



The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association



Cover story by Morgan Miller, Page 8

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Art Jacobs ~ VHPA President

Due to submission deadlines for the publishing schedule of "The AVIATOR," this message was written in mid-April. We are still in the throes of the pandemic, now some 18 months in duration. However, people are being vaccinated, new cases and deaths seem to have peaked and are now trending downward, and other than several variant surges, the trajectory "suggests" that restrictions will be such that we will finally meet in Charlotte for a long-overdue reunion. So, it is with the greatest optimism that I trust we shall have our 2021 reunion, and it is my sincere hope that this message is not premature, or in error.

If we do indeed gather in Charlotte, this President's Corner message for my term as your VHPA President shall be my last (no doubt causing spontaneous cheering in many bars)! I became the President during the closing banquet at the Kansas City reunion on Saturday, 1 June 2019. (1 June is also my wedding anniversary, so needless to say, it was a marvelous day.)

And... just like my wedding day, I felt both honored and humbled. It was an honor to become a member of my wife's family, but I was also humbled by my awesome responsibility to be a good husband and future father. In Kansas City, I was honored to be one of only a handful of Vietnam Helicopter Pilots who will ever hold this office. And yet, incredibly humbled because of the awesome trust and responsibility you gave me to continue the VHPA mission, help protect our investments, advance our legacy projects for when we are gone, look out for the best interests of the general membership, and to be part of an Executive Council that manages the many aspects of our daily business affairs.

We are one of the most unique military veteran organizations in the world. The helicopter is synonymous with the Vietnam War, and we know we faithfully did our duty. We should always celebrate our record of distinguished service to our country under those very challenging circumstances. The award-winning author Neil

Final Message

Sheehan, who wrote "A Bright Shining Lie," summed it up so well when he said:

"The aviation units were the sole combat element...that did not come apart under the stress of the war in Vietnam...whether it was the oneness of man and the acrobatic flying machine, whether it was the equally shared risk of officer pilot and enlisted crewmember, whatever the reason, the men of the helicopters kept their discipline and their spirit."

Neil Sheehan -Author

When we meet (fingers crossed) in Charlotte, I shall look back on the 26 months of my tenure with not just great pride, but in knowing four things:

- 1. I was simply carrying on the stewardship of all the past VHPA Presidents and Officers before me – merely building on what had been established and managed by a lot of truly great men.*
- 2. I was surrounded on the Executive Council by seven very talented and dedicated individuals who always worked hard and provided wise counsel – every year in the VHPA is a team effort.*
- 3. Words cannot adequately express my gratitude, but I sincerely thank you for the trust you placed in me. These six years so far on the Executive Council have been one of the highlights of my life.*
- 4. Finally, I will leave you with the same thing I tell strangers who thank me for my service, especially that service in Vietnam, "It was my honor, and I'd do it again."*

Art Jacobs, VHPA President

FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

We are still planning to hold the 2021 National Reunion in Charlotte, NC. However, to allow more time for conditions related to the pandemic to improve, we were able to work with the Westin Hotel to move the dates back. So, we are happy to announce:

**The 2021 National Reunion
Westin Hotel, Charlotte, NC**

Tuesday, 3 August – Friday, 6 August 2021

Please note the new dates. While the new dates increase the likelihood of a more fully attended, healthy, and successful reunion, there are no guarantees regarding health conditions or space restrictions over the next 90-120 days. We are hopeful that things will continue to improve.

We will be updating the VHPA website with more information and details as we are able to finalize them. The highlights, while still preliminary, can be viewed from <https://www.vhpa.org/R2021flyer.pdf>. We ask for your continued patience and flexibility as we continue to navigate these unpredictable times.

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

VHPA sends reunion updates via email blasts to the membership. There have been numerous emails that have "bounced". Please be sure to notify HQ to update your info if your email address, mailing address or phone number changes.

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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"My Crew"

I was about seven months into my second tour of Vietnam. Well, I guess I'd better go back to my first tour.

Thirteen months of 1966 and 1967, I did a walking tour of Vietnam as a Marine. Yes, I was a grunt! Don't call a Marine a soldier! Anyway, after four years in the Marines I thought there must be a better way of making a living. While being lifted into and out of Hot LZs I'd look up in a CH-34 and see the black, shiny boots of the pilots. I'd imagined they slept in a nice safe, dry bed and had a warm breakfast that morning. I had spent 14 days this time in the jungle and rice paddies, wet, tired and constantly getting shot at. Surely there's a way to make a better living.

Fast forward to 1969 and exit from the Marine Corps. After a few months of R&R, next stop was an Army recruiter. The Army wants helicopter pilots and I didn't want to be a grunt anymore. No basic training since I already had Marine Boot Camp so I had orders straight to Ft Wolters, TX for flight school. Nobody told me I'd have to be squared away militarily but thanks to Marine training it wasn't too tough. Flying was fun. Those classes kicked me until I caught up. Graduation from flight school came with orders back to Vietnam. I'd lived thru 13 months maybe I could make it another year.

Ok, back to seven months into my second tour.

I was an old guy now. Seasoned by years, by experience and hundreds and hundreds of hours of combat flying, I drew a simple mission today. Take a Huey from Da Nang to Phu Bai and be on standby. This was my second flight with what seemed like my fourth or fifth new guy as a copilot. We will depart Da Nang, fly an hour and a half north with a left and right gun check in route, refuel, check in and hopefully sleep off the hangover.

After maybe 30 minutes into the flight, I started sweating badly and sticking my head out of the window for air. Then the sickness came. In less than five

minutes from onset I was a passenger on my own aircraft and in five more minutes I was passed out. I do not remember anything for the next six days. It took another seven days to get out of bed and feed myself. After 17 days I was released for a check ride. I had contracted malaria. Yes, I took the anti-malaria pills, but some mosquito must have had fun.

I never found out the name of my copilot that day, but if not for him we would have been in a situation. He found his way back to Da Nang, landed at the hospital pad, dropped me off, and I don't know anything else other than that. The rest of the 12-month tour was fine, except for a few bullet holes on occasion.

Good job copilot, and thanks to my crew. You got us back.

Ed Hughes

D Trip 17th Cav, Sabre 24

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- | | |
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| - Terry Opdahl | - James Oden |
| | - William C. Brooks |

KOREAN WAR VET SATISFIED CLIENT

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

A PTSD Story

In Memoriam...

WO1 Vaughn David "Doc" Connell USA (KIA)

Dedicated To...

SFC Juan C. "John" Sablan USA (Ret.)

Shortly after completing the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Rotary Wing (i.e., helicopter) Aviator course in September 1967, I joined the Gun Platoon of D Troop, 1/1 Cavalry at Fort Hood, TX. After training at Ft. Hood, I went with D Troop to Camp Eagle, Phu Bai, South Vietnam in July 1968.

In March 1969, as an Aircraft Commander in B Company, 101st Aviation Battalion I was part of two slick (Huey, UH1H) crews detailed to the 3rd Marine Division at Quang Tri. I was impressed at how good the food was; someone reminded me that the Marines were under the Department of the Navy. In any case, our mission was to insert and extract small (10 man) Recon teams.

One morning, first thing, I was flying the lead slick on short approach to a small landing zone atop a 1500' pinnacle, Razorback, approximately 15 miles NW of Khe Sahn and a few miles south of the DMZ. About five feet from touchdown, I heard a loud bang and could not see anything at all. I believe that an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) had hit the helicopter.

I said to my Pilot, "Doc" Connell, "take it, I can't see." WO1 Connell got right on the controls and safely landed the aircraft. Immediately, a large concentration of small arms and automatic weapons began firing at the right front of the helicopter. I could feel things, bullets and pieces of the plexiglass windshield, flying past my head. I made myself as small as possible within my armored seat. Connell contacted the other slick and the two Marine gunships (Huey, UH1Es) telling them that we had been hit and that I was wounded. They responded that he should take off; Connell told them that the helicopter would not fly even though the engine was running and the rotor blades were turning.

My Crew Chief, SP4 Juan Sablan, opened my door, unfastened my shoulder harness and seat belt, then helped me get out of the aircraft and laid me on the ground. Sablan offered me morphine from our first aid kit; I turned it down due to an irrational/rational fear that if I got too relaxed, I might go to sleep and not wake up. This attitude was eloquently stated in the movie G.I. Jane: "Pain is your friend: it lets you know you're alive." I spent much of my time on the ground going through the multiplication tables, trying to keep my mind working.

After making sure I was safe and comfortable, Sablan, who had taken several pieces of shrapnel in his leg from the initial explosion, went to check on the Pilot, WO1

Connell. In several minutes, Sablan returned and informed me that Mr. Connell had been shot multiple times by small arms fire and that he thought him to be dead.

For the next 20 minutes or so, SP4 Sablan stayed near me and laid down protective fire with his M-16; the five Marines and my door gunner, Steve Hanson, were also in a defensive position returning the enemy fire. Sablan used my survival radio to inform the gunships of our situation and directed their fire to within about 50 feet of our position. He also directed fire of a pair of tactical fighter jets to the same area. All the while I was thinking that if I didn't die from my wound or the continuing enemy fire, surely the gunships or the jets would finish the job; but each time one of the gunships or jets came in for a firing run, Sablan shielded me with his body. I asked Sablan to, please, stop firing his M-16 on automatic as it was giving me a headache; this, added to the multiplication tables, later made me think that I was, at least partially, in shock.

After the gunships and jets had expended their ammunition, a Marine CH-46 helicopter hovered nearby (there was no room on the pinnacle for it to land) to evacuate our crew and the five Marines we had on board. We flew to Stud Marine outpost where I was examined by medics, given an IV and put aboard a Huey for transport to the USS Repose (a Naval hospital ship) cruising off the coast.

I underwent surgery aboard the Repose. The surgeons discovered that a piece of shrapnel about the size of a pencil eraser (still embedded inside my skull) had entered underneath my right eye and severed my left optic nerve. They repaired the shattered orbit of the right eye with a piece of plastic-like material. Their prognosis was that my left eye (no light perception) would remain blind and that my right eye (20/80) had a macular cyst that should heal, resulting in a return to normal (20/20) vision.

After almost a week on the Repose, I was moved (via one night in Da Nang) to an Army hospital on the outskirts of Tokyo, Japan. There, I learned that the cyst in my right (good) eye had burst and left a hole in the macula - the center of vision - and that the vision in that eye would not return to normal. For the first, and only, time since I was wounded, I felt sorry for myself. I went back to my hospital bed, laid down, and shed some silent tears for about five minutes. Then I realized that I had nothing to cry about since (1) I was still alive and (2) I was not totally blind - my vision was about 20/80 at that time and over the next few months it improved to 20/40, where it stabilized for decades.

So, after approximately six years, nine months and one day, I was medically retired from the Army at the age of 23. What to do? I tried being a hippie, including hanging

out in Mexico, for a few months, but that got boring. I then worked in a couple of motorcycle shops for a while, but that, too, bored me.

One day, I thought, perhaps, that I should check out the G.I. Bill. Shortly thereafter, I enrolled at my local community college. In my English 101 class, we read Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." Wow! For the first time in my life, I was intellectually excited. I was hooked on Philosophy.

As a high school drop-out with a GED, I was somewhat unprepared for the rigors of college. But thanks, in no small part, to the discipline instilled in me by the Army, I was able to progress from community college to U.C. Berkeley, where I received a B.A. in Philosophy. From there, I went to Cornell University, where I received a M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy. All that took about 11 years – not overly long to go from freshman to Ph.D. in the Humanities, especially since I'm somewhat of a slow reader. But the PTSD helped: I've always tried to be Positive, Tenacious, Sanguine and Determined.

Epilogue

For many years, I had been searching for Juan Sablan. Finally, in October 2011, I found "Chief Warrant Officer 2 Juan Sablan" on an Aviation Support Battalion (ASB) website, with a photo of a man who looked quite a bit like the Juan Sablan I knew. I thought: This must be his son! I called the ASB in Ft. Riley, KS and was told that Sablan had been transferred to an ASB at Ft. Hood, TX. I called Ft. Hood and was told that Sablan's company had been deployed to Afghanistan. After many phone calls to various personnel at Ft. Hood, I was able to get an address for CW2 Sablan. On October 24th, I sent him a letter includ-

ing Vietnam-era photos and an affidavit I had written in 1969 in support of a recommendation that Juan Sablan receive the Medal of Honor. I asked his help in locating the man I thought to be his father.

About a month later, my letter was returned as undeliverable; so I started calling Ft. Hood again. After about six calls, I was given a new address for CW2 Sablan in Afghanistan. I re-mailed my letter in mid-December.

Around mid-January 2012, I received a call from Juan "John" Sablan! Upon receipt of my letter, his son, Juan "Sonny" Sablan, had e-mailed his mother and father in Guam. John and I had a wonderful phone conversation.

Late in April 2012, my wife, Lois, and I arrived in Guam. We were greeted at the airport by John, his wife Arlene, his sister and his brother and his family. I was moved. John and Arlene put us up in their house and showed us the sights of their beautiful island home including introducing us to cousins, friends, their Chamorro culture and wonderful foods. Most important, after 43 years, I was finally able to thank the man who had saved my life.*

I want to thank Lt. Col. John Mike Henry, USA (Ret.) for suggesting that I put this down in writing. My wife and best friend, Lois Mohr, gave me many helpful comments and suggestions – thanks, Lois! Gof Dangkulu na Si Yu'os Ma'ase (Thank you, from the bottom of my heart) to the Sablans: To my personal hero, John, for helping me recall some of the finer points of our adventure; to Arlene for her beautiful Chamorro hospitality; and to CW3 Juan B. "Sonny" Sablan for helping me find his dad! Thanks to Andy Levas for suggesting the Epilogue.

**Tom Arner
Kingsmen 13**

From the Managing Editor ~

FELLOW MEMBERS,

I hope this edition was not delayed, but we did need to insert the very latest reunion information. A group email was also sent, yet we are more confident of everyone reading the magazine. Email, a great tool, often attempts to make us aware of both important and decidedly unimportant messages.

One interesting aspect of the Covid restrictions has been an increase in stories submitted to the Aviator. Because our activities may have been reduced, Tom Hirschler has endeavored to include as many stories as feasible to enrich your reading experience. It is obvious there are still plenty of recollections out there, we would all enjoy sharing.

Not surprisingly, many of our members are writing books, traditionally or self-published. Please be aware (within workload limits), Marc Liebman is available to review your efforts. Many of the authors have graced us

with the opportunity to advertise their books at a very affordable fee. Feedback indicates good results.

It is important to note one need not purchase an ad to obtain a review. Please contact me for more information. For the benefit of those who wish to 'blow by' the masthead; I can be reached at aviator@vhpa.org or 973-580-2422.

One final note for VHPA Chapters. Please send your activity reports to me as noted above, as well as Tom Hirschler at tah44@msn.com.

*Thank you.
Tom Kirk*

Correction:

The March/April issue of the Aviator identified Mike Sheuerman as the Scholarship Committee Chairman. **The Chairman is Tom Payne. Mike is co-chair and handles fund raising. Our apologies to Mr. Payne.**

Excerpt from 202 Shoot Down, a novel by Morgan Miller

COBRA 202

In the afternoon of the sixth day of Operation Lam Son 719, the siren at Quan Loi went off again, which meant another one of our helicopters was down. The clerk from the command bunker came to the Cobra maintenance area and told me that Cobra 202, piloted by Rick Norman, had crashed in a small clearing 20 miles north of Loc Ninh in Cambodia.

As I ran to the TOC with the clerk, I saw Spur 6, Major Russell, taking off for the crash site, along with three Hueys that had our aero-rifle platoon on board. Reaching the TOC, I heard two of our Cobras take off right behind them, when Captain MacDonald walked in.

About twenty minutes later, after the Major reached the crash site, over the radio we heard, "The Cobra went down in a small clearing. Both pilots are standing outside the bird and they appear to be fine. Tell MacDonald and Miller to get out here."

Captain MacDonald looked at me with even eyebrows, and we walked out together and got into an OH-58 scout helicopter. Captain MacDonald cranked it up and we headed for the downed Cobra. Enroute, he and the Major discussed the situation over the radio. I heard the Major confirm that both pilots were okay.

