntsville. NAVHPA President Marshall Eubanks and NAVHPA Honorary Member Julie Kink served as chair and co-chair for the Alabama GSFMM Committee.

Our UH-1C/M Gunship, BUC-3, sat for many months in her hangar waiting for an event for her to be displayed. With COVID safe practices, we determined that we could participate in both the Cullman, AL and Priceville, AL Veteran's Day celebrations. For her to look her best, we scheduled a wash and cleanup day on Nov 4th. We had 13 members show up – the first time a group of NAVHPA mem-



NAVHPA members Don Bisson and John McDaniel man a Gold Star Families registration table.



Honorary member Julie Kink and her husband Mike Sprayberry wait to speak at Gold Star dedication.



Gold Star Families Memorial Monument.

bers had gathered since March. In addition to clean-up chores, lots of catching up and storytelling took place.

On Nov 6, BUC-3 was towed to Cullman, AL and set up for their annual Veterans Celebration on Nov 7th this year at the Cullman Airport. Visitors enjoyed the many vintage military aircraft, vehicles and displays. NAVHPA members stayed safe by not allowing visitors inside BUC-3 (first time this has happened in more than seven years). This did not dampen the enthusiasm as many visitors asked questions and veterans recalled and related their experiences in Vietnam with Army aviation. One particular visitor, Charlie Heard, was a crew chief with the BUC-3's unit the 170th AHC from 1968-1969. Charlie flew in both BUC-3 and BUC-4 while in the company. We enjoyed listening to his stories and learning more about BUC-3.

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Members participating in the BUC-3 workday.



Members attending the Cullman Veterans celebration."



Charlie Hearn, 170th AHC 1968-1969, with BUC-3 at the Cullman Veterans Celebration.



Two boys dressed as 1940s paper boys at Cullman Veterans celebration

On the afternoon of Nov 7, NAVHPA members and spouses attended the Celebration of Life for Tom Rains. Tom and Lynn had recently moved to Virginia to be closer to family. Tom passed away unexpectedly on August 25 in Williamsburg, VA. Lynn wanted to have a celebration Tom's life with his many friends in the Huntsville, AL area. Tom's family as well as many friends and well-wishers attended this celebration. Tom will be missed by all.

Due to COVID concerns, the Huntsville annual Veterans Day Parade was cancelled, and a virtual program was shown on local television. This gave us an opportunity to support another community with their Veterans Day activities on Nov 11. BUC-3 was scheduled to participate in the Priceville, AL Veterans Day event. However, weather caused this event to be cancelled and BUC-3 was tucked back into her hangar.

NAVHPA made a monetary contribution to Stand Down Huntsville, a local charity helping homeless and less fortunate veterans in north Alabama area. We normally have been having winter coat drives every year for the charity. Stand Down Huntsville was in need of items to support local homeless veterans and NAVHPA decided to donate cash so they could purchase needed items.

By Ralph Weber

OLD DOMINION CHAPTER

Results from 7 November 2020 at Legend Brewing

We had nine members present and met very successfully with proper social distancing in the Dart Room.

Our next event is the Wreaths Across America Christmas wreath placement at the Amelia Veterans Cemetery on Saturday 19 December 2020 at noon. Our chapter has made a donation of \$300.00 to Wreaths Across America for purchase of wreaths for this event. Please plan to arrive about 15 minutes early as there will be an Impressive Ceremony at Noon. The address is 10300 Pridesville Road, Amelia, VA 23002 Tel: 804-561-1475 Contact person is Jonathon Diman.

Ron Markiewicz, who is a Docent for the New Army Museum, has agreed to set us up for a tour in March 2021.

Bill Baker and Frosty Price are working jointly on a meeting for us in the Fredericksburg area in January or February.

The members also voted overwhelmingly to donate \$300.00 from our treasury to purchase 10 Christmas boxes to be sent thru the Combat Helicopter Pilots Association to the 4th Combat Aviation Brigade currently deployed overseas and stationed in Afghanistan. These boxes will contain such things as toothpaste, Vaseline, foot powder, lip balm, candy, cookies, smoked salmon. Hugh Jay Brown Jr, from Divide, Colorado is heading up this project. He is a Life Member of the VHPA and CHPA. You can donate personally if you would like. Simply go to www.chpa-us.org and click on the link "Christmas Boxes."

If you wish to sponsor more than ten, give Jay Brown a call at 719-650-5874. All donations are fully Tax Deductible.

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Checks should be mailed to CHPA PO Box 2585 Peachtree City, GA 30269.

Wishing you all a Very Safe November and a Thanksgiving you will not forget.

A Very Happy Veterans Day to you all.

Don Agren
President,

SOUTH MISSOURI CHAPTER

The fourth quarterly meeting of the South Missouri Chapter of VHPA was held on November 7th in the Silver Dollar City Parlor at The Keeter Center, on the campus of the College of the Ozarks. Masking and social distancing protocols were employed by members, guests, students, and staff of the college.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer, the meal was served by the students and enjoyed by all in attendance. After the meal, Chapter Vice President Don Merritt led the Missing Man Tribute, a solemn moment when we all reflected upon those no longer with us.

Chapter President John Sorensen then shared his recent experience of flying a UH-1H helicopter that he actually flew 50 years ago in Vietnam. It is located in the Mid America Flight Museum in Mt. Pleasant, TX, and is one of many historic aircraft located at the museum, ALL of which are in flying condition! Certainly, this is a spot everyone with an interest in history, aviation, or both, should visit.

Mr. Sorensen then read letters from Natalie Rasnick, Dean of Development at the C of O, and from Jackson Jones, this year's recipient of the scholarship endowed by the chapter.

Throughout the year, members sold raffle tickets for the opportunity to win a quilt, made and quilted by wives and friends of the chapter. Don Merritt was the lucky winner and is pictured with his wife, Karen, with the beautiful quilt. A second quilt was randomly given away to a chapter member who had won previously, and this year that quilt was presented to John Wilkinson. Of course, the beneficiary of this



Raffle winner, Don Merritt and wife Karen.



Life Member Subscriber, Dr. Davis in the middle.

effort was the scholarship that the chapter endowed two years ago. Following the meeting, John Sorensen and Past President Ron Clifton met with C of O President Dr. Jerry Davis and presented him a check for adding to our endowment.

Our first quarterly meeting of 2021 will be on Saturday, March 27th. Once again, we will meet in the SDC Parlor of The Keeter Center and will begin at 11:00 AM. Our speaker will be Thanh Boyer, who was born in Vietnam and was scheduled to speak at our Annual Reunion in Denver before it was cancelled because of the Covid virus. Please mark your calendar, plan to attend, and invite other Vietnam veterans to come with you. I know we all will want to hear her remarks. More information regarding this meeting will appear in the weeks upcoming.

John Sorensen, President

The image shows the front cover of the book 'The Aviators: Stories of U.S. Army Helicopter Combat in the Vietnam War, 1971-72' by Rex Gooch. The cover features a painting of a UH-1H helicopter in flight over a field. The title 'THE AVIATORS' is prominently displayed in large, white, serif capital letters. Below it, the subtitle 'STORIES OF U.S. ARMY HELICOPTER COMBAT IN THE VIETNAM WAR, 1971-72' is written in a smaller, sans-serif font. The author's name, 'REX GOOCH', is at the bottom, along with a foreword by Lt. Col. Hugh L. Mills Jr., US Cavalry (Ret.). The background of the cover is a sunset or sunrise over a landscape with palm trees.

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

UTAH CHAPTER

As with many chapters, VHPA-UT has been severely limited on what we have been able to physically do with meetings and educational outreach.

VHPA-UT's vice president Doug Drury spoke to and provided a Power Point presentation to students at Hancock Charter School in Pleasant Grove, UT in November.

He was invited to speak to forty grade school students about a U.S. Army helicopter pilot's experience in combat during the Vietnam War. He discussed his experience as well as his wider perceptions of the prolonged conflict.

Because of the school's audio-visual technicians, the power point presentation was shared with as many as 100 other students in their classrooms and with parents and siblings at home.

The opportunity to tell our story, especially to young students is the mainstay of our educational goals in the chapter. The two young classes in attendance during the presentation were very courteous and attentive. While they all wanted to shake hands, they delighted in an elbow bump with a Vietnam Veteran and Doug was really gratified at the salutes from some of the boys.

Steve Jackson, President



Doug Drury addresses charter school students.



AV Broadcast to other students and homes.



Doug Drury with VHPA display.

Vietnam Heli Operations-VHPA Rotorheads Return



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AWARDS LEGEND

MOH = Medal of Honor; **DSC** = Army Distinguished Service Cross; **NC** = Navy Cross; **AFC** = Air Force Cross;

DSM = Distinguished Service Medal; **SS** = Silver Star; **DSSM** = Defense Superior Service Medal; **LM** = Legion of Merit;

DFC = Distinguished Flying Cross; **SM** = Soldier's Medal; **NMC** = Navy and Marine Corps Medal; **CGM** = Coast Guard Medal;

BS = Bronze Star Medal; **PH** = Purple Heart; **MSM** = Meritorious Service Medal; **AM** = Air Medal; **CM** = respective service Commendation Medal

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

***Aamodt, Donald V. USAF, MAJ Ret.; RVN: 67-68 20 HS 14 ACW; SS; Callsign: Green Hornet.**

Donald V. Aamodt passed away May 21, 2020. Don was born in Joice, IA on August 2, 1933. He graduated Joice High School and attended Waldorf College and Iowa State College before joining the Air Force in 1954. He received jet training at Big Springs, TX where he received his pilot rating, and helicopter training at Stead AFB, NV, after which he was assigned to the 71st Air Rescue Sq at Elmendorf AFB, AK where he flew the H-21. In 1963, he was assigned to the 1001 Heli Sq, Bolling AFB, DC. In 1968, after his Vietnam tour, he returned to the 1st Heli Sq at Andrews AFB, where he flew search/rescue and transported dignitaries to the Pentagon and Camp David. At 20 years, Don retired in 1974.

Don continued working as a safety officer for the Air Force from 1974 to 1997. When he retired from civil service, he and his wife moved to Lake Mills, IA. He served as the County Commissioner for VA Affairs and received the Individual Governors Volunteer Award in 2011. He was a life member of VFW, American Legion, Daedaleans, USAF Helicopter Association, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, and American Helicopter Association.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Faye.

***Allen, Robert D. USAF, LTC Ret.; RVN: 66-67 20 SOS 14 ACW, 70 MACV FLT DET; SS (2), DFC; Callsign: Hop Sing.**

Robert D. Allen died on September 30, 2020 under the care of Suncrest Hospice. He was born in Carroll, IA on October 15, 1935. He was raised in the small town of Glidden where he graduated from Glidden High School in 1954. Bob graduated from the University of Wyoming in June of 1958 with a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He received his Master's in Education from the College of William and Mary, VA in



1974.

His last assignment brought him back to Central Iowa as an Associate Professor of Aerospace Studies at Iowa State University in Ames. Bob retired with 20 years of active service on Aug 30, 1978. After retiring, Bob owned and operated Cyclone Awards for several years.

Bob was also very active in the Masonic Lodge. He was Past Patron of Laura Chapter No. 115 OES, Grand Master of Haggai Lodge No. 369 Glidden, and Grand High Priest of York Rite of Iowa. He also was an active member of Arcadia Lodge No. 249 in Ames.

***Anderson, Vincent R. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 68-6; RVN: 69-70 C/2/17 CAV 101 ABN, 69-70 A/101 AVN 101 ABN; DFC; Callsign: Condor 26.**

Vincent "Pike" Anderson of Hewitt died on October 7, 2020 at Providence Hospice Place surrounded by his family after a brief but courageous battle with cancer. Pike was born on August 18, 1944 in Sedalia, MO.

His family moved to Jackson, MS, where he graduated from Provine High School in 1962. He graduated from Mississippi State University in 1967, where he was a member of the ROTC and a member of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity. He completed a master's degree in 1977 from The University of South Alabama.