As Captain MacDonald and the Major were winding up their conversation, I pointed to our helicopters circling off in the distance. As we got closer, I suggested we fly over the crash site to see if there was a good place to land. Captain MacDonald agreed, but with caution in his voice, which was understandable. After all, I knew he had less than two weeks to go in country and I could tell he was not happy about making a perilous landing on such a dangerously small landing zone.

"Damn!" he said, "Do you think there is room for us to land?" "Yes, Sir, but it will be tight."

He made a perfect approach, and as he was about to touch down, I could see AC Rick Norman, the aero-rifle platoon leader Lieutenant Kelly, and the downed Cobra. However, to my surprise, the Cobra looked undamaged. A few minutes later, while walking up to the aircraft, I was astounded to see that the tail rotor and 90-degree gearbox were missing.

Shaking Rick's hand, I said, "Geeze, man! You are one



Cobra 202

lucky S.O.B. How did you get this machine on the ground? You have got to be the only Cobra pilot to have ever survived this kind of high torque mechanical failure!"

While inspecting the Cobra more closely, to my amazement I found that the drive shaft between the engine and transmission were undamaged, and that he didn't even damage the landing gear. I told Captain MacDonald that the aircraft would be flyable in a week, that all we needed was a new tail boom and tail rotor assembly. He passed the word to the Major and he made the necessary arrangements for a heavy-lift helicopter from Phu Loi, the Black Cats, to come out and extract the Cobra.

There were six hours of daylight left, the weather was favorable, and there was no enemy activity. The Black Cat Chinook was enroute from Phu Loi to pick up the Cobra, and Captain MacDonald, Rick Norman, and I were headed back to Quan Loi in the OH-58. Norman's copilot, FNG Captain Pete Gunn, had already left when the infantry was dropped off during the insertion, because he was so badly shaken up. The infantry stayed with the downed Cobra and waited for the extraction, and two other Cobras stayed on-station for added protection.

I spent most of the flight back to Quan Loi thinking about the accident, and how amazing it was that the pilots had survived. Rick Norman was a second-tour helicopter pilot who trained as a Cobra instructor at Fort Stewart, GA, after his first tour. For his second tour, he was attached to the Cobra Training Command at Vung Tau, and was my instructor when I went through the Cobra Transition School there. Two months later, the Army closed the Cobra Transition School because of the U.S. pullback, and Rick was transferred to 3/17th Air Cavalry Squadron. He could have stayed at squadron headquarters as the standardization pilot, but instead, he volunteered for the vacancy in our A Troop. After a month of AO training, he was promoted to Aircraft Commander. If anyone could have landed Cobra 202 with the damage it had sustained this day, it was Rick Norman.

The Cobra, also known as the "Widow Maker," had had a bad reputation ever since it entered the country in the fall of 1967. One of its problems was losing tail rotor control while

in a hovering quartering tailwind. There was also a problem with the Stability Control Augmentation System called "hard-overs." We lost Jim and Curt in June of 1970 because the controls seized up, and Craig Johnson put 097 down because of control problems. Chief Warrant Officer Young and Lieutenant Spencer were probably shot down, but they also could have had control problems.

After landing back at Quan Loi, Rick and I headed to the infirmary to check on the co-pilot. The medic there said he was in emotional disarray, but had checked out medically okay, and he had been sent to the Officers Club for a stiff one. We went to the club and found Captain Gunn on his third Scotch and water, and I met him for the first time. I asked, "How long have you been in country?" "Almost a week," he replied. We could tell he was still emotionally upset, and it was no wonder. He had just barely arrived in country and had already nearly been killed.

Since Captain Gunn was eager to hear what had happened, we turned to Rick, who explained, "The scout pilot and I had decided to give Captain Gunn some rocket target practice in case the scout came upon the enemy. So, the scout observer dropped a Willie Pete Grenade into the jungle for Captain Gunn to shoot at. While making his break from his rocket run, and starting his climb to higher altitude, the aircraft suddenly lost yaw and pitch control. I immediately took over flying, entered autorotation to stop the spin, and, with full aft cyclic, I guided the ship into the only clearing, which was right off our nose. Where we landed was a miracle. If that clearing had not been off my nose, we would have gone down in the trees and probably had a different result."

We continued our discussion about Rick's coolness and his ability to get the machine on the ground. He told us that one of the emergencies taught in flight school was landing without tail rotor control, but there was no procedure for landing without a tail rotor. He explained that the tail rotor assembly is about 27 feet aft of the center of gravity, and it weighs approximately 90 pounds. I knew that with this kind of balance change, plus the loss of anti-torque, these men were in a life-threatening situation. The other amazing thing is that Rick made the recovery from the front seat of

the Cobra, which has a control response ratio 4:1 less than the controls in the back seat. The AC usually pilots from the back seat unless he is training a new pilot, which was the case this time.

When we heard the noise of the Chinook, we went outside to watch the drop-off of 202. Then, after the Chinook departed, we headed to the aircraft for further inspection. I was still amazed that it looked totally undamaged.

The next day, representatives from Bell Helicopter and Army Maintenance flew to Quan Loi to investigate 202. They decided that 202 would be sling-loaded back to Tan Son Nhut and prepared for a flight to the United States.

Later that day over lunch, the Bell rep told me that their engineers were aware of the continuing problems with the tail rotor of the Cobra at high power settings, and he had heard they were considering putting the tail rotor on the opposite side of the tail boom. He also brought up the makers of the OH-6 scout helicopter, Hughes Aircraft, who were also having tail rotor problems, under certain situations, like a quick nose-low attitude to get away from enemy fire. This evasive maneuver would cause the tail rotor to be instantly placed in clean air with no downwash from the main rotor, which dramatically increased the tail rotor's effectiveness and caused the nose of the helicopter to go even lower. This flight condition in the OH-6 almost always made it impossible for pilots to recover.



It is interesting to note that, months after my time in Vietnam was finished, I went to Fort Bliss, TX, for an A Troop 3/17 Air Cav Reunion. While there, I got to see the new retrofit that Bell Helicopter had come up with to solve the tail rotor problem. They put the tail rotor on the opposite side of the tail boom and rotated it in the opposite direction. This was supposed to reduce the strain on the tail boom in high power situations. The tail fin and the 90-degree housing were also strengthened.

The events involving Cobra 202 and AC Rick Norman is a perfect example of how the AH-1G Cobra pilots in Vietnam were, technically, test pilots, counted on to discover design flaws that were inherent in the helicopter. Thanks to Rick Norman, one of the major problems with the Cobra was discovered, and many lives were ultimately saved as a result.

CH-47 Crew Chief Commands Seven Stars

This story involves a drafted Army enlisted man who performed magnificently during his three years of active duty, then doubled down when he re-entered the civilian world.

At the outset of my second tour in Vietnam, I was fortunate enough to be given a command of a CH-47 Chinook company in the First Air Cavalry Division. The command came with a company clerk by the name of Jerry Courington. Jerry was an accounting graduate of Abilene Christian University. He got his draft notice just weeks after graduation. Ironically, the same day he got the draft notice he also learned that he had passed the CPA exam. Jerry was not at all enthusiastic about going into the Army, particularly since we were at war in Vietnam, but he thought he might serve well as a Chaplain's assistant.

But Jerry was very good at taking tests. And lo and behold, the Army in its infinite wisdom had different plans for Jerry. Apparently, the Army thought Jerry would make a terrific helicopter crew chief. So, after basic training, off he went to Ft. Eustis to become a 15U, CH-47 flight engineer. Next, came "shake and bake" schooling where he emerged as a Specialist E-5. Then off to Vietnam. Jerry never became a full-time flight engineer. Although we did allow him to get his flight time so he could earn his flight pay. You see, Jerry was smart and he could type, thus he found himself as the company clerk. He was already serving in that position when I took command of the company.

It didn't take me long to learn just how valuable Jerry was. He was indeed my Radar O'Reilly. And, I suppose, I was his Colonel Blake of MASH fame. Jerry served as my company clerk for about four months, but halfway through his 12-month tour we lost our supply sergeant to rotation back home.

A supply sergeant position is a pretty critical job in a Chinook company with its 16 aircraft and some 325 men. My First Sergeant suggested to me, "Who would make a better supply guy than an accoun-

tant?" Great recommendation. I agreed, so we promoted Jerry to Staff Sergeant E-6, and he became our Supply Sergeant. And he quickly proved that we had made a wise decision...he did a splendid job. I left the unit in 1970 and didn't hear from Jerry again for 36 years.

He read my book, "Flying Through the Years," sent me a letter, and we began communicating again. I learned a lot from our newfound reunion. Like, unbeknownst to me, he wrote all my platoon leaders OERs for their men. And, all along, I thought I had a bunch of good writers in my unit! He also claimed that he could sign my name better than I could, and that meant that some of pilots probably found their way to the wild side of Saigon with a pass supposedly signed by Major Lanzotti. Then he related his experiences as a supply sergeant. He certainly learned quickly how to wheel and deal, and I'm sure Donald Trump would agree, "Hey, this guy ain't no apprentice!"

I also learned that after he was discharged from the Army in 1971, he went back to college on the GI Bill and earned an MBA. He then joined an international exporting company and ole smarty pants began working his way up the food chain. After several years, Jerry was promoted to CEO of a new start-up subordinate office in Houston, TX. He was told before he moved to Houston that he would have a few veterans working for him and one of them was a Navy Seal.

He met the moving vans and several of his new employees at the new company site and while unpacking noticed that one of his men was wearing a Top Gun T-Shirt. Well, that wasn't Seal paraphernalia, but Navy nonetheless. So, Jerry approached the guy and asked him, "What did you do before you joined the company?" The guy replied, "I was in the Navy." Thinking he may have found his man, Jerry then asked, "What was your job?" And the guy responded, "I was commander of the Pacific Fleet!" A four-star Admiral!

A week later, another Vet reported to Jerry and he happened to be General Schwarzkopf's Chief of Staff during Desert Storm, but later retired as a Lt. General. Now I ask you, what do you think the odds would be to find an E-6 Staff Sergeant today supervising seven stars?

I want to extract just one paragraph of one of the letters Jerry sent to me. "Although I did not do everything right while I was there, I believe it was the time I really developed the values that carried me through the rest of my life. I hope I was a good example and did not do anything to put a bad light on our unit. Not a day goes by that I don't think about my time over there. I value the time I had in the Army and especially with Charlie Company, 228th."

You know, there's one thing you cannot deny about the military...it certainly accelerates maturity. Personally, I think we may have made a big mistake when we said, "bye bye" to the draft in 1973. Let's just say that I think today's millennials may have missed an opportunity.

Bob Lanzotti
Tide 6



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CHARIOTS IN THE SKY BY LARRY A. FREELAND, PUBLISHED BY PUBLISH AUTHORITY, 300 COLONIAL CENTER PARKWAY SUITE 100, ROSWELL, GA 30076-4892, ISBN: 978-1-954000-05-6 (PAPERBACK); 320 PAGES, \$14.99 PAPERBACK, \$4.99 KINDLE. Available on Amazon in both versions.

"CHARIOTS IN THE SKY is the story of Captain Taylor St. James, a dedicated Army helicopter pilot, who is sent to Vietnam. While performing his duties, Taylor will be challenged and tested beyond any measure he could have ever envisioned.

He is assigned to the Eagles, a Huey Assault Company with the 101st Airborne Division in I Corps. Their flying exploits take them into many familiar places to include: A Shau Valley, Khe Sanh, Quang Tri Province, Hue, DMZ, North Vietnam and Laos. Along the way, Taylor participated in Lam Son 719, the last major American Offensive Operation of the war. This historical campaign lasted for sixty days and involved over 750 helicopters flying in and out of Laos, supporting the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos. Lam Son 719 was the costliest period of helicopter warfare for the Americans. More helicopters were shot down and sustained battle damage than any other period during the Vietnam War."

Vietnam Is a Long Way from Iowa...

But It's Still a Small World

*By Life member Steve Bookout,
Phoenix 62 & Razorback 33.*

While sojourning across the pond to Vietnam several years back, like many of you, I'd seen my share of strange and unusual things. Some were a mite harrowing (like suddenly observing a 105mm projectile in flight reach its apex just out your right door and arty had said they were cold at the time) and others just simply odd, but unusually so. All could be classified as "one of a kind" situations for this farm boy.

Slowly, time had marched on and the much-desired honorable discharge was in my pocket. I ended up flying back home to Iowa, found a job, and tried to raise a family. Things had slowed down and some kind of normalcy was returning into my life, but strange and unusual things still seemed to pop up once in a while. This time all were of the pleasant variety though. The following are a couple of examples for your consideration.

In the late eighties, my wife and I had got off work at Maytag, and went home. Neither of us felt like cooking supper, and strangely enough I was somehow elected to head over to the local KFC for a bucket of chicken. I had just finished placing my order when I heard from behind me: "Hello, Razorback 3-3." Whazzat?! I sort of went into a mini-freeze frame for a moment, slowly turned around, and raising my head upward. There behind me was a very tall gentleman, in his forties looking down at me.

"You don't know who I am, do you?" "No," was my quite confused reply. "I know you. In fact, I know and remember all you pilots," he shot back smiling. We stood there in silence for a moment, and he continued, "I was your flight following "Capitol Center" there in Saigon. You talked to me almost every day." I broke into a grin and ended up treating him and his wife to supper. Wow! He had retired as an E8 at Ft. Dix and they

were on their way to a new home in California. They were getting hungry and so pulled off I-80 to grab a bite before heading on to Omaha for the night. Such a happy memory for me!

Fast forward to the mid-nineties: My wife and I were on a United flight, sitting on the taxiway seemingly forever at SFO. The weather was bad ahead of us and we couldn't get clearance for departure. The flight attendants were up and down the aisle trying to keep everyone happy and content. A brown felt top hat bought the day before at Fisherman's Wharf was atop my head. A short, blonde-headed stewardess stopped to admire the hat. I stared back at her with my head cocked to one side. It was like déjà vu or something, you know...The Twilight Zone. She gazed back, probably wondering what my problem was, and I asked, "Did you ever work for Flying Tiger Airlines back in the sixties?"

Her eyes got big (as did my wife's for speaking to this unknown but attractive woman) and she blurted out, "Yes, I did. How did you know?" I smiled and gleefully replied that back in '69 I had given her a 101st Airborne Division "Screaming Eagle" pin and had pinned it on one of her apron straps. Recall: Many of the stewardesses back then wore aprons as part of their uniforms and hundreds of the guys had decorated those aprons with their unit crests and medals sometime during their flight back to "the world." She couldn't believe someone had recognized her from back then.

"You gave me a pin? Do you remember what it was?" she inquired. I replied that the tip of the black shield had been chipped from dropping it on the concrete while waiting to board back at Tan Son Nhut. Smiling, she excused herself and scurried off to the front of the airplane as the aircraft had begun moving. About 45 minutes later, she returned and said she was so lucky to meet one of "her guys" on her last flight and when we had landed in Denver, she would be retired! Wow! I

thought. What a nice coincidence and I was all smiles. Again, she headed to the front of the airliner.

A few minutes later my wife nudged me with her elbow and indicated for me to look up. Here she came again, still all smiles, but this time she was wearing that old Flying Tiger Airlines apron adorned with dozens of pins! She explained that it had been her good luck charm, had its own special carrying bag, and was along on almost every flight she made. She pointed at a pin and said, "See what I found!" There on the apron was that Screaming Eagle pin with a heavily chipped tip! How cool was that?

The Captain then walked up carrying a magnum of champagne. He introduced himself and told us that the champagne was to celebrate her retirement. She had told him about one of her "guys" being on the flight and that she was feeling really special today. Unbeknownst to us, after listening to her and observing that her attire was no longer exactly what was required for United, his curiosity became aroused. He peeked toward the back to see what was going on. Making a command decision, he felt that the champagne should be shared between the flight attendant, my wife, and me. She was now officially off work.

The Magnum was emptied (my wife doesn't drink by the way), a very enjoyable conversation ensued all the way to Denver, and the nearby passengers were all smiling at the two tipsy "old friends" (because the Captain had explained to the entire aircraft just what was being celebrated in row 28.)