Pike retired as Chief of Kinesiotherapy in March of 2000 after working at the Veterans' Administration in Waco since 1977. Upon retirement, he worked with The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) where he was a National Service Officer helping Veterans with their VA claims at the Waco VA Regional Office. He was presented the Kenneth Richardson Award as the 2008 MOPH National Service Officer of the Year. He retired from MOPH in December 2015 as the Region 5 Deputy Regional Field Supervisor. He was active in the local Veterans Community and was a Charter Member; former Quar-

termaster and former Commander of VFW Post 6008.

Mr. Anderson served sixteen years on the Hewitt City Council, including two years as Mayor. During his tenure, he helped in development of several transportation projects and in the development of the Veterans Memorial at Hewitt Park. Pike was very active in his church, The Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit. Over the years, he served on the vestry and became a Lay Minister.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Marcia.

Baiz, Marin G. USMC; Flight Class: 38-64; RVN: 66-67 HMM-362, 67 HMM-363, 70-73 AIR AMERICA; SS.



Marin Baiz passed away on January 23, 2015 at his North Fork home. He had been undergoing treatment for cancer over the previous several months.

Marin was born in Oakland, CA on February 22, 1942, then moved with his family as a young boy to the San Joaquin Valley. He graduated from Selma High School in 1961, then went on to study Aviation engineering at Reedley College, where he earned an associate of science degree, Joining the U.S. Marine Corps in 1964.

Upon his return from overseas, Marin purchased a farm in the Selma area, where he produced raisins on the forty-two acres. He was a bilingual librarian for Madera County from 1994 to 2003.

He is survived by his wife, Merry Gale.

***Bower, Ron J. USA; Flight Class: 65-2; RVN: 65-66 A/1 AVN 1 INF; Callsign: Rebel 21.**

Joe Ronald "Ron" Bower, who set two speed records circumnavigating the earth in helicopters, died on October 12, 2020. He was born on December 28, 1941.

Bower had amassed more than 9,000 hours over his 55 years of flying and obtained nearly every aircraft rating, except for blimps and hot air balloons. He had served in multiple roles,

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including as a flight instructor, combat pilot, sales executive, and purchasing consultant, in addition to his east and west-bound helicopter world records. Soloing in 1962, Bower's flying and business expeditions led him to pilot aircraft in 37 countries and visit more than 50, according to a tribute site.

Bower originally gained experience in the U.S. Army flying Hiller observation helicopters on the demilitarized zone border with North Korea and then Hueys during the Vietnam War.

After his service, he joined IBM in 1967 to sell computers but in 1982 jumped back into aviation when he joined a fellow IBM colleague to help launch an aircraft sales company. There, he built a team of mechanics, pilots, salespeople, and administrators to support the sales business, as well as establish a database of Bell 206 records.

In 1994, he broke an around-the-world record set in 1982 by Ross Perot Jr. and Jay Coburn. Bower flew eastbound in the 206B3 Jet Ranger III, departing and ending at the Bell Helicopter Textron delivery center in Fort Worth, TX. The trip began on June 28, 1994, and ended a month later on July 28, gaining recognitions for a world speed record, five specific city-to-city speed records, and as the first western helicopter to fly across Russia.

His westbound trip followed in 1996, beginning and ending in London in a Bell 430, setting a world speed record for a twin helicopter. That trip began August 17, 1996, and ended less than three weeks later on September 3, averaging 10.2 hours a day, with the longest day reaching 17.5 hours. The total distance traversed was 20,508 nm and he logged a high of 2,263 nm in one day.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Peggy.

Boyd, Keith W. USA; Flight Class: 69-43; RVN: 70-71 B/158 AVN 101 ABN; Callsign: Lancer 19.



Keith was born in Seattle, WA on June 3, 1949. Keith graduated from Lincoln High School in 1967 during the peak of the country's involvement in Vietnam. Keith, along with all the other male high school graduates, was given a draft number. Keith's number was low, and he decided to choose his own branch and job in the military rather than wait for his draft number to be called. Keith decided he wanted to

fly helicopters for the Army.

After his tour in Vietnam, Keith, like many active duty warrant officer aviators, was granted early leave from the Army. So, after serving the one year in Vietnam, Keith returned to Seattle and to his job at the US Postal Service. Unfortunately, those close to Keith know that he returned with scars from Vietnam and anxiety that he would eventually learn to live with. While working for the post office, Keith went back to school, eventually completing his BA in accounting at Central Washington University in 1986.

He is survived by his wife, Imsuk.

***Burke, Marius Jr. USMC; Flight Class: 5-58; RVN: 63-75 AIR AMERICA; Callsign: Durax.**



Marius Burke Jr. of Merritt Island, FL died on October 29, 2020. He was born in NY, NY on October 8, 1937.

Marius joined the Naval Reserve and a year later, he accepted a commission with the U.S. Marine Corps, where he attained the rank of Major. A graduate of the service's flight training program, he flew fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft for the Marines and Navy, including time on aircraft carriers that took him to many countries and continents worldwide. His love of travel and exploration never stopped. In 1963, following his active duty career, he joined Air America, flying secret missions throughout Southeast Asia on behalf of the U.S. government. He performed this work with quiet courage, never bragging about the lives he saved—military and civilian—while experiencing his own close calls with death.

During the last year of the Vietnam war, he was one of several Air America pilots who evacuated Da Nang, Nha Trang and Saigon. Iconic photos and film on April 30, 1975, captured these brave pilots landing on rooftops, picking up desperate Americans and Vietnamese and shuttling them to waiting ships. On that day, Marius flew for 15 hours straight, getting out of the cockpit only twice. He wrote of this experience, "I salute all those fine crews and support personnel of Air America who made it happen."

Following the Vietnam War, Marius settled in Utah, and started several real estate and construction businesses. However, his passion for flying drew him back, and he joined the

Army Reserve and Key Airlines, an air ambulance company, and later Air Methods, where he eventually became the Director of Operations until he retired.

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

Cannon, Howard A. USA; Flight Classes: 68-513/68-23; RVN: 68-69 117 AHC, 70-71 A/3/17 CAV, 71 C/101 AVN 101 ABN; DFC, BS, PH, ACM; Callsigns: Warlord/Silver Spur.



Howard A. "Buddy" Cannon passed away on November 24, 2017 at Moses Cone Hospital. He was born on September 28, 1946 in St. Louis, MO. Buddy graduated from Elon University with honors. After being drafted into the US Army he served from 1968 to 1973.

Following his military service, Buddy worked in the field he loved, aviation and aircraft sales. He owned his own company, Cannon Aircraft Sales, Inc. and retired after 40 years of work.

He is survived by his loving wife of 34 years, Karen.

Case, Warren L. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 57-3; RVN: 65-66 HHC 1 BDE 1 CAV, 68-69 355 HHC; Callsigns: Thunderbolt 36/Workhorse.

Warren L. Case was born 18 May 1933 in Rapid City, SD. He died 20 August 20, 2020 in Enterprise Medical Center, Enterprise, AL from pancreatic cancer.

In May 1951, he entered the Navy upon graduation from high school, where he served proudly for (as he always said) 3 years, 29 months, and 1 day. While serving in the Navy on the USS O'Bannon, he participated in retrieval of buoys from the first H-bomb in Eniwetok, then served on the island of Guam with the Mobile Construction Battalion #10. He entered the Army 29 July 1955 and received his Warrant in 1957. He always felt the most rewarding part of his career was serving as XO of the 61st Candidate Company at Ft. Rucker.

He was a member of the First United Methodist Church, New Brockton, AL; Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association; and Military Officers Association of America. He retired after serving a total of 26 years.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Lenore.

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Coker, Terry J. USAF/USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-18/68-30; RVN: 69-70 D/15 TC; MSM (1 OLC), ACM; Callsign: Sunny Day 5.



Upon graduation from Tallassee High School in 1961, Terry earned a bachelor's Degree in Psychology and was commissioned a 2LT in the United States Air Force from Auburn University in 1966; and he earned a Masters Degree in System's Management from the University of Southern California in 1974.

Upon retirement, Terry served as the Senior Army Instructor at several high schools: Cypress Lake (1986 – 1989), Goshen (1989 – 1992), and Barron Collier (1992 – 1998), and began the JROTC Program at Gulf Coast (1998 – 2009). During his tenure in Collier County, his cadets at both Barron Collier and Gulf Coast High Schools earned the designation of Honor Unit with Distinction during every Cadet Command Formal Inspection. Seven cadets were awarded Senior ROTC Scholarships and eight cadets received appointments to Service Academies with four being West Point.

*Cruz, Tomas Q. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 54-J; RVN: 67-68 1 CAV; BS, ACM.



Tomas Quenga Cruz, the first-ever Guamanian helicopter pilot to serve in the U.S. military, died September 25, 2020. He was born December 22, 1925, in Piti, Guam.

A man with nine lives, the beloved husband, father, great-grandfather, uncle, and brother survived six crash-landings, colon cancer, and myriad war injuries that included being shot and bayoneted.

Tom was 15 years old when the island of Guam was invaded by the Japanese in 1941. Along with his father and eldest brother, John, he was forced to work in labor camps until the island was liberated in 1944.

Tom's military career began in 1946 at Fort Lewis, WA, where he completed basic training. In 1954, he was accepted into the U.S. Army Helicopter School at Fort Sill, OK, and earned his wings that October. In 1955, he was assigned to the 3rd Helicopter Company at Fort Belvoir, VA, supporting the White House and Pentagon. He occasionally flew then-Vice President Richard Nixon to and from Camp David.

Following his military career, he became a supervisor at Lockheed Missiles and Space Company before retiring for good.

He is survived by his wife, Charmidivina.

*Flowers, Jack L. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 71-10/70-46; RVN: 66-67 1 INF DIV, 71-72 11 CAB; LM, BS (5), PH (2); Callsigns: Dungeon C 6/Red Dog 3.



Jack Lamar Flowers of Richmond Hill, GA passed away in Vidalia Community Hospice on October 20, 2020, after a prolonged battle with Alzheimer's Disease. Jack was born on January 12, 1940, in Waycross, GA.

Jack served in the military for over 32 years. He served in both the U.S. Air Force and the Georgia Army National Guard prior to joining the U.S. Army.

Following the Army, he was a highly successful realtor owning multiple companies in the Richmond Hill area. He was a graduate of the Command and General Staff College and received his Master's in Management from Central Michigan University. He was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and the Disabled American Veterans.

He is survived by his wife of over 60 years, Patsy.

*Foote, Brian G. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 59-7; RVN: 66-67 179 ASHC, 70-71 178 ASHC; Callsigns: Shrimp-boat/Boxcar 6.



Brian Gerard Foote, was born July 7, 1936 in San Antonio, TX and passed away July 13, 2019 in Gilbert, AZ.

He attended Central Catholic High School, then earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX in 1958. Upon graduation he received an ROTC commission in the US Army. He served on active duty as an artillery officer and aviator for over 22 years. He also served with the VIP Flight Detachment in Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN, flying Vice President Hubert Humphrey in the "Army 2" CH 34 in 1969.

After Army retirement, he worked for Martin Marietta in Denver, CO for 17 years, managing planning and integration for military satellite launches.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Christine.

*French, Clyde B. USA; Flight Class: 67-9; RVN: 67-68 A/227 AVN 1 CAV; DFC (2); Callsign: Chickenman 3.



Clyde French was born May 6, 1946 in Monroe, LA. and went home to our Lord October 28, 2020.

Clyde worked for more than 40 years in the financial services industry, with the last ten at his company, French Financial Services.

He remained active in service to fellow veterans as past Chairman of the Veterans Memorial for the Community of Lincoln Parish. Clyde was also a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, Veterans of Vietnam Motorcycle Club, Combat Vets Motorcycle Association, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA), Combat Helicopter Pilots Association (CHPA) and the Distinguished Flying Cross Society. He was also active in the local community serving on the board of the American Red Cross and The Strand Theatre. He was a member of the Krewe of Gemini, as well as the Krewe of Gemini Royalty Club.

He is survived by the love of his life, his wife of 35 years, Judy.

*Grayson, Eugene H. Jr. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 62-3; RVN: 65-66 D/227 AVN 1 CAV, 69 HHC 101 AVN 101 ABN, 69 D/101 AWC 101 ABN; LM (2), DFC (3), BS (2), ACM (V) (3 OLC); Callsigns: Devil 3/Hawk 6.