The three of us were allowed to deplane first. We received some applause, many friendly smiles, and a few slaps on the back as we passed. Best of all, I got a big, tearful, but smiling hug from the former Freedom Bird hostess just before we stepped through the door. "This has been a very, very, special flight for me. Such a way to retire! Thank you, so much!"

At the moment, that old tune by the Eurhythmics Sweet Dreams Are Made of This is looping through my head...and dudes, let me close with this: life doesn't get much stranger or better than these!

UPCOMING REUNIONS

US ARMY, ALPHA TROOP, 2/17TH CAV, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION REUNION,

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Hotel TBA*

*Contact: Glen Veno
gveno36@comcast.net or 810 599 9999*

WHEN: SEPT 15-19.

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*Where: The Beach House,
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*Mention the Swift/Peachbush Reunion
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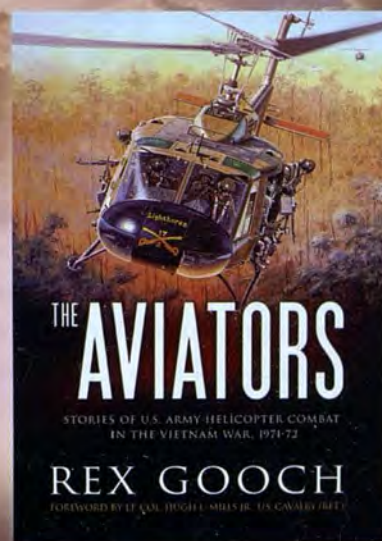
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*Note: Featured speaker will be
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USS Tucker

By Life member Warren E. Fuller

The year was 1969. Our unit, Div Arty Americal Division, had transitioned from the OH-23G (Raven) to the OH-6A (Cayuse). I had just become the CO of the Div Arty Air Section prior to this event. I was sitting in the office working on 759 Flight Records when I heard one of our pilots check in on the FM radio. He was asking for permission to shoot down a UFO. Everyone in the office turned to me as if to say WTF? I looked at the assignment board to verify that this was indeed the aviator that put an OH-23G in the South China Sea on take-off from our base in Chu Lai on his very first mission. It seems that he may have pulled on the fuel cut off lever instead of the carb heat lever, which were next to each other. I think an inbound Cobra saw the incident and hovered over him so that he could grab the skid, then proceeded to drag him to shore. A couple months after that, I got a call from Division Headquarters that an OH-6A that belonged to us was at the swimming beach, picking up troops, flying them a short distance from the beach and then letting them dive in to the sea. Yes, this was the same aviator who now wanted to shoot down a UFO.

I got on the horn and told him NOT to do anything with the UFO and that I'd call Division Headquarters and report what he saw. After I reported this "UFO Incident", I got an immediate call back from the Naval Liaison Officer (LO). He told me to be sure and NOT let anyone shoot at anything that looked like a UFO. This UFO was a DASH (Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter) which was controlled remotely and had a TV camera that was used to adjust naval gunfire from the USS Tucker (DD 875). The Naval LO asked me if I wanted to fly out to the USS Tucker to see what they were

doing. I said "definitely" and he then asked me if I had access to a helicopter...to which I replied...how many do you want? He jumped into a jeep and was at our office within 10 minutes. We then went down to the flight line and took off from Ky Ha in an OH-6A. I had already asked the Naval LO if they knew we were coming and he just grinned at me and said..." yes, they're expecting us".

I contacted the USS Tucker and asked for permission and landing instructions, to which they told me to circle the ship until they could turn the ship into the wind. Being 24 years old and brash, I responded that they didn't need to turn the ship for me, as I could land this thing on a dime. They gave me a "Roger that" and in I came. The USS Tucker had removed a 5" aft gun mount and made it into a very small helipad they used to launch and recover the DASH. The ship's Captain and XO were there to greet us and began giving us the tour, which was quite impressive for this Army type. I spent

Page 14 The VHPA Aviator



OH-6



OH-23

a lot of time looking at the DASH area. The Captain asked me during the tour if I could take the ship's photographer on a flight around the ship while they were firing a live mission. I couldn't have said "ABSOLUTELY SIR" fast enough. As luck would have it, no sooner had I responded to the Captain, when a request for naval gunfire came in. I loaded up the photographer and we took off, circling the ship and taking pictures. A couple of times I got too close to the guns and the concussion from the guns was beyond belief for me. I kept looking for cracks in the plexiglass.

After the live fire mission,

we landed and got something to eat. The Naval LO mentioned to the Captain that the Americal Division Headquarters was having a party that night and invited him to attend. The

Captain declined, saying that he couldn't leave his ship, but offered the XO the chance to go in his place and represent the USS Tucker. The XO agreed to go, as long as I could bring him back to the ship that night. I agreed to everything and the Captain said that he wanted me to spend the night on the ship when we got back...promising me a breakfast fit for a king. I cleared everything with Col. Jones, the Div Arty Commander, before we departed back to Chu Lai. I had everything ready for takeoff when the XO returned from the division party. Like most nights there, it was pitch black looking out over the sea, except for a few fishing boats lights along the shoreline. I established radar contact with the ship and they began giving me vectors towards the ship. As I was following their course directions, the XO kept telling me that I was going in the wrong direction. I relayed this back to the radar operator, but he assured me that



USS Tucker landing pad (forward of rear 5" mount)



he had identified me on his scope. **USS Tucker**
The XO kept pointing to a blue light off in the distance, saying "I'm telling you, that's our ship over there". The look he gave me told me that he knew what he was talking about. I told the radar operator to continue to monitor us, but that I was following the XO's directions. Sure enough, 10 minutes later we were on the deck of the USS Tucker. I had a nice shower before retiring for the night and slept extremely well. I got up just in time for that breakfast and the Captain was right, those stewards know how to cook a breakfast. It was at breakfast that the Captain had me sign the ship's log or something like that, which stated that I was the first pilot to land on the USS Tucker at night time. He presented me with some ship souvenirs that I took back to our unit, one being a USS Tucker plaque that we hung up in the office and I gave the lighters to those who smoked.

On the helipad, we shook hands, saluted, and wished each other well. I took a gander at the weather and noticed that we were still in a thin fog bank and knew I'd be out of it once I gained some altitude. Once through the fog bank, I turned west towards land and that's when I realized that I had no idea where I was. The skyline was completely different and I was lost. I immediately radioed the USS Tucker to see what our location was and this is a fairly accurate account of what I was told:

"Uhhh, Cpt. Fuller, we forgot to tell you this morning that the USS Tucker was ordered to the Cam Ranh Bay area...we've been steaming south for a while now. We just passed Qui Nhon."

Great; at least I was still south of the DMZ. My memory fails me a bit right now as to where I stopped to refuel on the way back north to Chu Lai. Later, when the USS Tucker came back in to our AO, one of our pilots went out for a visit as well and took an AK-47 as a present from Div Arty Air.

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VN TOUR ORIGINATORS



WHERE HISTORY COMES ALIVE

Armor Components in Vietnam

Gary Worthy always wanted to be a helicopter pilot. Growing up, he loved watching TV shows such as Whirlybirds and dreaming of flying. After flight school, Gary was sent to Vietnam in 1968.

As a 1st Lieutenant in the 11th Armored Cavalry regiment his job was similar to being a "bird dog", flying low over the jungle looking for enemy ambushes to protect the soldiers below him moving through the jungle. Sometimes he would hover over the jungle

using the rotor wash from the helicopter blades to clear foliage to look for footprints, trails, or signs of the enemy.

As a pilot, Gary was issued an armored chest protection plate which are colloquially called 'chicken plates'. These vests, which included a CoorsTek ceramic component made from alumina, were issued to all pilots. During one of his scouting missions, Gary and another passenger, his observer, spotted something that looked unusual on the ground.

"I saw what looked like a bamboo table, sitting in the jungle," he said.

When he brought his helicopter closer to investigate further, several enemy soldiers started shooting at the helicopter with AK-47 automatic rifles. One of the bullets hit Gary directly over the heart. Fortunately, he was wearing the armored plate, so the bullet did not kill him instantly. Instead, the bullet ricocheted and went through his jaw and into his skull.

The observer in the co-pilot seat was not hit, but there were multiple rounds in his seat,



Gary Worthy in 1968.

which was also protected by armor. Gary was later told that the helicopter had over 75 bullet holes.

Despite the bullet lodged in his skull, Gary was able to fly the helicopter back to a safe area, not knowing how injured he actually was. When he landed, his wingman, Mr. Ballou immediately picked him up and flew him to a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) unit. Upon landing, the MASH doctors didn't immediately

get to work on him, until Mr. Ballou pointed his weapon at one of the doctors and told him he had better attend to Gary. Gary was then moved to a larger hospital and spent three months recovering in Saigon, Japan, and Fitzsimons Army hospital in Denver.

When Gary tells his story, he says that the 'chicken plate' saved his life. If he hadn't been wearing it, the bullet proba-

bly would have killed him immediately. To this day Gary still has the bullet in his head. The area where the incident occurred was later found to be a large Vietcong base camp.

Today Gary lives in Atwood, Kansas where in 1975 he founded Sunflower Aero Inc., an aerial crop dusting business. Gary still runs the business today.

CoorsTek has been manufacturing life-saving ceramic armor components since the 1960s.

Article reprinted with the permission of CoorsTek, Inc.



PROTECTION FOR MEN IN VIET NAM BUILT IN GOLDEN
Inspectors at Coors Porcelain Co. of Golden check dimensions of ceramic components of new armor designed for troops fighting in the jungle. At right is Edward Miller, supervisor of inspection. With him is William Harbert, product engineering supervisor.

CERAMIC SHIELD

Coors Manufacturing Armor for Viet Nam

A Vietnam War era newspaper article showcases the manufacture of armor components at Coors Porcelain (today's CoorsTek).



We're still going to Charlotte...but...

The new dates are 3-6 August (banquet on Friday, 6 August)

Rationale: With the current state of the pandemic and the health restrictions in North Carolina, the City of Charlotte, and the Westin Hotel, we were able to work with the hotel in negotiating new dates a bit further out to increase the likelihood of a more fully attended, healthy, and successful reunion.

As you have become accustomed, there are no guarantees with regard to health conditions or space restrictions over the next 90-120 days, but we are hopeful that things will continue to improve and that we will finally be together. We realize that this adjustment may be disruptive to some, but we ask for your understanding in that we were guided solely by the best interests of our overall membership.

Details will be up on the website as soon as they are finalized. The reunion registration and the hotel reservation system will follow once everything is finalized. Please monitor the website for the most current information.

We ask for your continued patience and flexibility as we continue to navigate these unpredictable times.



Quilters Show and Tell

With the situation of the pandemic continuing to improve, the VHPA Reunion in Charlotte, NC has been rescheduled for 3 August through 6 August 2021 with the Quilter's Show and Tell scheduled for 5 August 2021.

A few of the quilts will be on display August 3rd and 4th in the Vendor's Room. Stop by and see a sample of the quilts that will be presented to 10 of our fellow veterans. I would love to meet and talk to you and answer any questions you may have.

Everyone is welcome on 5 August from 2:00 to 4:00 when the Quilters will be presenting the quilts to the selected recipients. The Quilter's Show and Tell will follow. Hope that everyone has been busy this past year and will be bring their blocks or projects.

A RECAP ON THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BLOCKS:

- ★ The unfinished blocks are to be 12 and one-half square
- ★ Fabrics to be quilt quality
- ★ Colors are to be red, white/cream and blue
- ★ Prewash all fabrics as some will bleed.

Kathleen Sherfey . klskms@aol.com

12420 W 53rd Terr ~ Shawnee, KS 66216

NOTICE TO CHANGE THE VHPA BY-LAWS

CHAPTER 15 – BY-LAW AMENDMENTS

1. Proposed amendments will be submitted to the VHPA or any VHPA officer 90 days prior to the annual business meeting at which they will be considered.
2. The adoption of the amendment(s) at a meeting of the VHPA shall be by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. Unless otherwise stated in the amendment(s), all amendments shall be effective the day following the conclusion of the meeting at which they were adopted.

Current By-Law:

CHAPTER 9 – MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

6. The presence of three percent (3%) of the membership at an annual meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Problem:

At the present membership level of 8,511 members, that means that we would need 256 members present to achieve a quorum. We have come dangerously close in the past to not having that number present and if we fall below the three percent (3%), we would not have a legal annual business meeting or could not hold officer elections and conduct the business affairs of the organization. We also have members attending the reunion, but who choose not to attend the annual business meeting (their prerogative). As we age and with some members having travel or mobility issues, we could have a lower number of members attending the annual reunion and annual business meeting. We need to set a more reasonable percentage to ensure that we achieve a quorum now, and in the future, as our membership and attendance at annual reunions declines.

Proposed Amendment:

6. The presence of thirty percent (30%) of the registered dues-current Vietnam Helicopter Pilots at the annual reunion and present at the annual meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Rationale:

If we tie the percentage to the number of VHPA members registered to attend the reunion, we will have a "sliding number" whereby the one-third (30%) remains achievable for the foreseeable future.

~ See you in Charlotte

REUNION ★ 2021

CHARLOTTE - NORTH CAROLINA

The Westin Charlotte

1601 S. College St.
Charlotte, NC 28202

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

\$129 + tax over these dates of 3 August – 6 August, 2021 **BASED ON AVAILABILITY**
(VHPA room rate availability limited pre & post reunion dates)

Cutoff date for VHPA hotel rate is 12, July, 2021

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

VHPA 2021 PRELIMINARY REUNION SCHEDULE

Tuesday 3 August	Wednesday 4 August	Thursday 5 August	Friday 6 August
Mini Reunions	Golf	Gold Star Breakfast	Memorial Service
Vendor Room	Vendor Room	Quilters Show & Tell	Business Meeting
Early Bird Reception	Welcome Reception	Vendor Room	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 in his and wife, Ruth's 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.



Night Cross Country

William R. Vaughn

<http://betav.com>

Someone told a fun story on one of my veteran Facebook pages. It seems he ran out of gas on a long night cross-country training flight. I wondered if I was also one of those pilots in the air that night.

I fondly remember my days (and nights) at Ft. Wolters--the Army's Primary Flight Training School where all Army helicopter pilots learned to fly. On our massive (entire class) night cross-country navigation exercise that included dozens of OH-23 and TH-55 helicopters, I remember using my grease pencil to chart out my course on the plastic-covered maps. Our instructors had given us a route that crisscrossed the Texas hill-country around Mineral Wells. We were to fly from Ft. Wolters to a town (probably Palo Pinto), turn to navigate to another town (probably Grayford), find a highway intersection, and then head home. It would take about ninety minutes. Easy--in the daytime. Not that easy at night.

On the flight line, once the pre-flight was done, I strapped in, took a deep breath, and got situated--placing my maps on the seat. I was ready. When it was my turn, I fired up the engine and lifted off to hover down the runway following the conga line of helicopters in front of me. Listening to the tower, I was eventually cleared to take off. I remember my heart trying to escape my chest and my leather gloves feeling clammy. It would be my first solo night cross-country.

Keeping the ship ahead of me in sight until I was clear of the traffic pattern, I saw the flight and the ship ahead were following everyone else--a long line of blinking position lights snaked off in a (more-or-less) straight line into the night sky. "This is going to be easy," I said to myself.

I remember how beautiful it was to fly at night--the lights of the cities, the farms, and even the porchlights far below. I could even pick out the highways and the car headlights and... wait. This was not a scenic tour. I had a mission to fly.

Checking the mag compass, I realized I was not on course--by a lot. <expletive> I guessed I had plotted it wrong and kept following everyone else. But the towns on the ground and the roads didn't match up either. What the <expletive>? Where are they all going? I told myself that the training officers were playing a trick on us--it was all part of the training. "Some flights MUST

be flying different routes," I said to myself.

I got my bearings, decided to trust my plotted course, and turned back toward my first checkpoint. A few minutes later, the lights on the ground and the pattern of the highways started to match up with what I had expected to see. Whew.

At the time, I had no idea that the aircraft behind me were having to make a decision: either follow me and my rogue (he's probably lost) flight path or follow the other aircraft who (in my opinion) were heading off in the wrong direction.

About this time, a voice came on over the radio. It was the TAC officer flying high above us. He made it clear that the long line of aircraft I had been following were lost. At that point, it was almost comical as the lead ships tried to find the right course. Not so funny if you consider that now there were aircraft everywhere--flying around like bees who have lost the scent of the hive.