Eugene Howard Grayson, Jr. passed away on November 8, 2020 after a valiant fight with cancer which was Agent Orange related. He was born on March 24, 1936.

He graduated from Radford High School where he was President of the Key Club and participated in all three boys' sports. He graduated from VMI as a member of the class of 1958 and awarded a Regular Army Commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry. For the next 28 years he served in various United States, Europe, Korea, and Vietnam. He attended the Infantry Officers Basic Course, The Infantry Career Course, The Command and Staff College, and the National War College. While a student at Fort Leavenworth, he became a member of the John Hancock Masonic Lodge. During his career, he also earned Graduate Degrees from the

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Washington University.

He served on the European General Staff and in the Pentagon where he headed the Army's Flying Hour Program. Later assignments were at the Army War College in Carlisle, PA and the Marine Corps University in Quantico, VA. where in both posts he served as a Professor of Military Strategy Plans and Operations.

Following his retirement, the family returned to Radford where he joined the Kiwanis Club and rejoined VFW Post 776 as a life member.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Betty Davis.

***Grow, John W. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 66-15; RVN: 66-67 155 AHC, 67 HHC/52 CAB, 69-70 166 AMD; Callsigns: Falcon 3/Processor 6.**

John Grow was born on March 5, 1937 in Bremerton, WA. He died at his home in North Richland, TX on November 20, 2020 from lung cancer.

John enlisted in the Army for four years in 1954. In 1965, he reenlisted to attend flight school.

Following his military retirement, he became a contract manager for JRC and Bell Helicopter. He started a custom framing business after retiring from Bell.

Haines, Richard G. USA; Flight Classes: 67-503/67-25; RVN: 68-69 B/101 AVN 101 ABN; Callsign: Kingsman 3.

Rick Haines, age 73 of Mt. Juliet, TN passed away on September 4, 2020.



***Henry, Robert F. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 69-45; RVN: 70-71 242 ASHC; MSM (2); Callsign: Muleskinner 22.**



Robert Henry passed away on October 25, 2020. Bob was born in Boston, MA in 1947, then lived in Michigan before settling in Miami, FL where Bob attended the University of Miami and Miami Dade Jr College. Bob was a member of the Sigma Chi Fraternity.

Due to Bob's "astute leadership" he was a top three finalist for earning the honor of Army Europe's Aviator of the Year.

After retirement from the Army, Bob settled

in Colorado Springs where he worked and again retired, as a Commercial Field Appraiser.

Bob was a proud member of Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, Veteran of Foreign Wars and the Warrant Officers Association.

Jensen, Larry D. USA; Flight Classes: 68-501/68-1; RVN: 68 B/2/20 ARA 1 CAV, 68-69 E/82 ARTY 1 CAV; BS; Callsigns: Blue Max/Hardcharger.

Larry D. Jensen of Chino Hills, CA passed away on October 13, 2020. He was born in Ada, MN on April 29, 1948. He fought a brave battle against COPD and other health issues for several years. One of the things he will be well remembered for was his great ability to put people at ease and make them laugh. He was a proud member of the VHPA and the American Legion Post 299 in Chino, CA where he spent a lot of his time volunteering.

He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Susan.

***May, Bobby D. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 65-18; RVN: 65-67 170 AHC, 69-70 10 AVN BN; Callsign: Buccaneer 7.**

Bobby "Bob" D. May, age 83, went to be with the Lord on Saturday, May 16, 2020. He was a member of First Baptist Concord Church. He served his country in four branches of the Military before retiring as a Major from the Army as an Aviator. He defended our country twice in Vietnam during his career. He loved the Lord, his family, and especially loved children.



***Melin, Thomas G. USA; Flight Classes: 68-515/68-27; RVN: 68-69 176 AHC; Callsign: Musket 38.**



Thomas George Melin passed away September 28, 2019 at the Billings Clinic Hospital from illnesses related to Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL), attributed to his exposure to Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam.

Tom was a lifetime resident of Park County, born at the Chico Hot Springs Hospital July 22, 1947. He graduated from Clyde Park High School (now Shields Valley High) in 1965. He attended the Church College of Hawaii (now BYU-Hawaii) 1965-1967.

Tom became an apprentice carpenter with Martel Construction Company in Bozeman after his

military service, eventually becoming a master carpenter which served him well the rest of his life. In 1980, Tom decided construction was too seasonal and too hard on his body, so he became a licensed insurance agent. He built the Melin Agency, now Big Sky Insurance, from the ground up.

Tom served on the Livingston School Board and coached his children in T-ball and baseball for many years. He served as a BSA Scoutmaster for 12 years, where he blessed the lives of dozens of young men in Troop 524. He also served on the Water Board for the Paradise Valley Irrigation Ditch and volunteered much of his time in the community through Kiwanis, The Senior Center, and The Food Pantry.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Rosalie.

***McGregor, Thomas USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 56; RVN: 65-66 228 AVN 1 CAV; BS, MSM, ACM.**



Thomas McGregor, a resident of Peachtree City, GA, died May 21, 2018. He was born October 28, 1930 in Yonkers, NY.

Thomas completed his education in the Yonkers school system and graduated from Gorton High School in 1948. He worked for Bigelow-Sanford Carpet Co. and in the evenings attended Pace Collage, NYC. He enlisted in the Army Reserve with the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in NYC in 1950 and entered active duty in 1952.

He completed a Bachelor of Business Administration degree at St. Benedict College, Atchison, KS, and attended the Department of Defense Aircraft Accident Investigation course at University of California.

After retiring from the Army, he managed a real estate trust in Albany, GA for five years, where he designed and built the company's first apartment complex in twenty years. While in Albany he earned an MBA from Chapman University, Orange County, CA. He then moved to Chicago and joined the Santa Fe Land Improvement Company, a subsidiary of ATSF Railroad. He participated in the acquisition of commercial real estate and developing the property management program. He joined Paramount Group and managed their real estate assets in mid-continent and then the Greater American Real Estate Management & Page 43 The VHPA Aviator

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Investment (GAMI) Inc., relocating to Atlanta and managed thirty-two office complexes throughout the United States. He started a real estate brokerage company in 1990, practicing acquisition and sales of commercial real estate throughout the country.

He was a member of the Clan MacGregor, Order of Scottish Clans in Yonkers and participated with the degree team in the Robby Burns day parade down central park west, NYC on several occasions. Thomas was a member of the Yonkers Chapter Order of DeMolay, from 1946 to 1969, becoming a Past Master Counselor of the chapter. He became a Master Mason with the Thistle Lodge #900, Yonkers, NY in 1953. In 1989 the members of the Grand Imperial Council of Scotland went to Frankfurt, Germany and bestowed upon him and other army officers the York Rite degrees including Supreme Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland-Excellent Master Lodge, Royal Select & Super Excellent Masters, Royal Arch Mariners, Order of Temple, The Order of Malta, The Order of St. John the Evangelist, and The Imperial Religious Military Order of Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine. He was a life member of The Military Officer of America (MOAA), Army Aviation Association of America (MAA), Disabled American Veteran (DAV), Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF), and The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

O'Berry, Lee R. USA; Flight Class: 55-Q; RVN: 66-67 15 TC 1 CAV; DFC.



Lee Roy O'Berry of Enterprise passed away on October 18, 2020. Lee was born in Jesup, GA October 23, 1929.

Lee enlisted in the Army in 1948, where he began his lifelong passion for aviation. He served in Vietnam, Korea, Germany, and several U.S. posts, retiring in 1967. He continued serving his country with the Federal Aviation Administration for the next 29 years. He retired from the FAA as Chief of the Cleveland FSDO Office in 1995. Upon his retirement, Lee returned to Enterprise where he became an active member of the National Active & Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), serving as President of two chapters. In 2008, Lee was honored with the Service Officer of the Year for both the Alabama

Federation of NARFE and NARFE Region III.

Lee was active in the community of Enterprise. He served on the airport advisory board, supported the activities of the Enterprise Chamber of Commerce, was nominated for Man of the Year in 2002, and was awarded the Retiree of the Year in 2009. For his role in helping seniors on many different levels, he was awarded the Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016. He was an active member and deacon of Grace Place Church in Enterprise for many years. He served his country, his family, his community, and church for 90 years. He is remembered for the many lives he touched.

He is survived by his wife, Sara.

***Oeder, Richard C. USA; Flight Class: 69-25; RVN: 70-71 187 AHC, 71 25 CAC; Callsigns: Red Carpet 415/ Crusader 27.**

Ricardo Colin Oeder, 73, of Moss Bluff passed away on October 6, 2020 while in Dallas, TX.

Mr. Oeder was born in the Dominican Republic while his dad was working there. At an early age, they moved back to the states where he was raised in Slidell, LA. He later moved to Mississippi to attend and graduate from Chamberlain Hunt Academy in Port Gibson. Mr. Oeder furthered his education in Natchitoches, LA at Northwestern State University for three years where he joined the Kappa Alpha Fraternity before enlisting in the US Army.

Upon being honorably discharged from the military, he continued his career as a pilot and earned his title as the Director of Operations for ERA Aviation before retiring.

He is survived by his loving and devoted wife of nearly 43 years, Theresa.

Ogle, James M. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 69-47; RVN: 70-71 C/227 AHB 1 CAV; BS, PH (2); Callsign: Betsy.

James "Mike" Ogle passed away peacefully at home on September 28, 2020. Mike was born on February 29, 1948 and grew up in Annapolis, MD. Upon graduating from Annapolis High School in 1967, Mike enlisted in the Army to become a helicopter pilot, a lifelong

passion. Mike continued his military career in the NC National Guard and the Army Reserves, retiring after 25 years.

Mike graduated from Lenoir Rhyne College in 1974 and started his career with Catawba County Schools as first a teacher, then Assistant Principal and finally a Principal.

He is survived by his wife, Betsy.

***Dr. Olinger, Michael L. USA; Flight Classes: 70-3/69-49; RVN: 70-71 ACT/11 ACR; Callsign: White 5.**



Michael Olinger, M.D., who served as INDYCAR's medical director from 2006-2018, died November 7, 2019. He was 69.

Dr. Olinger joined the AMR INDYCAR Safety Team when INDYCAR was formed in 1996, as an on-track physician. He was promoted to INDYCAR's Senior Medical Director in 2006 following the retirement of Dr. Henry Bock. Dr Olinger had served as Bock's deputy medical director at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for more than a decade. In 2003, Dr. Olinger was recognized with the Safety Award from the Championship Drivers Association.

Dr. Olinger was appointed the state of Indiana's first emergency medical services medical director in 2014 and held the job for two years. He was a professor of clinical emergency medicine at Indiana University School of Medicine and served as medical director for the Indianapolis Fire Department and Indianapolis EMS. He was a gubernatorial appointee to the Indiana EMS Commission. Dr. Olinger also served as the Medical Director for Marion County's Urban Search and Rescue Task Force (Indiana-Task Force 1).

A graduate of the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 1983, Olinger, a former helicopter pilot in the Army, completed his Residency in Emergency Medicine in 1987 at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX.

He is survived by his wife, Jeanette.



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*Paulson, Philip T. USA, CW5 Ret.; Flight Classes: 69-39/69-37; RVN: 70 F/8 CAV AMERICAL; Callsign: Blue Ghost 39.



On September 6, 2020, the Paulson Family and the world lost a true hero. While flying helicopters in Vietnam in 1970, Tom said it was scary flying blacked out at night, especially in the mountains and he knew there had to be a way to "light up the night." After being discharged from active duty, Tom became a charter member of the 53rd Aviation Co in Madison, WI, January 1972. Between January 1979 and April 1985, he was a National Guard Instructor Pilot assigned to Ft Rucker, AL and Ft Indiantown Gap, PA. His legacy in Night Vision Goggles began at Ft Rucker and he became the first Instructor Pilot in the National Guard to log more than 500 hours using NVGs. In April 1985, Tom returned to Wisconsin to continue to instruct in NVGs. In January 1992, he took his final assignment to Det 52 OSACOM flying two different airplanes and finishing his 29-year career as the Detachment Commander.