Something had gone terribly wrong with their navigation. Then another voice came on over the radio. I don't remember who said it, but it suggested that pilots switch from red cockpit lights to white so they could read their maps. It seems that red grease pencil plot marks disappear under red light. Who knew? In the debrief session that night we had a long talk about following the leaders when you know (or think) they're wrong. Yes, we were lucky no one was injured. I expect some pilots got lost and ran out of fuel and set down all over North Texas, but the only thing they lost was a bit of pride.

Incidentally, flying at night is scary. Our training helicopters had no radar to see other aircraft, mountains, or those uber-scary radio towers (it's not the tower, it's the guy-wires). We're trained to look into the black and hope we see any approaching aircraft or obstacles. We use red lights in the cockpit to help us see better at night. We learned why flight planning is so important. We plot our courses around the towers, the hills, and the office buildings. We also must plan for the weather which can (without notice) reduce visibility and force us to land and take the fun and excitement out of the flight.

That said, I still think flying at night is also exhilarating. Once you've done it, (and survived), it's something that you'll not soon forget. The adrenaline rush is what brings us back into the air--night or day.

And no, I no longer fly my own planes or helicopters--and I make a terrible passenger.

LOOKING FOR

Hello Tom,

My name is Lauren Sherrick, and I am the daughter of Gary Smalkoski who was a decorated Vietnam helicopter pilot serving in the Army. He passed away in 1999 when I was 12 and I am looking to connect with anyone who may have known him during his military career. I have carried on his legacy and have become a fixed-wing career pilot so I would love to know more about his flying in order to feel more connected to him, as I wish every day, we could share stories and could go flying together. If you could please pass this along to your members in hopes I can connect with someone who knew him, to learn more about his aviation career. I would appreciate it! Please share my contact information.

Thanks,

Lauren Sherrick

262-914-2801

Laurensherrick26@gmail.com

Dear Editor,

I was a grunt, and I am looking for one your bravest.

I was with the 1/8th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division from August 1968 - March 1970 as an Infantry Small Unit Commander in the jungles around An Khe, Pleiku, Kontum, and Dak To. I flew with a LOH pilot just outside An Khe, who we all remember only as "Crash" and whose name I think was Bentley. Does anyone recall this incredibly brave, EXTREMELY SKILLED young man?

I heard tales of him landing next to the Brigade Commander's shower and getting into trouble for blowing dust all over him. I also heard of him circling a bamboo clump with a .51-caliber machine gun and shooting at them out the side of his LOH with his pistol.

My personal recollection is of his landing in a clearing just outside of An Khe and asking if I wanted to see the top of a ridge line we were about to ascend. Little did I know that he intended to cut bamboo all the way up the trail, below the canopy. I still don't know how he managed to get us back down that trail backward without crashing.

Would love to meet him again and thank him. I lost seven men that day, but would have lost many more if he had not shown us the bunkers on that ridge.

Homer R. Steedy Jr., swamp_fox@earthlink.net

Tom

During the Summer and Fall of 1970 I was the S-3 for the 13th CAB at Soc Trang Army Air Field and we ran several combat assault missions with Navy Seals to try to free U.S. POWs in the Mekong Delta. We came close on two occasions with Seal casualties on the last mission during a combat assault in a mangrove swamp near where The Mekong River flowed into the South

China Sea.

We flew the injured casualties to Bin Thuy Hospital near Can Tho. I would really like to hear from Huey pilots who flew the two lift ships or the two gunships. I was flying C&C with the Seal Platoon Leaders.

Dan Schrage Tel (404) 395-4456

Hello Tom,

We have acquired a UH-1 for our Bennington NE veterans memorial from Bennington VT!

We also need volunteers who can help restore the craft. We need a rotor, and we need someone who can re-attach the tail, as it was removed to transport, and painting. A full history of the aircraft is on our website under "Updates", Operation Restore Huey" NVVMF Website <https://nvvmf.org>

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter!

Dottie Barickman,

VVA National Board of Directors (2015-2021)

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

drbarickman@hotmail.com

dbarickman@vva.org

712-314-1808

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Contact: John Conway

NEW!!! 816-813-3488

JPConway@sbcglobal.net

NEW!!! Website: museum.vhpa.org

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

Fair Prices Paid. Not for profit.
References available.

NATIONAL AMERICAN HUEY HISTORY MUSEUM

By Robert Fureigh, Musket 39, 176th AHC
with American Huey 369, Inc.



www.americanhuey369.com

Facebook: **American Huey 369**

Sixteen years ago, John and Alan Walker purchased Vietnam Veteran UH-1H 70-16369 off eBay to fix up for personal static display. Interest and support soon grew among other veterans and patriots, and with much work and some fundraising, "369" was beautifully restored and - instead of static display - returned to flight. Among the volunteers, a mission crystallized: to preserve, educate and honor all veterans (especially those that served in Vietnam, as well as Gold Star family members). The organization has since grown tremendously, with two more aircraft restored to flight (with another one, donated by Lockheed Martin, in the works); several other airframes awaiting restoration; and a growing collection of Vietnam artifacts. Along the way, the emotions of hundreds of thousands of Americans were touched as we flew the Hueys to veteran related events at a steady pace. Through passionate dedication and with divine oversight, American Huey 369 has attended 227 events without a single cancellation by weather or mechanical failure, and membership now exceeding 20,000!

Commitment to attaining goals has been demonstrated through significant effort to restore three aircraft to flight, acquisition of a beautiful 34-acre museum site, construction of a 60'x140' facility for storage of aircraft and equipment, operation of a temporary museum, and myriad other accomplishments, as well as expansive, laudatory recognition in two issues of Warbird Digest.

While there are countless warbird restorations and many aviation museums around the country, no attention has been directed toward a museum for the symbol of The Helicopter War - the iconic Huey. **That time is NOW!**

As a volunteer organization of veterans and patriots with the mission to preserve, educate, and honor, it is incumbent for us to lead the charge to build the National American History Museum. That realization took hold a few years ago as we began fundraising toward a goal of \$4 million. So far, \$1.75 million (44%) has been raised through focused (\$1K minimum) Founder drives, individual donations, sales of Memory Bricks, and Jim Crigler's Mission of Honor campaign. Several months ago, our landlord at Grissom Air Reserve Base advised us that our old temporary quarters are too close to the runway and must be vacated for demolition. Though a deadline has not been established, the need to expedite museum fundraising was immediately obvious. While founder donations have ticked up, pressure remains to meet our fundraising goal. We are fortunate though to be able to take a few steps forward as we continue seeking founder (and other) donations.

RECENT MILESTONES TOWARD MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT

1. In January, John Walker and Phil Marshall drove to Columbus, Nebraska, and made a \$400,000 deposit toward a \$1,000,000 package of steel materials for the 34,000 SF museum building. The materials package will be delivered in late spring.
2. For fire prevention (sprinkler system) and domestic water needs, it was necessary to tap into a water main on the opposite side of divided US Highway 31. The work required boring a 20" passage under the highway to accommodate 300 linear feet of 16" steel casing pipe, then pulling through 300 LF of 6" ductile cast iron pipe.
3. To evaluate subsurface conditions, several soil borings were performed at the building site. Analysis of the data will allow detailed design of the foundation.
4. For erection of the museum building, a contract has been executed with GCC Steel Erectors of Plainfield, Indiana. Our two previous Aviator ads resulted in several \$1,000 Museum Founder donations from VHPA members. One pilot donated his Covid stimulus check. Great idea! I plan to follow suit. Also, five VHPA chapters became Museum Founders. To all, thank you for helping preserve your history and the history of our beloved Hueys, and to educate current and future generations about our service.

While we will be starting construction around the time this issue of the Aviator arrives in your mailbox, it is uncertain that we can keep it going. More Founders are needed. If you **BELIEVE** and can help, **BECOME A FOUNDER**. You may use the form on the facing page or find it at www.americanhuey369.com.

This is a paid advertisement.

PHASE 3 FOUNDER APPLICATION

HELP PRESERVE THEIR HISTORY TODAY!

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

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

Contact Us:

John Walker: (765) 469-2727

Email: info@americanhuey369.com

www.AmericanHuey369.com

First *Flight* in Vietnam

By Andrew Belmont

After Warrant Officer Flight School in April of '68, I spent eight months at Ft. Sill, OK learning to fly the CH-47 Chinook. Not a slow learner, but a member of a Chinook unit building to deploy to Vietnam. Sixteen new-from-the-factory helicopters, 24 Warrant Officers (16 fresh from Ft. Rucker), eight Commissioned Officers and almost 400 enlisted flight & support troops assembled in a fashion that the Army has done, well, since there has been an Army. In the Grand Scheme of Army Things, the entire cast of characters was ordered to deploy from Ft. Sill to Hue Phu Bai, I Corps, 101st Airmobile Div., RVN on 24 Dec 1968.

In actuality, and after much confusion, the Unit deployed on 30 Dec. WELCOME TO VIET NAM! Merry Christmas err International Date Line So Happy New Year. oh 'Get over it, you're in a Combat Zone!!' Aircraft by Sea in November, Company Personnel by air in December.

Due to C Co. 159th ASHB arriving in mass with a totally new cast of characters to a war zone, life focused on getting settled and finding where the pots 'n pans for the mess hall were stored, and inspecting the 16 aircraft after their ocean voyage. Most of the unit's new accommodations were ready for occupation except Junior Officers' quarters. So, with guidance from Navy CBs we set about constructing our living quarters. While the dust was settling around C Co, I was granted a three-day pass to visit my already In-Country brother. As part of the WORWAC program, I signed about a dozen documents and one was a waiver about two family members serving together in a Combat Zone. Who knew?

I wrangled flights from I Corps to III Corps, Saigon. My Grunt brother maneuvered from 50 miles west of Saigon, Delta, 7th Sqd., 1st Air Cav Reg. How this came together was more luck than skill, but indeed we

met. I cherish a photo of him in faded fatigues and me in new green jungle fashion standing in front of the Saigon Hotel. My brother was on a tight time-line and we spent about five hours together before he needed to head back to base. Brother - Combat Vet with V Device medal. Hug, take Care n See Ya?

As I started to work my way back north and hitch a helicopter ride, I met up with several WO Classmates from '68-1 that were Huey Pilots and now Aircraft Commanders, 'Old Guys' with combat experience. So, me being 'pale faced and red skinned (sunburned) they asked, "where have you been?" "Flying Chinooks!" Ooooooh, what that like?" Me: "Easy. If the cigarette lighter does not work, we red X the aircraft, thus NO FLY." Wow says Huey guys. Ha Ha I thought, there isn't cigarette lighter in a Chinook, and at that point in my RVN service zero flying time. But hey, I was a newbie face to face with 'Real Pilots'! But each of my classmate Aircraft Commanders said upon seeing me, "Hey, Bob Beck is just down the road from here, want a ride?" "Yeah, sure," I said.

Why the instant connection with me and Bob Beck former classmate?

Bob Beck, born in Munich Germany whose father was WWII US Army occupation troop who met and married a sweet Fraulein and settled in Long Island NY with his new family, including mother-in-law. Bob, blonde hair, blue eyes, always smiling, motorcycle (Harley) rider, bugs in his teeth, wonderful fellow to be around. Me from Philly, then Detroit, then Army, were Urban guys and In Sync when we were grouped together in a new Warrant Officer Rotary Wing Aviation Course (WORWAC). Easier said as WOC - Warrant Officer Candidate school and piece of brass worn on one's uniform. (An unusual focal point for every TAC Officer during multiple daily inspections).

When cast into the haphazard mixture of Army recruits it is hard to express how or why fellows 'Buddy Up' or 'Just Hang' together but 'Welcome to The Army' and life streams along. Bob and I made an instant connection that lasted for the remainder of WOC training and afterward. When time would allow from the WOC regimen of double time everywhere, brace against the wall, spit shine shoes along with shinning toilet fixtures and that WOC insignia better GLOW in the dark it was expected that future Warrant Officers Should and Will Be socialized.

A highlight of WOC school was a monthly dance at the EM Club with requisite socializing provided by the fair sex via the gracious, lovely, charming, sweet, effervescent, proper ladies from Texas Woman's University, who would oblige with patriotic fervor and came to a Saturday Night Dance at Ft. Wolters via a couple of the Greyhound Bus loads all the way from Denton, TX, ±85 miles one way,

but by Texas standards '...just over there.'* see p.s. below* So, at least 10 minutes before the eagerly anticipated Greyhounds crowded with Southern Bell's arrived, WOCs would be waiting and jostling for position to be an Escort for "My Lady"! As each Damsel emerged from the steps of the bus, an eager WOC would present his arm and profess a desire to be her escort for the evening. And two by two waltz into the EM dance hall.

Not a problem for Bob and Me. We two were still putting on After Shave Cologne while the eager beavers were salivating by the bus. 'Let the dust settle' and we would pick off the loveliest of the lovelies with Bob's smile and our practiced Motown dance steps. The Tempting Temptations and The Fabulous Four Tops were good enough



Dennis & Andrew Belmont, Saigon 1969.

guides, but no match for Bob and Andrew's dynamic dance steps. Once viewed by the lovelies, scatter around the dance floor only the bravest and usually attractive Co-Eds from TX Woman's would attempt to join our inner circle and abandoned those lesser WOC peter-pilots 'wanna bes'. Hey, only have two arms so how many girls can you sweep OFF the dance floor? High standards to be #1 amongst one peers, but Bob and I humbly accepted the challenge and with Courtly Gentlemen Gallantry allowed the Little Lovelies to SCHMOOZE with the two Cool guys.

After my fourth Huey hop from Saigon, I'm now in Dong Tam, IV Corp, 9th Inf Div. HQ and the friendly Huey pilots, not a classmate but aware of Bob Beck's reputation within the Division, says

Beck's unit is over there and the Orderly Room is that brown building to the left. "Thanks," I said. Finally getting closer to my goal of finding Bob Beck, announced myself to the PFC clerk and asked where can I find WO Beck. "Oh, he is on duty tonight and is down at the Ready Area... that way." So, from Goodbye to my brother in Saigon it has been about two hours until I am about to connect with Bob Beck. Sometime about 1900 hr, I walk into an Army Canvas Tent and there are four inhabitants and Yoho one of them is Bob Beck!

The Ready Area: pierced steel planking used since WWII to make "Instant Runway" was at one end of the Unit's helicopter home base with maintenance, fuel, and ammo and for several dozens of helicopters. But just outside the ready tent were two AH-1G helicopter - Gun Ships - Attack Helicopters - which I was not cognizant of as I was focused on Bob Beck. Nine months have passed since we have last seen each other, and our departure was typical Army. We started school together but for this and that I finished school a class ahead of Bob, got Sworn In (by my Father, LTC Ret USAF WWII, Korea) have a party and Tata get out of Ft. Rucker while Bob is off on another WORWAC adventure until his swearing and pin a month later. Gone and dispersed Army style but not forgotten and now face to face!

The Ready Tent, is true Army with four spring cots, one 3' x 4' table and two wooden folding chairs and center wooden support poles. Three seconds after entering the tent Bob Beck jumps up and bear hugs me, "What the heck are you doing here?" After one minute of explanation, Bob turns to his Co-Pilot and says, "Leave your helmet and 'Chicken Plate' (armor chest protector) for Andrew as he will be my gunner tonight." That WO was about as sunburned as me, but it took him less than five seconds to jump up, hand me his helmet and gone. But before I could reconcile with my goal of connecting with Bob, he grabs me by the arm and says, 'Come here, let me show you how to get into a Cobra Helicopter.' If you missed the step-in sequence, then you were facing the tail of the helicopter and unable to enter the for-

ward gunner seat and Alert Time did not allow for hesitation. Huh? COBRA, Gunner, what Alert?

Back to the Ready Tent and excited to see my man Bob the previous orientation to a helicopter that I have never seen before was part of the excitement of our connection after all these months. Blah, blah, blah between me and Bob and now about 2100 hrs. and I'm fading fast, and the Army cots are looking mighty good. Eventually, Bob and I slow down, at the request of the other two occupants of the tent and settle in the cots.