A very special day was shared a year ago between Gina and Tom, our two vets, as they participated in the Badger Honor Flight. Tom appreciated seeing the monument dedicated to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots and Crewmembers, in Arlington National Cemetery.

Tom's last battle came in the form of esophageal cancer, which he fought with chemo and radiation. He was cared for at home by his loving wife and daughters, due to Covid-19.

Polanski, Christopher S. USA; Flight Classes: 68-1/68-503; RVN: 68-69 68 AHC; Callsign: Tiger Tail.

It is with great sorrow that I report that Christopher Polanski passed away on October 17, 2020, after a long battle brought on by his exposure to Agent Orange. No other details are available at this time.

*Rennacker, Gregg A. USA; Flight Classes: 66-21/66-19; RVN: 67-68 128 AHC; Callsign: Tomahawk 27.

Gregg Alan Rennacker passed away peacefully in his



home on July 29, 2020. He was born in Berkeley, CA on July 16th, 1944. He received his education at the University of Cal, Berkeley.

After his Vietnam tour, he worked for AT&T as a technician for over twenty years.

He is survived by his beloved wife of eighteen years, Judy. *Nov/Dec listing did not have an obituary available. The complete listing is now provided. Ed.*

Ritchie, Owen M. USA; Flight Classes: 69-15/69-9; Callsign: Chickenman.



Owen Ritchie has gone to the Silver Hills after a long battle with the effects of Agent Orange in Nocona, TX. He was born on July 04, 1943 in Lubbock, TX, and died on July 13, 2014.

After his military service, Owen was a purchasing agent, DOT, States of Nevada and New Mexico; and a Nocona VFW Post #8585 member.

He is survived by his wife, Nancy.

Shipman, Bob T. USA; Flight Classes: 70-5/70-3; RVN: 70-71 C/7/1 CAV; Callsign: Comanche 39.

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Robert Thales Shipman (Wewahitchka, FL), born in Kissimmee, FL, who passed away on September 28, 2020, at the age of 77.

He is survived by his wife, Phyllis.

Shoudy, Howard E. USA; Flight Class: 64-8W; RVN: 65 155 AHC, 65-66 A/1 AVN 1 INF.



Howard Eldred Shoudy, "Scientific Grandpa", age 77, of Knoxville, passed away November 22, 2020 at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center.

He was a dedicated member of Powell Presbyterian Church where he thoroughly enjoyed singing in the church choir.

He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Joyce.

*Stromquist, Lenard P. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 67-11; RVN: 67-68 1 BDE 4 INF, 70-71 1/9 CAV; Callsigns: Alligator/Gators.



Lenard Pete Stromquist of Athens, AL passed away on November 2, 2020 at Athens Limestone Hospital. Pete was

born on January 7, 1944 in Topeka, KS. Pete graduated from Topeka High School in 1962 and attended Washburn University before enlisting in the United States Army in 1964.

He began his Army service at Fort Polk, LA and later served as a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division. Pete attended Warrant Officer flight school and became a helicopter pilot and later became a Commissioned flight instructor.

After retiring from the United States Army, he moved to Athens, AL and worked for 30 years as a cost analyst with most of those years at Redstone Arsenal. He graduated from Athens State College in 1992 with a degree in Business. He was a member of St. Paul Catholic Church. He was also a dedicated volunteer of 20 years to Hospice, where he was a facilitator to many children that had lost loved ones.

He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Carolyn.

Sunley, Jerry L. USA; Flight Classes: 66-15/66-13; RVN: 66-67 68 AHC, 69 D/101 AVN 101 ABN, 72-73 Arizona Helicopters.

Jerry L. Sunley of Ozark, MO passed away peacefully November 16, 2020 in his home. His wife, Donna, and two sons, Heath and Davin, were by his side. He was born September 1, 1944 in Springfield, IL. In 1965, Jerry joined the US Army.

During his long flying career, Jerry held various positions as a licensed pilot and was employed with many companies throughout various states and countries. For example, in 1972-1973 flew Bell 206Bs out of Vientiane, Laos for Arizona Helicopter.

He is survived by his wife, Donna.

Sweeney, William T. USA, CW5 Ret.; Flight Class: 70-22; RVN: 70-71 DIV ART 23 INF; BS; Callsign: Phoenix 11.



William "Bill" T. Sweeney passed away peacefully September 10, 2020 with his loving family by his side. Bill was born on March 17, 1947.

He graduated from Cardinal Mooney and attended the Pittsburgh Art Institute for Graphic Design.

Drafted on April 18, 1969, as a Private and upon completion of bootcamp he applied for and was accepted to the Army Officer Candidate School. Once commissioned, he chose to

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enter helicopter training.

Upon completion of his service in Vietnam, Bill's love for his country and flying led him to the continuation of his military career in the National Guard. He served as a UH-1 helicopter pilot in the Ohio National Guard and later transitioned to a Black Hawk pilot with the West Virginia National Guard. While serving with the West Virginia National Guard, he was granted a unique and rare consent from a two-Star General at the Pentagon, to be approved for deployment at the age of 59 with his unit to Iraq. Halfway through his tour, he celebrated his 60th birthday. Bill was awarded a second Bronze Star and two Air Metals, while in Iraq. Upon his return to the United States, he retired from his military career at the rank of CW5.

In concurrence with his military service, Bill and his wife, JoAnn, owned Sweeney and Associates, a graphic design studio located in Boardman, OH. They operated the company for over 30 years serving clients from small businesses, non-profit companies and major industrial corporations. He took great pride in helping others reach their success through the use of strategic marketing. This type of initiative led to his collaboration in the creation of CSUtest.com, an EMS and Fire online continuing education service.

In 2008, Bill and JoAnn sold Sweeney and Associates and he continued his passion for flying as a pilot for the STAT MedEvac (UPMC critical care transport flight system). Although not on military duty, he continued to save lives. He retired from STAT MedEvac in December 2018.

Besides his country, Bill enjoyed serving his community. He was a 35-year member of Boardman Rotary. He received Rotary's Service Above Self Award, was a multiple Paul Harris Fellow and Past President of the Club. Bill lived his life following the Rotary's motto of "Service

Above Self."