'ATTENTION', unnoticed, by me, in the corner of the tent was a radio and suddenly it announced in loud decibels "Fire Mission!" Curses and hustle 'n bustle, Bob on the radio getting mission info and the other two pilots are mounting their aircraft. Bob yells at me to come on, let's go. Remembering the step sequence and entered the front seat cockpit, put on a tight helmet, and look as to where to plug in the helmet to the radio. Bob is in the rear cockpit which has full controls and starts the engines. Close the canopy and off we go into the Wild Black Night of RVN. Enroute to the mission, Bob instructs me how to unhook the gun sight and which trigger activates which guns. IV Corp Vietnam is mostly flat with only a few hills to worry about, but it does have cities and jungle. We set up an orbit about 1,800 feet above the terrain and Bob is busy on the radios talking to the ground troops and his wingman. Turns out an ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) thinks there are bad guys advancing on one side of them. Bob does not see any movement, I see darkness. So, after some negotiation Bob is getting frustrated and he descends from orbit altitude and comes to a three-foot hover 500 feet in front of a tree line about 500 feet to the side of the ARVN unit. He turns on the aircraft landing/search light and scans the tree line telling me to follow the light's path with the gun sight. Hover, hover, and scan left - right one, two, three times. Suddenly, I have a butt clinching moment aware that I am #1 target during this whole exercise. The ARVN are placated, and we return to base, refuel and back to the tent.

It's been a long day for me and I hit the sack. "ATTENTION - Fire Mission!" This turns out to be an escort for a Long-Range Recon Petrol extraction. Darker than the previous mission of two hours ago and all I recall was a shadow (Huey) descend into the trees. No shooting and back to base and that seldom used cot. In all honesty I dozed off on each return trip and was not a functioning crewman during most of these episodes. 0600 hrs. Bob and team are released from duty and Bob says, "Come on Andy" let me show you how the guns work!" Off we go into a dawn sky and Bob is giving me more info about the gun sight that I have my hands on. Bob explains that this is a free fire zone and thus no need to get permission to shoot whatever. He spots a small bamboo structure and sets up for a gun run. So, we nose over steeper than I thought a helicopter could and Bob commands, "SHOOT." I pull the trigger and the mini-gun sounds off but I'm nowhere near the target but Yo give me a couple of seconds and I'll get it, when Bam! My helmet hits the side of the canopy as Bob pulls UP and left, how shall I say ABRUPTLY! Back to altitude and more instruction from Bob and, "...don't forget the grenade launcher as it covers our break". Ok got it, dive "Shoot", mini-gun closer but... "Grenades"! shouts Bob as again my helmet makes hard contact with the canopy. Two more runs and now in the 'I bet I scared them this time' marksmanship and the grenades were lost in space. Back to base and some chow and some needed sack time. About 1200 hrs. met up with about four former classmates in the lift platoon and swapped stories. Later, hop, skip and jump back to I Corp and the 101st.

My first four hours of flight time in Vietnam were in an AH-1 Huey Cobra. Got one hour in a OH-6 months later and with my first month about ten hours, counting the Cobra time and my last month about 40 hours, I squeezed in Nine Hundred and Ninety-eight hours in CH-47 Chinooks. Many adventures and couple Medals later back to USA. Eight months later a Civilian.

Epilogue:

Bob and I met two more times while in RVN.

Bob extended his tour for six months in exchange for 30-day home leave and an early out of the Army. Our last meeting was after his return to RVN, and he was less effervescent Bob and war weary. I finished my tour and soon afterward so did Bob and once again loss of connection between us. Many moons later with the founding of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and their annual reunions at different cities across the US, I was always hopeful of connecting again with Bob. Alas, it turns out Bob perished in an airplane training accident in the late 1970s. R.I.P. Bob Beck.

p.s. Texas Women's University founded in 1901 in Denton, TX about 40 miles NE of Dallas. Great history of training women in Industrial Arts, Nursing and Liberal Arts especially women of Hispanic culture. Nice.

The First Signal Corp Army Aviation flight training was moved from Ft. Myers, VA to Dallas, TX in 1909 because Myers was for horse Cav and Aviation was - well just not MILITARY. So, in the wide-open spaces of TX the boy of the Air was training. Soon due to objections from local community groups about the cohabitation and resulting pregnancy between the Fair Ladies of Texas Woman's and those Army Aviators, Political Correctness made the Army move of men and facilities to the barrens of Ft. Sill, OK.

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...

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 8 New Members and covers the period 02.18.21 to 04.07.21

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

Dillard John Samuel **
Pensacola Florida
Navy
55-G
HC-1 DET 49 in 65-66;
VAQ-130 DET 66 in 68

Erickson Lyle W **
Rapid City South Dakota
Army
68-518 68-32
116 AHC in 70-71

Fowler Ormond Craig **
Savannah Georgia
Navy
HA(L)-3 in 70-71

Harp Donald B. **
Owens Cross Roads
Alabama
Army
69-9 69-3
HHC 1 AVN BDE in 69-70

Murphy Delmar D.
'Dwayne' **
Naples Florida
Army
69-22
611 TC CO in 70

Peifer Richard W. 'Rick'
Chisago City Minnesota
Army
68-15
2 SIG GP in 68-70

Porter Kurt J
Madison Alabama
Army
68-31 68-517
15 TC 1 CAV in 69-70

Sasser Roff H. **
Rincon Georgia
Army
69-31 69-29
134 AHC in 70-71

Combat Helicopter Pilots Association

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



Website: www.chpa-us.org
Email: hq@chpa-us.org
Phone: 800-832-5144 messages
Membership assistance:
Loren McAnally (205) 529-4684 cell
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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

Despite Snowmageddom, the great Texas freeze, and COVID, our band of hardy aviators and their partners were up to the challenge. No sir, those obstacles could not keep us down even though the great freeze and snowstorm of February 2021 enveloped south central Texas. COVID...we can deal with it. Our Governor determined that Texans were big boys and girls and essentially opened the state up from almost all COVID restrictions saying that we could make our own decisions of how to deal with COVID.

On February 24th we had a great luncheon at the Bourbon Street Seafood Kitchen. March 23rd found us at The Barn Door Restaurant with an Executive Council Business meeting followed by a great dinner with 30 + chapter members and their partners and guests. The Executive Council discussed continuing support of the Huey 369 project and the Vietnam Archives Project at Texas Tech. The chapter will issue a check in the amount of \$1,350 to Vietnam Archives Project. Every penny was a donation made by our members. Mike Law provided everyone with a pledge slip to be used to pledge money in support of the Huey 369 project. President Ray Vaske provided the council with an update on his Zoom meeting with multiple chapter presidents. Great ideas were exchanged, some of which the Alamo Chapter intends to pursue. They include: The Wreaths Across America Program, attending funeral and/or memorial services for "unclaimed" vets, and offering local high schools the opportunity for some of our aviators to address students on the Vietnam War and the differences between Memorial Day and Veterans Day and the significance attached to those holidays.

Toward the end of the evening excitement started to build in anticipation for the drawing for the door prize. Fred Lyssy was the winner of a great looking "altimeter" clock. Fred is pictured holding his new time piece.

The highlight of the evening was welcoming our new



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Life Member and potential Life Member to the chapter. Ken Dies and his wife Jackie joined the ranks, and potential Life Member Frank Owens and his wife Shirley will shortly join the ranks of those who flew "Above the Best". A great picture of the four of them is above.

The chapter continues looking forward to 2021 and a great year with President Ray Vaske flying left seat. Visit us at our web site: <http://vhpa-alamo.com/> for more information about the Alamo Chapter.

Until next time, stay happy and healthy.

Mike Clark
Chapter Secretary

In other Chapter News...



VHPA Life Member Dean Resch was inducted into the Florida Veteran's Hall of Fame.



AMERICAN HUEY CHAPTER

Kudos to chapter members Mark Hopkins (webmaster) and Kae Walker for their continuous work keeping the website, www.americanhuey369.com, updated.



It requires regular attention: (a) updating event photos and new members on the membership page; (b) adding museum founders to the image of the Phase III Founders Plaque mock-up; (c) updating museum fundraising progress on the

homepage; and (d) many other aspects. Check out one of my favorite links, the "VIDEO PAGE".

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9 - ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S FLAG RAISING & AIRCRAFT EXERCISING

It was a cold morning, but 30 folks gathered at the new Museum property at 7:30 a.m. to prepare for the annual flag raising at 8:00 a.m. sharp - as the bugle from nearby Grissom Air Reserve Base sounded reveille.



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Breakfast at the Dutch Cafe, followed by a little flying and a lot of camaraderie, made for a great day!



While 803, 369, and 049 were being exercised, crews from Earth Exploration, Inc., were on the Museum property to perform soil borings to evaluate subsurface soil conditions necessary for foundation evaluation and design for the new Museum building site. As a donation to the Museum, they gave up their Saturday to spend the entire day taking core samples. The least we could do was take them on a flight.



ALSO IN JANUARY ...

Other cooperation and support has come from local government and business to allow tapping a water line into a main located on the opposite side of divided Highway 31 - necessary to provide a minimum flow rate (650 gpm) and pressure (85 psi) for the museum building, for fire prevention (sprinkler system) and domestic water needs. The work required boring a 20" passage for 300 linear feet of 16" steel casing pipe under the highway, then pulling through 300 LF of 6" ductile cast iron pipe.

...A milestone for museum development - John Walker and Phil Marshall drove 11 hours to Behlen Buildings in Nebraska and made a \$400K deposit toward a Red Iron Building package for the 34,000 SF museum building package, which will be delivered in late spring.

Saturday, March 13 - Breakfast & Flying: Approximately 40 folks enjoyed a beautiful day of 50+ degree weather. After a good breakfast at the Dutch Cafe, everyone relocated to the hangar. All three Hueys (803, 369, and 049) were pulled out and exercised, one at a time.

Everyone was glad to see two PICs that have not been able to join us in a while. Wade Hedinger took a break from his EMS flying gig in Cleveland and rode over with the Victor clan; and Ron Paye, who underwent neck surgery last year, has recovered and drove up from Indianapolis. Tom Klare and Kathy Cox brought sloppy Joes and soup for lunch snacking. Ron got to climb in his "Old Reliable" friend, 803 Warrior 11, with Wade.

After exercising, cleaning, and tucking the aircraft snugly back into the hangar, dinner was enjoyed at Los Primos Mexican Bar & Grill. We eat well!



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WEEK BEGINNING MONDAY, MARCH 22 – ANNUAL MAINTENANCE FOR 803:

Each aircraft must undergo an in-depth annual maintenance regimen which takes the better part of a week. Volunteers are primarily needed Monday-Wednesday, with less work to do on Thursday and Friday. Since our hangar is unheated, these are scheduled late in the non-flying season when it's apt to be less cold. Annuals provide a good opportunity for chapter members to get some touchy-feely experience and provide some TLC to the iconic Hueys to which we are emotionally connected.



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2021 FLYING SEASON - MAY-OCTOBER:

Sadly, In January, Knob Creek Gun Range (West Point, Ky.) announced cancellation of their Spring Machine Gun Shoot in April. Fortunately, pandemic restrictions have loosened up in many parts of the country. So, we are hoping for the best. At this point (late March), 13 flying events are slated, including one private event at our home base, by the 15th Medical Battalion on June 12.

Please note that the August 14-15 event, The Gathering, is our own event. If you can only make it to one event, make it to this one. You will be glad you did. I will pay for your membership flight.

CANCELED - April 9 & 10 - Spring Knob Creek Machine Gun Shoot - West Point, KY - membership flights available, weather permitting

May 14 & 15 - 34th Annual Armed Forces Day Celebration - Findlay, OH - membership flights available, weather permitting

May 28, 29 & 30 - Veterans National Memorial Shrine & Museum Inaugural Wall Debut Event - Fort Wayne, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting

June 12 - **PRIVATE EVENT**- 15th Medical Battalion - American Huey Museum, Peru, IN - **PRIVATE EVENT**

June 18, 19 & 20 - Veterans Memorial Park Pork Rind Festival - Harrod, OH - membership flights available, weather permitting

July 31- Peru Municipal Airport Fly-In/Drive-In - Peru, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting

August 14 & 15 - 15th Annual Gathering of Veterans & Patriots - Peru, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting

August 20, 21 & 22 - Fort Fest - Fort Jennings Park - Ft. Jennings, OH - membership flights available, weather permitting

August 28 - Honoring Our Heroes - Yogi Berra's Yellowstone Park - Pierceton, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting

September 11 - Rotors Over Mentone - Lawrence D Bell Museum - Mentone, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting

September 12 - Veterans Memorial Dedication/Masonic Compass Park Home Festival - Masonic Compass Park - Franklin, IN

September 17, 18 & 19 - Bringing the Sound of Hope - Vietnam Veterans Reunion - Ead Farm - Greentown, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting

September 25 - Logansport Airport Awareness Fly In - Logansport-Cass Airport - Logansport, IN - membership flights available, weather permitting

October 8 & 9 - Fall Knob Creek Machine Gun Shoot - West Point, KY - membership flights available, weather permitting

Photography by Wright Hickenlooper, Kae Walker, and Kathy Cox.

Robert Fureigh
Secretary-Treasurer

CALIFORNIA NORTH CHAPTER

We have continued to be physically distant in California since our last report. But, things are looking up! We have started polling our members on their Covid vaccine status and a good number have reported they are fully vaccinated and interested in getting together soon. We hope that by our next chapter report we can state that we have actually seen each other in



person for the first time since early January 2020.

Hopefully, there will also be a safe VHPA reunion in 2021.

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

Dave Anderson
Secretary, VHPA-CCN

GEORGIA CHAPTER

On Saturday, March 20, the Georgia Chapter met for its bi-monthly breakfast meeting at the Come-N-Get-It restaurant in Marietta, GA. As usual, the food and the company were superb! We had a good crowd (20 intrepid Vietnam helicopter pilots) and we received a really excellent and informative briefing on Lam Son 719 by Cliff Stern (who was an assault helicopter platoon leader during that operation). The heroism and professionalism of the Aviators who participated in that operation was truly awe-inspiring.

Another awe-inspiring event during that meeting was the visit by Georgia Chapter President Chuck Stoudt. Chuck is suffering from Stage 4 Pancreatic Cancer. He was driven



Chuck Stoudt, Vance Gammons, and George Murray.

to the meeting by his son, Scott (a very impressive guy in his own right). Seeing Chuck was truly inspirational for those in attendance (knowing what it took out of him to make the 45-mile trip from his home and participate in our

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meeting), and we truly appreciate his attendance and are grateful to Scott for bringing him.

Chuck served in Vietnam in the same unit (the 335th Assault Helicopter Company) as two other GA Chapter members, Vance Gammons and George Murray, who were also in attendance today.

The Georgia Chapter meets the third Saturday of

every other month, so the next meeting will be on 15 May 2021, at 0900 hrs. A meeting schedule is on our web site (ga-vhpa.org). Former Vietnam helicopter pilots in the Atlanta metropolitan area are welcome to attend; the food and fellowship are exceptional. For additional information, please contact Skip Bell at gavhpa@gmail.com.

Carl "Skip" Bell

MICHIGAN CHAPTER

The Michigan Chapter continues to wait out the pandemic with hopes of restarting activities soon. In the meantime, Member At Large Mark Benjamin has hosted two gatherings at the Hotel Indigo in Traverse City in February and March.

For the February 3rd gathering Mark wrote that he played it low key in light of the pandemic issues, no picture taken. Clay and Linda Maxwell drove up from Beaverton and joined Bob Matlis, Ron Hofmeister, and Mark but had three no shows. He hoped for a better turnout in March – which he got.

For the March 3rd gathering Mark wrote: Great time today. Photo was taken of the participants. Most stayed after lunch and we just talked for nearly two hours. Talked about disabilities we have that are service connected, then flying experiences after Vietnam. Mark Benjamin flew with the Vermont guard for a few years then 24 in the USCG, then 16 with FedEx. After a 13-year break, Pat Mullen flew with the Michigan Guard. Barry Witt never flew with the military again, but he owned a Beach Bonanza for 32 years which he recently sold. That's about it. We had a great time.

Glenn Youngstedt is exploring restarting gatherings in Saint Joseph. A photo of a reunion from last fall at his gatherings is shown here. Three pilots (Mark Benjamin, Art Fantroy and Glenn Youngstedt) who flew with the 128th AHC in Phu Loi in the 1970-71 timeframe were present. Art and Glenn flew together in March 17, 1971 while flying an airmobile assault near Snuol Cambodia where they were shot down.

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 11 non-Michigan residents on our roster so don't let that stop you from joining us.

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

Submitted by Rich Deer, President



March 3rd Traverse City L-R Walter Topp, Paul Fitzsimons, Bart Halliday, Mark Benjamin, Pat Mullen, Bob Matlis, Barry Witt.



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

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VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

Since the North Alabama Chapter VHPA (NAVHPA) has not been able to meet due to the COVID pandemic, I asked the members to share some reminiscences. They could be about Vietnam or not. Here are some of their experiences: *Ben Bentley is a former Cobra pilot in the 4th Corps Tactical area.*



No Traffic — Cleared To Cross: "It was a typical, hot, humid Vietnam afternoon, probably about 1400 hours (2pm for any wives or dependents who have been away from military time too long). Our morning mission had been to recon the Vietnam / Cambodian border region north of the Seven-Sisters mountains. Having found nothing after several hours, we were released and redirected to proceed to an area about 20 kilometers south of Dong Tam for some more scouting to find the elusive Viet Cong thought to be working in the area. The easiest and most direct way to get to the new area of operations was to climb up to a reasonably safe altitude (defined as 1,000 feet or higher) and go "IFR", which in Vietnam translated to "I Follow Rivers". In this case, the Mekong River was almost a direct line from where we were to where we needed to go. The boss, in the Command & Control Huey, led out, followed by the Lift Platoon of Hueys, the Scout Platoon in their baby-bird Loaches, and finally the Gun Platoon with our shark's teeth adorned Cobras. Three separate formations about a half-mile or so apart, close enough to react if anyone got into trouble, but far enough apart to make a lazy/ easy flight without holding tight formations. About half-way through this little journey, sat Bien Thuy Air Force Base on the southern bank of the east-west flowing Mekong, with its main runway running due North-South. As each formation approached Bien Thuy's controlled airspace, the flight lead would call the tower to determine if they had any aircraft in the traffic pattern. Since they primarily flew jet fighters and cargo airplanes out of there, any of them would be extremely hazardous to helicopter flight. Third and finally, it was my turn to call Bien Tui tower for clearance to cross their extended runway. From the voice accent, it was obvious the controller was Vietnamese, although he should have been backed-up with an American advisor. Anyway, he stated he didn't have any aircraft in the flight pattern and we were cleared to cross the extended runway. About the instant my flight of four Cobras crossed the runway center line, I saw a blur go across my nose at eye-ball level. The turbulence from two small A-37 jet fighters, one passing only a few yards in front of my Cobra and his wing-man passing about the same distance behind my 4th Cobra shook us like proverbial rag-dolls. Luckily, the tweety-bird pilots apparently saw us in time to break apart their take-off formation slightly left and



Marshall, Ben, Sharron and Bob ready to welcome Gold Star Spouses.



Gold Star Spouse parade entering event area.



Redstone Arsenal Command Sergeant Major greeting a Gold Star Spouse.

right to avoid direct impact—but not by much. What can you say or do-things happen. After checking our shorts for stains and moisture, we proceeded on to the next mission. Just another sleepy, hot, humid afternoon in Vietnam."

NAVHPA member, Ed Marzola, remembers.

"I was working as a corporate pilot for Verizon flying out of Morristown airport in New Jersey. A few years ago, we had an overnight trip to Huntsville, and we stayed at the Huntsville Marriott. The Marriott was kind enough to leave some chocolates on the bed for me. I lay down on the bed and promptly fell asleep. While I was sleeping those chocolates somehow worked their way under my body. I woke up and found myself lying in a brown goo all over the sheet. My first thought was I must have had an accident while I was asleep. Then I saw the candy wrappers in the middle of this mess, and I realized it was my chocolates. I tried to think of a way to clean this up, so it wouldn't look so bad but that turned out to be impossible. I decided the best thing to do was check out before housekeeping came in. I

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have not stayed at the Huntsville Marriott since.”

Another Ben Bentley story.

Hold Your Position: “One of our most frequent missions was armed reconnaissance, basically going out scouting for signs of the Viet Cong, working off of intelligence, looking for any indication of activity and trying to pick a fight. When working deep into the southern portion of the Delta, or IV Corps as the Headquarters preferred to call it, we made quite early departures from our base at Vinh Long, so as to be able to start scouting about sunrise. Depending on how far we were going, that generally meant a takeoff time of 0430 to 0530 (4:30 to 5:30am)-into the very dark Vietnam morning. On this particular morning, we’d all been to the mess hall, had some semblance of breakfast, drawn our C-Ration boxes for our daily sustenance between missions, and gone to the flight line for pre-flights and cranking of aircraft. One at a time, each of my three other Cobras backed out of their revetments and lined up behind me in trail formation. I was sitting cross-ways to the runway line until I saw the last one take its place in line. Then I picked my Cobra up to a hover, turned 90 degrees to align with the formation, landed and called the tower for take-off clearance. The tower came back to my request with a ‘Dutchmaster 36 Hold your position. I have a flight of 12 VNAF H-34 helicopters inbound for landing.’ No big deal. There we sat, four Cobras sitting a flat pitch, waiting for a few minutes for our Vietnamese buddies to land over on the main runway which was a few hundred yards away to our left side, running east to west, as did our revetment line. Slowly at first, but then with rapidly increasing ferocity, my Cobra started vibrating and rocking, much like I would imagine it feels like in a hurricane. At first, I couldn’t figure out what was happening and then the unmistakable flashing red light of an aircraft anti-collision light began strobing thru my cockpit. I looked straight up through my overhead canopy to see the oily underbelly and wheels of an H-34 about 10 feet above my spinning rotor blades. Then the revelation of what was happening became crystal clear. The flight of 12 Vietnamese H-34s in an extended trail formation were making an approach to our position and anti-collision lights - instead of to the lighted runway! The first H-34 came to a stop over my Cobra, hovered straight forward, landed when it was clear of my spinning rotor blades and taxied down the revetment lane. Each of the trailing 11 helicopters did exactly as their leader had done. When I first saw the underbelly and wheels of the 1st helicopter, my initial thought was to turn off my lights but realized before taking any action, that without those lights for reference in the darkness, the pilot would probably lose all ground/spacial reference and would most probably drop that greasy belly and wheels down into my rotor blades. Imagining

what it would be like to be strapped inside the jumbled and tangled hunk of a Cobra and H-34, rolling around and beating themselves to death with massive rotor blades was not a pleasant thought. Needless to say, fervent and sincere prayers were answered that morning. As before, uniforms were checked for stains and moisture, take-off clearance was granted by the tower, and we went off for another day of hunting, Vietnam style.”

NAVHPA member Terry Richmond contributed the following.

“At 23 years old, and a 540 Charlie Model Gunship aircraft commander (A/C), (I marvel at the idea today with the 23-year-olds I know.) I was at home base on the 5th Special Forces Compound in Nha Trang, just off the end of 05, it may have been mid 1966 or early 1967. Perhaps I was just coming back or going on R&R, at any rate I was the only gun pilot there when an emergency request came into ops. A training patrol from Special Forces Camp Delta B-52 had encountered some bad guys on the mountain just west of Nha Trang AFB and they wanted gunship support. The 281st AHC’s mission was supporting Project Delta so the request was normal for them to seek our help. The only other pilot available was a UH-1D ‘slick’ driver named Tom Buckley. Tom agreed to help. For some reason two UH-1C gunships were available. We recruited, easily, some mechanics for door gunners, put the crew chiefs in the left seat and off we went to save the day! What could possibly go wrong? Tom was an experienced slick A/C and we had known each other for months, so we were comfortable with each other. I don’t remember the gun configuration, it was either the 4 M60s or minis, except we both had seven shot pods with either 10 or 17 pounders HE on one side and flechettes on the other.”

(Now I must digress a moment, I had an additional duty as armament officer which I was enjoying at the time. Being a farm boy, tinkering was natural to me and we were definitely in that frame of mind. Each gunship A/C had the choice of which button he wanted to use for rockets, and we wired the machines to his specifications. (One more point: gun ships would assume a 60-knot attitude, in trim, slowly descending on the way inbound to the target. Then break hard, pull max power, drop the nose outbound, and do a cyclic climbing 180 to roll back in to cover the breaking ship’s back side. The breaking ship would then do this same maneuver, and the daisy chain would continue throughout the engagement. This was easy with three ships: two, not so much.)

“Back to the story, I thought Tom might be a little intimidated with the guns. On the way out we talked about the daisy chain pattern and how to arm and disarm the guns. Also, about the way the birds were wired and that I did not know which button would fire rockets.

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We, (the royal we) decided it would be a good idea to go guns-cold on the out bound leg of the pattern as we would be looking at Nha Trang AFB from some distance, but at 3,000 ft. We located the team and began our pattern. They were moving safely away from the area and had not exchanged any more fire and did not want any suppression, so we just kept a loose pattern going. Then it happened. On my run in Tom was even with me and I saw the tell-tale puffs of smoke from the rocket pods. I asked Tom if he had fired a pair and he said yes. I then went on Guard and advised Nha Trang Tower that there were two 2.75-inch rockets inbound from the mountain and to take cover. We could not believe how many Colonels there were on Nha Trang AFB when we landed. Only one guy was injured diving off a Caribou wing. But we grounded a bunch of the Air Forces PSYOP birds with little bitty holes."

"Tom Buckley made it back too, he passed away hiking the Appalachian Trail. Other Wolfpack alumni Jim Good and Lynn Coleman are both gone now too, we served together in Savannah. The ranks are thinning which is why we're going to the 281st AHC Reunion in Savannah this November. We were married there 53 years ago."

Gold Star Spouses Day was celebrated on Redstone Arsenal, AL on Sunday, March 28, 2021 - a week earlier than the national *Gold Star Spouses Day*. The event was organized by the Redstone Survivor Outreach Services office and consisted of a parade by Gold Star Spouses and families. The parade passed through a large parking lot that was set up with a sign honoring each Gold Star Spouse, US flags for each sign held by volunteers, North Alabama Patriot Guard Riders and the local Corvette club - "Vets with

Vettes." As the parade, led by the police and the Patriot Guard Ride Captain, passed through the area, supporters waived flags while each vehicle stopped and was presented a gift bag by the Arsenal commander and command sergeant major. After passing more flag wavers, each vehicle stopped again and was presented with gift certificates by the Survivor Outreach Services officer. Many tears were shed by the passing Gold Star Spouses - tears of remembrance of their spouse and tears of appreciation for this event honoring them. Bob Monette, Marshall and Sharron Eubanks along with grandson Ben represented NAVHPA. These annual events honoring Gold Star Spouses, Gold Star Mothers, and Gold Star Families are powerful reminders of the price being paid for our freedom. Let us not forget!

The NAVHPA is planning on a picnic at the Redstone Arsenal Outdoor recreation area on April 17th. We will meet for a short business meeting, picnic lunches and perhaps, adult beverages and corn hole afterward.

Our first post-COVID regular meeting is scheduled for May 11th at the Huntsville Country Club, cocktails and camaraderie at 1700 (5 PM) with the meeting at 1800 (6PM).

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

Ralph Weber

OLD DOMINION CHAPTER



Frosty Price and Bill Baker set up this event for us to try to pull in more members from outside the Richmond Metro Area.

We met with a group of 35 at the Shannon Air Museum in Fredericksburg, VA on 27 February for a tour of this spectacular facility. Tom Doran and Bob Cash (a hook crew chief in Nam) were among the tour guides.

Sidney Shannon Jr, as part of his love for aviation and to honor his father, Sidney Shannon Sr. founded the Shannon Airport in the 1950's. Sidney Shannon Sr. was one of the founders of Eastern Airlines with Ace Eddie Rickenbacker. Luke and Kim Curtas purchased the airport in 2014 and the Museum is now open and houses one of the rarest collections of vintage aircraft in the world. Check it

out at <http://www.shannonairmuseum.com>

After the museum tour we met at the Four Seasons Family Restaurant in Fredericksburg for lunch and camaraderie.

31 March at 7:00 PM we are having a Virtual Meeting with the Richmond Area Chapter MOAA for a Tour of the US Army Woman's Museum and the National Museum of the United States Army by Tracy Bradford, who has worked for the Army Museum Enterprise for more than a decade.

No meetings or gatherings are planned for June, July, or August for our Chapter.

I hope to see you all at the National VHPA Reunion at the Westin Hotel in Charlotte NC in August.

Don Agren
President, Old Dominion

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

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

OK I get it. I thought we were left in the dust as far as activities were concerned, but after reading the Chapter Activities section in the March-April Aviator, I have come to the conclusion that we are all in the same Helicopter. The Covid pandemic has us all restricted in one form or another. We are

2021 with our mobile Helicopter War Museum, but as of this writing we are waiting to see how the physical distancing and pandemic status factors develop. We are just as concerned today as we were last year when we determined that we could not provide any level of safety against the virus for the public and ourselves when we occupy the same 4X20 foot space all confined in a 48' trailer. Not even metering visitors seems viable. Not everyone views our artifacts at the same speed and some questions require more time than others to answer. All are reasons we cannot reasonably have a successful exhibit.

Meeting Schedule and other Information:

We normally hold meetings once a month, on the third Wednesday, at 10:00 hours at the American Legion Post #1, I-25 and Yale Avenue. However, we have suspended all in-person meetings and activities except for video and telephone conferencing which we conduct on the same date and time. Visit our Web site at www.RMCVHPA.com for any updates. We continue to look for artifacts for the Museum. Please contact our Chapter President and Museum Curator, Dale House with anything you'd like to donate

or loan to the museum. We can be contacted through our mailbox at: RMC.mailbox@yahoo.com

In the meantime, Stay Safe, and above all Stay Healthy.

Dale House
President



This is Us, Zooming again.

Zooming around the country with varying degrees of success and reminiscing about what we used to do. Light is appearing at the end of the tunnel, hopefully it is not another train wreck of a year. Hope is our mission, subject to change, is our game.

We are getting numerous requests to attend activities in

Want to start a Chapter of the VHPA in your area?

Contact:

*Tom Payne for full details
and lots of help!*

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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.

Ayala, Jesus J. USA; Flight Class: 69-12; RVN: 69-70 D/1/10 CAV 4 INF; Callsign: Shamrock 22.

Jesus Ayala died on August 1, 2018. Following his Vietnam service, he joined the San Diego PD, Air Support Division from which he retired.

***Ballis, Arthur H. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes: 71-17, 71-19; RVN: 71-72 128 AHC, 72 135 AHC, 72 HHC/11 CAB.**

Art was born on September 27, 1944, in Kingsport, TN. He lived most of his childhood in Germany, then returned to the US for a short period of time, where he graduated Ayer High School in Ayer, MA. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Professional Aeronautics/Aviation Safety Management at Embry-Riddle and graduated class of 1998.

He is survived by his wife, Christine.

***Cargen, Alfred J. USA, CW3 Ret.; Flight Class: 56-7; RVN: 63-64 52 CAB; DFC, BS; Callsign: Buddha.**

Alfred J. Cargen passed away on January 27, 2012 in San Antonio, TX from Parkinson's disease. He was born in Philadelphia, PA on June 29, 1930.

Al enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1952 after serving as a B-29 engine mechanic. He was assigned to an aircraft maintenance unit in Korea and later at Ft. Riley, KS where SFC Cargen was selected for a direct appointment to Warrant Officer as an Aircraft Maintenance Officer. Al was the eleventh aviator to be qualified on the Huey.

After retirement in 1968, Al served as Chief of Aviation Safety at Fifth Army and was awarded the Meritorious Civilian Service Medal, the James H. McClellan Aviation Safety Award, and the Daedalian Award for Army Aviation Safety. In 1982, Al became the Aviation Safety Manager at the National Guard Bureau where he implemented numerous programs which improved the aviation safety program in the Army National Guard.

After retirement from civil service in 1986,

Al established Aviation Safety Organization and conducted aviation and ground safety courses worldwide for more than 100,000 service members.