He leaves his beloved wife, JoAnn.

Szuch, John F. USA; Flight Class: 60-9; RVN: 61-62 57 TC CO, 62 C/17 CAV.

John F. Szuch of Seville passed away October 8, 2020 at home. He was born January 11, 1938 in Cleveland, OH. He was a 1955 graduate of Benedictine High School and 1959 graduate of John Carroll University.



Proud of his Polish Heritage, he was an avid collector of Polish General Casimir Pulaski memorabilia, and past President of the Polish Genealogy Society of Greater Cleveland. He was the original football historian of Benedictine High School.

He is survived by wife, Marlene.

***Vertrees, Carl R. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 57; RVN: 67 242 ASHC, 67-68 147 ASHC; DFC (OLC), BS, (4), ACM; Callsign: Muleskinner.**



Carl Vertrees passed away on October 11, 2020 in Copperas Cove, TX. He was born on May 19, 1932.

Carl served his country honorably with the U.S. Army as a pilot for 27 years before retiring in 1973. In his retirement, Carl was a life-time member of the VFW, DAV, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, the American Legion, and the Special Forces Association.

Wisenor, William W. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 68-25; RVN: 68-69 11 ACR, 70 25 AVN; Callsign: Blackhorse/Red Carpet.

On November 14, 2020, William Wesley Wisenor passed. Bill was born May 14, 1949 in Enterprise, OR. He grew up in Grangeville, ID.

He joined the Army at 17 and entered helicopter flight school and successfully earned his wings. After his Vietnam tours he joined the National Guard and spent the next several decades flying helicopters. He joined the Spokane Fire Department in 1973, serving 25 years.

After he retired from the Fire Department and the National Guard, he moved to Whitebird, ID. He worked for the Doumecq Road District. Bill reinstated in Idaho as an EMT and was active for several years. He was a member of the White Bird American Legion; participation was important to him, Flag and Country. He participated in forming White Bird Medical and Relief an organization dedicated to help those in need in our area.

Bill and Millie moved to Las Vegas in 2004 where he flew helicopter tours over the Grand Canyon for several years. In 2006, he decided he would commute from White Bird to Galiano, Louisiana flying crews to the oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico.

He is survived by his wife, Millie.

***Yoakum, Billy D. USA; Flight Class: 69-18; RVN: 69-70 240 AHC; Callsign: Greyhound 3.**

Billy Darell "Bill" Yoakum was born April 13, 1945 in Matador, TX. He was reared in Spur and Lockney, TX. He attended South Plains College in Levelland prior to entering the U.S. Army in 1967. He served in Vietnam after having completed Artillery OCS and USAPHS. Upon separation from the Army in 1973, he began a 30-plus year career as an agricultural lender in the Farm Credit System, reaching the position of President/CEO of Ag New Mexico, from which he retired in 2009.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Ellon.

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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. 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 or by calling 1-800-505-VHPA. If you knew any of the pilots listed, please help VHPA by sending any information you know about the person to HQ@VHPA.org or call 1-800-505-VHPA (8472) so it can be added to our database.

Adams, Frank R. USA; Flight Class: 67-6; DFC, PH; died on November 14, 2020.	Lorimer, David S. USA; RVN: 65-66 A/101 AHB 101 ABN, 68 AIR AMERICA; died on July 31, 2020.	Sling, Ricard D. USA, COL Ret.; died on September 29, 2013.
Basney, Ronald A. USA; Flight Class: 65-12; PH; died on October 22, 2020.	Minardi, Wayne USA, CW2 Ret.; died on November 14, 2020.	Spangler, Paul D. USA, LTC Ret.; BS, LM, ACM; died on November 1, 2020.
Booth, Robert E. USAF, COL Ret.; RVN: 68-69 37 ARRS; SS, DFC; died on November 15, 2020.	Piety, Richard L. USA, CW4 Ret.; DFC; died on October 9, 2020.	Schneider, Donald E. Sr. USMC, COL Ret.; died on October 8, 2020.
Kier, Larry L. USN; RVN: 67-68 HA(L)-3; died on October 12, 2020.	Pittman, Thurman M. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 63-8; DFC, BS; died on July 10, 2020.	Warr, Thomas J. USA, LTC Ret.; DFC, LM, PH; died on November 16, 2020.
Lawler, George V. Sr. USAF; died on November 9, 2020.	Salvagno, Anthony USA; Flight Class: 69-45; BS (2); died on August 6, 2015.	Wenrich, Quentin L. USA; Flight Classes: 68-503/68-1; RVN: 68-69 882 MED DET, 45 MED CO, 44 MED BDE; Call-sign: Dustoff 89; died on November 15, 2020.
	Shipp, Thomas R. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 68-6; RVN: 68-69 92 AHC; BS; died on May 20, 2016.	

WELCOME TO THE VHPA!

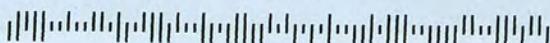
Look the list over and if you recognize anyone, give them a call, drop them a line or send them an e-mail welcoming them into our Association. Full contact information is available either on-line in the Member Services section of our website, or through our staff at HQ by calling 1-800-505-VHPA.

AVIATOR REPORT completed for 5 New Members and covers the period 10.02.20 to 12.02.20

Line 1 has the last then first names plus middle initial or name with the nickname in quotes VHPA Life Members have ** at the end of line 1, Line 2 has his city and state, Line 3 has his military branch of service, Line 4 has his flight school number or wings date, Line 5 has his Southeast Asian tour information where the unit abbreviation is followed by the YEAR(s)

This roster is presented in alphabetical order by last name

Anderson John Alfred ** Croydon New Hampshire Navy 59-18 USS PRINCETON in 66-69	Burbank Lawrence R. 'Larry' ** Manchester Maryland Army 61-9 242 ASHC in 68-69	Ohlrogge Richard K. Ronkonkoma New York Army 67 1/9 CAV 1 CAV in 68-69	Uznanski Thomas C. ** Berlin Connecticut Army 70-26
	Diffendorfer James H. ** Renton Washington Air Force		



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