In 1990, the Army National Guard experienced zero Class A aviation accidents - a first for any service or component in the Department of Defense. Many believe it was the result of the programs and training Al Cargen created. Today, aviation safety programs, certainly those in the Army, stand in large part, on the work of Al Cargen.

***Clay, Dennis L. USA; Flight Classes: 68-4, 68-503; RVN: 68 A/9 AVN 9 INF, 68-69 B/9 AVN 9 INF; BS; Callsigns: Jayhawk/Stingray.**



Dennis Clay, a longtime contributor to the Columbia Basin Herald, passed away on April 9, 2020. Clay was born in Ephrata, WA on July 3, 1947. He graduated from Moses Lake High School in 1965 and joined the Army a year later as a private.

After submitting his first story to the Herald, Clay blossomed into an internationally known writer, columnist, photographer, and broadcaster. Clay's outdoors column in the Herald began in 1990 and his well-read "Bits & Pieces" a historical column debuted in August 1996 under then-Herald publisher Steve Hill. For the Herald, Clay also contributed to editions of Progress and Strength, wrote hard-news stories, and contributed to an annual hunting and fishing booklet. Clay was also published in Alaska Outdoors, Wild Sheep Magazine, British Columbia Sports Fishing, Ted Nugent Adventure Outdoors, The Outdoor Press, Boys' Life, and Fishing and Clay also received awards from the Inland Northwest and Pacific Northwest chapters of the Society of Professional Journalists. Clay was also a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America and the Northwest Outdoor Writers' Association in which he was elected to serve on the board of directors. Clay also graduated from the Washington

State University Master Gardener program.

Beyond his professional life, Clay was known as a selfless, charitable person. Whether it was weekly trips to the Moses Lake Food Bank for deliveries to assisted-living centers or serving as the chairman of the Columbia Basin Job Corps Community Relations Council, Clay gave his time to everyone.

***Cottrell, David D. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Classes: 59-6, 61-4Q; RVN: 65-66 A/227 AVN 1 CAV, 68-69 B/15 TC 1 CAV; LM, SS, BS, MSM, ACM; Callsign: Apache.**



David Dean Cottrell died on December 24, 2020 in Shenandoah. He was born on June 10, 1935 in Marysville, KS.

As a teen, David moved to Round Rock, TX. He graduated from Round Rock High School in 1953. He was a member of the Army ROTC. David received his BBA from the University of Texas in 1958. He attended the University of Maryland, William and Mary, and the University of Houston for his graduate studies.

David was Commissioned in the Army on August 30, 1957 and retired October 15, 1989. He also retired from the Texas Department of Health, after 23 years as a Program Manager for the Tuberculosis Elimination Program.

David was a member of the Oak Wood Lodge No. 1444 Arabia Shrine. He was extremely generous with his time and money by actively supporting the Shriners Children's Hospital in Houston, the Food Bank in Conroe, Salvation Army, and of course all things Veteran.



Creagan, Wayne C. USA; Flight Class: 66-19; RVN: 67-68 336 AHC, 68-69 235 AHC; DFC; (OLC), BS, ACM (V); Callsigns: Dealer 23/T Bird 4.



Jim Creagan passed away on January 29, 2021 from heart and lung complications. His first combat mission on February 15, 1967 was noteworthy enough to warrant an article in Stars and Stripes.

After his retirement from the appliance repair business, Jim kept current on veterans' issues. He was deeply committed to creating a veteran's drug court in his county, and was helpful in its planning stages through research, consulting with other veterans' courts, and lobbying in Albany. He was protective of his fellow veterans and was quick to point out when persons or organizations used "the plight of veterans" - individually or collectively - to advance their own aims.

Downing, Dudley H. USA; Flight Classes: 71-29, 71-35; RVN: 72 60 AHC, 72-73 180 ASHC; Callsigns: Ghost Rider 22/Big Windy 47.

Dudley Downing died on May 2, 2020. No other information provided.

***Doyle, Michael D. USA; Flight Class:** 67-12; RVN: 67-68 176 AHC, 68 484 TC DET/282 AHC 71-72 608 TC CO; Callsigns: Blacksmith/Cat Doctor 6.

Michael Doyle died on October 24, 2019. No other information provided.

Gates, Hardy D. USMC.

On January 19, 2021, Hardy Duane Gates passed away peacefully in San Antonio, TX. Hardy was born on November 26, 1930 in Fremont, MI. Hardy served his country in the Korean war and two tours in Vietnam. He completed his service as a Presidential helicopter pilot for Presidents Johnson and Nixon and retired from the Marine Corps in 1973. Following his military service, he began a second career with Wilsonart in Atlanta, GA, where he retired in 1994.



Grazier, Edward H. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 69-26; RVN: 70 605 TC CO.

Edward H. Grazier, of Mesa, AZ, passed away March 6, 2021 surrounded by so many who loved him.

Edward was born in 1945 in Hagerstown, MD and was a proud citizen of the Cherokee Nation. His family moved to Colorado when he was a boy. He graduated from Colorado State University and Babson College.

He spent 27 years in the United States Army as a helicopter pilot. After retiring, he continued his love for helicopters by working at McDonnell-Douglas/ Boeing in Mesa. He taught graduate classes at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. His love for service extended to his volunteer work with the Native American community and as foster parent to over 63 children.

He leaves behind the love of his life, soulmate, and best friend Barbara.



***Hanson, James S. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes:** 67-15, 67-17; 67-68 A/4 AVN 4 INF, 68 D/1/10 CAV, 71-72 173 AHC; DFC; Callsigns: Shamrock 47/Robinhood 20.

James Strickland Hanson passed away February 25, 2021, at Jackson Madison County General Hospital. He was born October 3, 1947, in Birmingham, AL.

After 22 years of active-duty service, he retired from the Army and became an instructor pilot at Fort Rucker, AL. He later flew as a defense contractor in the Middle East.

Jim regularly attended reunions of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and the Robin Hoods (173rd AHC), maintaining close relationships with his fellow pilots and brothers-in-arms for more than 50 years.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Mary Ann.



Hardbeck, James V. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 65-3W; RVN: 65-66 A/502 AVN, 67-68 175 AVN, 69-70 7/1 CAV; SS, DFC, BS, PH, ACM; Callsign: Maverick.

James Vernon Hardbeck passed away March 15, 2021 at his care center in Cumming, GA. He had been battling complications from a



severe head injury sustained in the summer of 2020. He was born in Spartanburg, SC on December 17, 1944. He spent much of his formative years near Charlotte, NC.

After his Vietnam service he went on to fly for, and retire from, the GA Army National Guard.

***Helmke, Norman L. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes:** 68-1, 68-501; RVN: 68-69 E/82 ARTY 1 CAV; DFC, BS; Callsign: Woodpecker 37.



Norman L. Helmke of Greenwood, IN passed away on January 16, 2021. Norm was born October 17, 1947 in Renwick, IA. He attended Boone Valley Schools in Renwick and graduated from Boone Valley High School in 1965. He attended Eagle Grove Jr. College, while working for his father on the family farm. The summer he graduated from high school, he took flying lessons at the airport in Eagle Grove, IA starting in June and by late August that summer, he had obtained his private pilot certificate.

In November 1971, Norm was offered a job as a helicopter pilot with Petroleum Helicopters in Lafayette, LA, which involved flying in support of oil and gas production in the platforms located in the Gulf of Mexico. In 1972, Norm moved to Eagle Grove, IA to become Chief Pilot for a large, regional trucking company, Umthun Trucking. He remained with this company for 22 years flying multi-engine airplanes, including King Airs. During this time, he continued duties with the Army Reserve for units located in Des Moines, IA.

In 1994, Norm accepted a job with Featherlite Inc. as their Director of Administration. While at Featherlite, he was in charge of the corporate flight department which operated King Air 350's, 200's, Beech jets, and Lear jets. Featherlite was the official trailer for NASCAR and Indy Car.

Norm left Featherlite in the fall of 2010 for employment with Rockwell Collins, a large avionics manufacturer in Cedar Rapids, IA as a Sr. Customer Training Specialist responsible for training the military and airline customers on the avionic equipment produced by Rockwell. This training took Norm to many varied locations all over the world. He retired from Rockwell in July 2015 and moved to Indiana.

He is survived by his wife, Cindy.

***Keelean, Roger M. USA; Flight Classes: 67-7, 67-9; RVN: 68 B/7/1 CAV, 71 605 TC CO; DFC, PH; Callsign: Dutchmaster 13.**



Roger M. Keelean passed away on January 16, 2021, in his home with his wife, Anna, by his side. He was born December 20, 1940, in Lake City, MI.

After his honorable discharge from the U.S. Army, he took a job in Lansing, MI, working for Consumers Power. Roger and Anna had caught the moving bug while in the Army being stationed stateside and overseas at numerous locations for 13.5 years. So, they packed up the family and had stops in Louisiana, Idaho, Washington, back to Michigan, before moving back to Asotin and settling down. Roger worked for the city of Asotin as the town marshal and deputy sheriff for Asotin County, where he eventually served as undersheriff until his retirement.

He is survived by his wife, Anna "Vera".

***Kinzel, John S. USA; Flight Classes: 66-2, 66-23; RVN: 67-68 119 AHC; PH; Callsign: Gator 519.**



John Stuart Kinzel died peacefully in the arms of his family on March 7, 2021 at his home in Memphis, TN after a courageous battle with cancer. John was born on November 14, 1944 in Memphis, TN. After serving in Vietnam, John became an Instructor pilot and Instrument Instructor Pilot at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA. John had a successful career as a human resource executive for Rockwell International's power tool division & later Delta International Machinery. Following a successful career in corporate America, John became a founding partner of Bosco's Restaurant and Brewery & Ghost River Brewing.

He is survived by his wife, Janet Lee.

***Lane, Carl D. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 68-4; RVN: 65-66 MACV 2 ARVN DIV, 68-69 A/228 ASHB 1 CAV; LM, DFC, BS (OLC); Callsigns: Tiger 3/Wildcat 3.**



Carl Dennis "Denny" Lane of Bloomington, passed away on March 1, 2021 at OSF St. Joseph Medical Center. Denny was born on June 17th, 1940, in Davenport, IA.

He graduated from Aurora East High School, Aurora, IL in 1958. He was recognized as Distinguished Alumni in September 2017. He later graduated from the University of Tampa with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1973 and received his MS degree from Florida Institute of Technology in 1976. He was also a graduate of the U.S. Army Infantry Officer Candidate School in 1965, the U.S. Army Aviation School in 1968, and Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS in 1976.

He would later be inducted as a Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum (NASM) Honoree in 2010 and his name is engraved upon the Smithsonian NASM Wall of Honor.

After retirement from the Army, he and his wife, Janene, transitioned to civilian life. Locally they are best remembered as the owner/operators of the Chicago Dough Company, Bloomington, IL (1988-1993). Denny later went to work for Caterpillar's Government and Defense Group where he worked as a Contract and Program Manager on major U.S. Army programs and contracts. He retired from Caterpillar in 2008.

Dennis was a proud member of The Oneida Indian Nation.

He is survived by his wife of more than 58 years, Janene.

***LeRay, Robert N. Jr. (Dr.) USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 69-48; RVN: 70-71 173 AHC; DFC, BS; Callsign: Crossbow 30.**



Dr. Robert Nelson LeRay Jr., 77, a native of Thibodaux, LA and resident of Eureka Springs, AR passed away on March 11, 2021.

He graduated from Thibodaux College in 1961. After graduation, he attended USL where he received his bachelor's degree in psychology. Following graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Army.

After retirement, he was employed with PHI as a helicopter pilot. He later pursued a master's degree at Nicholls State University and continued his education at University of Southern Mississippi earning a PhD in Psychology. He was in a private practice as a psychologist in Houma and Lafayette until his retirement. His most fulfilling part of his career as a psychologist was working with inmates at Angola State Penitentiary.

He is survived by his former spouse, Linda.

Mazzucca, Valerio S. USA; Flight Classes: 67-5, 67-7; RVN: 67-68 128 AHC; DFC; Callsign: Gunslinger 38.



Val passed away unexpectedly on February 19, 2021 after a long battle with cancer that he felt was from Agent Orange exposure.

After discharge from the service, he was promoted to Auxiliary Captain in the New York City Fire Department. Val went to work flying for an airline based at JFK airport in New York City. When the Airline shut down, he started an aircraft charter company and retired after 27 years of aircraft charters.

***McCleney, Dickie H. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 67-4; RVN: 67-68 A/7/17 CAV, 71-72 C/101 AVN 101 ABN; DFC, BS, MSM, PH, ACM; Callsigns: Tornado Red 15/Black Widow 5.**

Dickie Howard McCleney passed away peacefully February 6, 2021 due to his illness with bone marrow cancer. Just like he dealt with all experiences in life, Dickie managed his illness with strength and grace from his strong faith in Jesus Christ. He wanted to spend as much time with his loved ones as possible. On his final day, he was at home with family. His date of death was one day after his 55th Wedding Anniversary.

He was born January 16, 1943 in Angleton, TX, and attended school through his graduation from Angleton High School in 1961. He attended Sam Houston State University from 1961 through January 1966.

While at Sam Houston, Dickie earned his Bachelor of Science degree and was Commissioned a 2LT in the US Army through the ROTC program.

He is survived by his wife, Sandra.

***McComic, Ira W. USA; Flight Class: 68-7; RVN: 68-69 235 AWC; Callsign: Satan 13.**



Ira McComic died on January 21, 2021. He was born on May 31, 1945 in McKinney, TX. He grew up in the cotton fields of Climax, TX. Upon graduating as valedictorian of his Princeton High School class, he attended Texas Tech University before receiving his Bachelor of Science and Master's degrees in Computer Science at East Texas State University.

When he returned home from Vietnam, he and his wife moved to Plano, TX in 1971 where he would spend the rest of his life.

While his children were younger, Ira was ever involved in coaching their softball, soccer, and baseball teams, and being a constant influence and guide in other organizational group activities.

Although somewhat a mystery to others, he worked mostly in the world of computers beginning with EDS and Texas Instruments, and later in a few of his own start-up companies involving software engineering. Ira was a great public speaker, a history buff (especially Texas history), taught computer classes at the collegiate level, a blog writer, and a catfish and chicken fried steak connoisseur.

He is survived by his wife, Gretchen.

Merz, John E. III USAF;
Flight Class: 61E; RVN: 69-
70 21 SOS, 71-73 100 SRW;
Callsign: Knife/Buffalo
Hunter.



Jay was born in Brooklyn, NY on October 25, 1939. He attended high school in Corning, NY, graduating from Corning Free Academy, and then continued his studies at Pennsylvania State, eventually earning his BA Degree from Florida State and a MA from Webster University.

He was commissioned as a Second Lt. in the USAF in 1961 and continued serving his country for 21 years. He was awarded many service medals in his career, but I believe he was most proud of the "Winged S Award" for life-saving missions flown in a Sikorsky Helicopter.

After retiring from the Air Force, Jay began a second career providing support for the Contractors at Vance AFB, including Aircraft Simulators, Community Planner, Civil Engineering, Director of Personnel Services, and Human Resources Manager.

Jay enjoyed giving back to his community as well. He spent many hours volunteering with AMBUCS, Cross Roads Counseling Board, and Hedges Speech and Hearing Board, as both a member and past president for each of these organizations. He also served as a member of the City of Enid Zoning and Adjustment Board, Oklahoma State Quality Council Member and Evaluator, and was a member of the American MENSA Society. He enjoyed making things happen, helping others, and seeing results.

He is survived by his wife, Carol.

***Munson, Wayne T. USA;**
Flight Class: 67-20; RVN:
68-69 B/2/20 ARA 1 CAV;
Callsign: Blue Max 49.



On February 6th, 2021, Wayne Munson of Fernandina Beach, FL was called home. He was born September 14, 1945 in NYC, NY.

Wayne enlisted in the U.S. Army. For the next twenty years, Wayne served our Nation with distinction, leaving a profound impact on all of those with whom he served. While the military was an important and formative part of Wayne's life, it was the people he met during that time that he valued most.

After retiring from the Army, Wayne explored the public sector with the same level-head and steady hand he used to drive fast cars and fly helicopters, finding success first in banking, then as a consultant, and ultimately, as a fundraiser. In 1999, he began working for the Association of Graduates at the United States Military Academy as a Major Giving Officer, eventually moving on to roles with increasing responsibility at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and finally, at Florida State University. It wasn't long into his second retirement that the fundraising project that meant the most to him came along: the construction of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Mission Church in Yulee, FL.

He is survived by his wife, Kathy.

***Nichols, Herbert W. USA,**
LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 56-
4FW, 57-7QC; RVN: 67-68
USARV; Callsign: Big Daddy 6.



Herbert W. Nichols, 92, formerly of Northern California and a resident of Las Vegas since 1993, died on January 22, 2021. He was born in Kansas City, MO.

He was a retired US Navy and US Army veteran of 23 years having served with US Forces in Austria, Korea, Panama, Peru, Vietnam, and various stations in the U.S. He was a Professional Member of Emeritus American Society of Safety Engineers; Member of Association of US Forces in Austria; Charter member of Las Vegas Chapter of Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Assn; founding member of the Combat Helicopter Pilots Assn of Las Vegas; member of the Order of Daedalians; member of Army Otter/Caribou Pilots Assn; Las Vegas Hagar Quiet Birdmen; the AOPA; and a Lifetime

member of Military Officers Assn of America. He was a volunteer with the Las Vegas Metro Police, and a graduate of the Las Vegas Metro Civilian Police Academy.

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

Pettit, Phillip D. USA; Flight Class: 60-2;
RVN: 64-65 161 AVN, 65 A/1 AVN, 67-
68 200 ASHC.

Phillip Pettit, born in 1928, died on/about November 15, 2020 in Bay, FL. No other information provided.

***Phillips, Jim G. USA; Flight**
Class: 68-3; SS, BS, (OLC),
PH (2).



Jim Gary Phillips of Newark died March 7, 2021 at his home. He was born April 27, 1941 in Hawthorne, CA. He was a member of a Veteran's organization: 48th Assault Helicopter Company. During his service in the U.S. Army, he achieved rank of Captain in the Special Forces Unit. He was chosen to be on the first Honor Flight for Vietnam veterans Purple Heart recipients, which was one of the highlights of his life.

He retired from Owens Corning as an electrician after more than 30 years of service.

Phillipsen, Edwin R. III USA;
Flight Classes: 69-27, 69-29;
RVN: 70-71 162 AHC; Call-
sign: Vulture 11.



Edwin R. Phillipsen, III of Fort Collins, formerly of Greeley, passed away August 8, 2017 at The Suites at Fort Collins. He was born December 20, 1943 in Brooklyn, NY and moved to Greeley in 1976 to attend graduate school.

Ed, a licensed mental health professional, believed in service to others. In addition to his 35-year career as a psychologist, he served eight years on the Greeley City Council, four as Mayor Pro-Tem and also served on numerous commissions and boards within the city of Greeley, Weld County and state of Colorado.



Punchak, David J. USA; Flight Class: 71-41; RVN: 68-69 1 INF, 72-73 F/8 CAV; Callsign: Blue Ghost 21.



David was born in Fort Belvoir, VA. After his military service, his endeavors included owning Little Jim's Pub & The London Square restaurant. Eventually, David found his niche in car sales and enjoyed a decades-long career.

***Sebastian, Richard J. USA; Flight Class: 68-22; RVN: 69 F/8 CAV 23 INF; Callsign: Blue Ghost.**



Richard J. Sebastian passed away from complications of an experimental heart procedure on, February 14, 2021 in Nashville, TN. Rich was born in East Chicago, IN on February 20, 1944.

Rich's career in the flooring industry spanned over 45 years until his retirement in 2017.

He was a proud and active member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and the VFW.

He is survived by his wife, Olivia.

Shaw, Ralph W. USA, LTC Ret.; RVN: 68-69 1 CAV, 70-711 AVN BDE, Callsign: Night Rider 1.

Ralph Shaw died on January 2, 2020. He was born on November 7, 1946. No other information provided.

Sibely, Bruce W. USA; Flight Classes: 70-7, 70-3; RVN: 70-71 B/101 AVN 101 ABN; DFC, BS, PH; Callsign: Kingsman 29.

Bruce Lawrence Sibely was born December 7, 1944 in New Haven, CT and went to be with his Lord and Savior on February 13, 2021.

Prior to being drafted by the United States Army, Bruce earned a degree in Business Administration in 1969 from the University of Houston.

He spent his entire professional career as a toy sales representative, starting with Ideal toys and later Playskool and Hasbro.

Smyer, Raymond L. USA; Flight Classes: 68-3, 68-503; RVN: 68-69 A/7/17 CAV; Callsign: Sierra 69.

Raymond Smyer died on March 20, 2019. He was born in 1945 and attended Morro Bay

High School, graduating in 1964.

Following his Vietnam service, he flew for the US Forest Service.

His background in aviation led to work with mainframe computers preparing for a launch of the space shuttle from Vandenberg Air Force Base (discontinued after the Challenger explosion). He liked to joke that computers, unlike helicopters, wouldn't kill you when they crashed.

Staggs, Elbert E. USA; Flight Class: 69-31; RVN: 70 15 TC 1 CAV, 72-73 H/17 CAV.

Elbert Staggs died on December 23, 2018. He was born in Fleming KY in 1943. No other information provided.

Stewart, Lance E. USA; Flight Class: 65-21; RVN: 67-68 A/229 AVN 1 CAV, 68-69 56 TC CO; Callsign: Serpent 56.

Lance Stewart passed away on March 19, 2021. He was born on August 6, 1944 in Beaumont, TX. The family moved to Payson, AZ in 1959 where he entered High School and graduated with the class of 1963 as Class President.

Lance wanted to be a pilot. His first fixed wing flight lesson was with his future father-in-law, Art Goodnow. After working on forest fires as a fire fighter, he joined the US Army and went to basic training and eventually to helicopter training.

After his service, he obtained a BA in Education and taught high school shop classes for two years before his desires for flight pulled him back into the industry. He flew helicopters for 42 years before he began to succumb to Agent Orange maladies: heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes. He flew for EMS operators, forest fire contracts, went to Nigeria to fly food to those in the bush after their civil war, and served with the Arizona Army National Guard RAID detachment performing drug interdiction missions.

***Taylor, Edward J. Jr. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 59; RVN: 65 57 MED DET, 68 82 MED DET, 69 45 MED CO; DSSM, SS, BS (OLC), MSM; Callsign: Dustoff 86.**



Edward J. Taylor Jr., 84, died peacefully on March 12, 2021 after a courageous battle of cancer-related illnesses complicated by

COVID-19 pneumonia. He was born in Albany NY.

He graduated from Bethlehem Central HS in 1954. He attended Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. In 1977, Ed received a Master of Science Degree in Business Management from Indiana State University. He attended Command General Staff College in 1970.

He has been recognized with the Order of Military Medical Merit, the Sikorsky Aircraft "Flying S" Lifesaving Award and was a life member and past president of the DUSTOFF association.

Upon retirement from the Military, Ed joined a fellow military comrade and worked another 10 years with North American InTele-Com, as VP of Operations. He also volunteered with the Census Bureau and the Valero Texas Open for many years.

He is survived by his loving wife of 57 years, Rose.

Townsend, Harry W. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 50; RVN: 67 USARV, 67-68 HHC/268 CAB; Callsign: Black Lightning 6.

Harry Townsend was born December 22, 1922, in Philadelphia, PA and passed peacefully in Silver Spring, MD, on February 18, 2021. A veteran of three wars, a Master Army Aviator with more than 8,000 hours (of which more than 1,700 are combat) and a master parachutist, he began his military service with the Citizens Military Training Corps. During World War II, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and served in Europe.

In 1947, he applied for flight training. When there was no response, he and 19 other black parachutists bought an Aeronica Chief and formed a flying club in Fayetteville, NC. His outstanding service with the 555th Parachute Infantry was rewarded with a Regular Army commission. Townsend completed fixed-wing and helicopter training in 1950 and went on to fly hundreds of combat missions in Korea in H-13 and liaison fixed-wing aircraft.

His last years of military service were in the offices of the Army's Inspector General, the Secretary of Army and the Secretary of Defense. After retirement, he served for decades on AAAA's National Executive Board, ten years as trustee and treasurer of the Scholarship Foundation, and as international judge in national and international helicopter championships.

TAPS

He was also a Founding Member of the U.S. Army Black Aviation Association, serving as its Chairman in 1985, and Chairman of the Board of the ROCKS, Inc., a professional military officers' organization. In 1972, he was inducted into the Officer Candidate School (OCS) Hall of Fame, Ft. Benning, GA; and in 2004 into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame.

***Vandagriff, Luther H. USA,**
CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes: 69-49, 70-1; RVN: 64-65 8 RRU, 65-66 1 SF GRP, 70-71 11 GS 1 CAV.



Luther Henry "Vandy" Vandagriff of Midland City, passed away at his home in the early morning hours on Tuesday, March 9, 2021, surrounded by his loving family, after fighting cancer for several years.

Vandy was born September 13, 1938, in Wellington, TX. After graduating high school, Vandy joined the US Army, where he served in a multitude of positions over a 24-year career. Beginning as a Private, he started out with the Army Security Agency, advanced to special forces, where he became a Green Beret, advancing to an Army Aviator until he retired. His professionalism and experience

were instrumental in helping to develop the Special Ops Unit, "Task Force 160", which has evolved into a top combat unit in the Army. Vandy served three combat tours in Vietnam, and three tours of duty in Germany.

Following retirement from the Army, Vandy went on to become a contract instructor pilot at Ft. Rucker, and then moved on to flying commercially for Saudi Arabian Helicopters, advancing to Chief Pilot. Following this, he continued his career with Tex Air Helicopters, out of Houston, TX.

He is survived by his loving wife, Hilde.

Wiles, James T. USA; Flight
Classes: 67-13, 67-17; RVN: 67-68 189 AHC, 71 335 TC CO;
Callsigns: Ghost Rider 28/Jock Strap 15.



James Wiles died on January 7, 2021. No other information provided.



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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.

Barfield, James S. USAF; Flight Classes: 71-30 AF; died on February 25, 2021

Behelfer, Gary L. USA; Flight Class: 68-3; died on March 12, 2021.

Borton, Donald W. USA; Flight Class: 67-17; RVN: 67-68 176 AHC; died on February 20, 2021.

Cornett, Jack Sr. USA; Flight Class: 66-12; died on February 24, 2021.

Cunningham, William F. Jr., USAF LTC Ret.; died on February 6, 2021.

Curtis, Grantson R. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 69-1; RVN: 69-70 B/1/9 CAV 1 CAV; DFC (2OLC); Callsign: Saber 24; died on September 28, 2019.

Daniels, Rufus USA; Flight Classes: 70-23, 70-21; RVN: 70-71 C/7/17 CAV; died on June 21, 2017.

Donahue, John C. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 67-15; RVN: 67-68 174 AHC; DFC, BS; died on March 13, 2021.

Duff, Robert G. USN, CDR Ret.; RVN: 69-70 HA(L)-3; Callsign: Seawolf; died on March 9, 2021.

Fish, Ronald M. USA; Flight Class: 67-15; RVN: 67-68 189 AHC; died on February 12, 2021.

Franklin, William P. USN, CPT Ret.; RVN: HA(L)-3; DFC, BS; died on December 18, 2020.

French, George D. USA, LTC Ret.; RVN: 281 AHC; died on February 18, 2021.

Gardner, Jim USAF, LTC Ret.; RVN: 67 37 ARRS DET 2; BS; died on April 1, 2021.

Gillette, William P. USA, LTC Ret.; RVN: 65-66 HHT/1/9 CAV 1 CAV, 69 HHT/7/1 CAV; DFC (2), BS (2); died on January 31, 2021.

Graves, Benny B. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 64-4W; RVN: 65 A/501 AVN; died on January 20, 2021.

Greenawalt, Frederick W. USA; Flight Classes: 68-36, 68-524; RVN: 69 ACT/11 ACR; died on August 22, 2020.

Hall, Jerry W. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 66-21, 66-23; RVN: 67-68 17 AHC; DFC, BS; died on February 25, 2021.

Hoppough, Robert E. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 72-21; died on March 18, 2021.

Hoven, Paul A. USA; Flight Classes: 68-3, 68-503; RVN: 68-69 A/9 AVN 9 INF; died on January 9, 2014.

Michaelis, Frederick G. USA; Flight Class: 69-13; DFC, BS; died on February 14, 2021.

Ostergaard, Ray D. USAF, MAJ Ret.; RVN: 71-72 20 SOS; Callsign: Green Hornet; died on January 20, 2021.

Rodwick, Joseph III USA; Flight Classes: 66-5, 66-7; RVN: 66-67 120 AHC; died on February 19, 2021.

Rudy, James J. Sr. USA, LTC Ret.; RVN: 66-67 170 AHC; died on May 25, 2014.

Selfe, John K. Sr. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 60-6Q; died on February 26, 2021.

Senitta, Michael Jr. USA; Flight Class: 67-16; RVN: 67-68 17 AHC; died on March 14, 2021.

Shilkett, James D. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-16, 68-510; died on March 26, 2021.

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

Shuey, Martin W. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class 65-5; RVN: 125 ATC, 68-69 D/101 ABN; died on October 29, 2019.

Spaur, Kenneth L. USAF; RVN: 65 PARC DET 4; SS, MSM; Callsign: Pedro; died on January 21, 2021.

Walker, Jerry L. Sr. USA; Flight Class: 69-39; RVN: 70 B/229 AHB 1 CAV; Callsign: Killer Spade; died on February 4, 2021.

Warren, Robert F. USMC, COL Ret.; RVN: 67-68 3 MAU; DFC; died on February 9, 2021.

White, John W. USA, MAJ Ret.; RVN: 10 CAB; died on January 24, 2021.

Woltersdorf, Leonard O. USN, CPT Ret.; RVN: 67-68 HA(L)-3; DFC, PH; Callsign: Seawolf; died on February 8, 2021.

Wright, Vernon, E. USN; RVN: USS TRIPOLI; died on February 1, 2021.

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

Patrick Leary, FVSO President and VHPA Life Member

Y Nuong's first smile



Introducing baby Y Nuong, the newest member of the Vinh Son orphanage family, born on November 18th, 2020. Sadly, her mother died shortly after giving birth, and knowing he couldn't provide for a newborn baby daughter, Y Nuong's father brought her to the Vinh Son-2 orphanage. The children and caregivers there will take good care of their newest sibling. She doesn't know it yet, but Y Nuong also has an unseen family of very generous donors, who provide annual dental care, education, food, medicine, and shelter for the children just like her.

For more info, contact FVSO

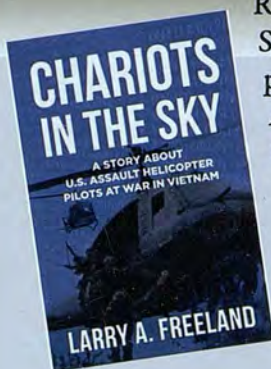
Mail: FVSO, P.O. Box 9322-B
Auburn, CA 95604-9322

Web: FriendsOfVSO.org

Email: FriendsOfVSO@gmail.com

~ BOOK REVIEWS ~

Aviator Staff Book Review – Tom Kirk



Review of *Chariots in the Sky* by Larry A. Freeland, published by Publish Authority, 300 Colonial Center Parkway Suite 100, Roswell, GA 30076-4892, ISBN: 978-1-954000-05-6 (paperback); 320 pages, \$14.99 paperback, \$4.99 Kindle.

The subtitle "A Story About U.S. Assault Helicopter Pilots at War in Vietnam" tells a potential reader exactly what this book is about. The book is based on Larry Freeland's tour in Vietnam. There

are more than enough harrowing flying scenes and firefights on the ground that will keep readers of this genre interested. For Army Aviators, *Chariots in the Sky* is a realistic and fictionalized tale of what they endured during their time in Vietnam. Although the traditional bad guys – the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army – get a vote in the story, the main villain is within. An Ops officer more interested in furthering his career than taking care of the men who fly for him endangers all those around him. Most of us have been there, done that and it is not pleasant. *Chariots in the Sky* is an interesting read for those who want to read about someone else's experience in Vietnam to see if it was similar to theirs.



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