



# The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association



*Cover Story on page 20*

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### FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR...

Some of our members may have noticed a change on page two of the Aviator. The **Membership Directory** and **Historical** committee categories have been removed. Going forward, these activities will be combined with **Records/Database** function.

**AVIATOR PRIVACY STATEMENT:** The VHPA considers member information proprietary and confidential. Use of any information in this publication for any type of solicitation is prohibited. Member information contained in this publication shall not be distributed to non-VHPA members without the express consent of the member.

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

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# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## Free Membership for Army Aviation Museum Foundation



While reviewing the June 2024 "Prop & Rotor" Monthly Newsletter from the Army Aviation Museum Foundation, I wondered how many of our VHPA Membership have participated in receiving a free Lifetime Foundation Membership? I spoke with Leah Dunkle, Executive Coordinator, Army Aviation Museum Foundation, and she checked her system noting that approximately 150 VHPA Members have joined. This number surprised me as I was expecting several hundreds, if not thousands. The Newsletter is great; the website offers some very interesting opportunities/features; and retaining this connection with "Ole' Mother Rucker" that was such a pivotal point in our lives just seems to be part of our DNA.

We now know that at the end of completing the Membership Form there is a quirk in the registration process because the application is looking for a membership fee through PayPal, ignore this notice and close your browser. Perhaps you have tried to register over this past year, but were confused or discouraged by this event since it seemed to stop the system from accepting your membership data. As a VHPA Member, that fee is waived and your membership is free. You simply need to ignore that prompt and make sure you select/check mark: "VHPA VIP Lifetime - FREE" in the Membership Form along with providing the other required information.

To get started, enter the following URL into your internet browser (Safari, Chrome, Google, etc.)

[www.armyaviationmuseum.org](http://www.armyaviationmuseum.org).

You only need to fill out a short membership registration on-line and you'll receive your Lifetime Membership Email from the Executive Coordinator, followed by an acknowledgment letter, a sticker/patch for display, a Membership Card with your Member Number, and a monthly email with a digital pdf file of the latest "Prop & Rotor" newsletter that you may download.

*When you are on the initial splash screen for the Museum, you will see a gold bar below the header with navigation titles for the website.*

- ❖ Select: "GET INVOLVED" from the dropdown choices
- ❖ Then Select: "BECOME A MEMBER"
- ❖ You will be presented with the "MEMBERSHIP Form"
- ❖ Make sure you select: "VHPA VIP Lifetime - FREE"
- ❖ Recommend that you state in the Additional Information block, either:
  - ☞ "I am a Lifetime Member of the VHPA" Or,
  - ☞ "I am a dues current member of the VHPA"
- ❖ Complete the relevant data requested on the Membership Form and hit "SUBMIT"
- ❖ A PayPal notice appears: "Things don't appear to be working at the moment. Please try again later." DO NOTHING! You Have Registered Correctly. Just exit your browser and you should receive your email and items listed above in a week or two.

*Cheers,  
Frosty Price*

### For Your Information:

The minutes of each monthly meeting of the Executive Council are available on the VHPA website.

# FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

## PLEASE HELP US REDUCE THE COSTS OF REMAILING ITEMS!

If you move, PLEASE call HQ with an update to your address! This is important if you head south for the winter and back north for the summer. You must call HQ to change your mailing address each time to ensure you do not miss an issue of your newsletter.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR R2025 IN ST. LOUIS, MO AUG 20 – AUG 23, 2025!

#### Reminders:

- The on line directory is free at <https://directory.vhpa.org>. As of the deadline for this issue, you can not make updates to your information via the on line directory. You can log in and search for members. Please call HQ with any changes to your contact info. We apologize for the inconvenience but things are taking longer than expected.
- Minutes to all EC meetings are posted in the VHPA website each month along with minutes to the Annual Business Meeting, VHPA Financial Reports and VHPA Policies. To view these documents please go to <https://directory.vhpa.org/>, click on

member log in, sign in using your member number & setting up a password, under the “Other Documents” tab on the left – click “VHPA Administration Documents”.

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 and attend reunions!

*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!*

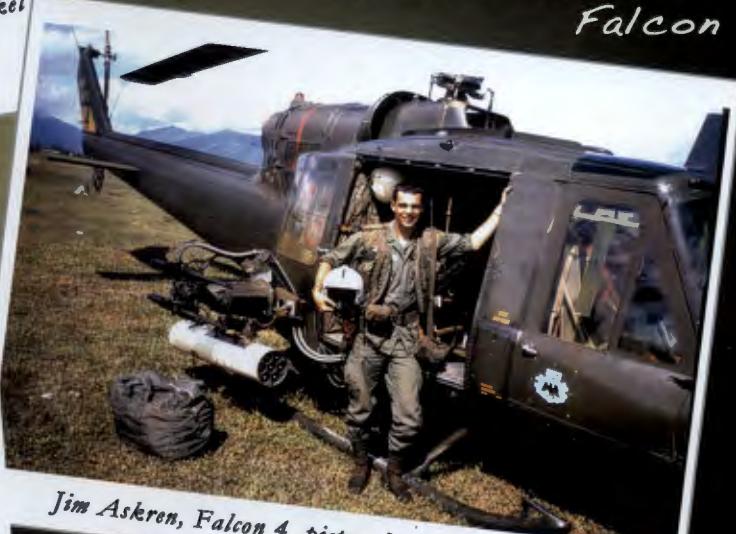
Sherry Rodgers  
VHPA Business Manager



Author Jim Askren and (possibly) Hasco K.W. Eckel digging a foxhole. No security and no tents supplied.



Over Lac Thien: Enemy bullet paralleled Jim's elbow passed through the seat back and exited by the gunner's door without further damage



Jim Askren, Falcon 4, pictured with his ship.

*"Here's to the guys with whom I served from August 1965 to August 1966 in A/1st subsequently the 155 AHC in Ban Me Thout."*

*Falcon 4*

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Looking for: Anyone who knew and/or flew with WO David A. Troxell, 335th AVN Co. Troxell's Vietnam tour was 1969 - 1970 in the Gun Platoon. He Died After Tour in a helicopter crash in 1974 and his daughter would appreciate any information about her Dad. He died when she was an infant.*

*Please contact me at dmz.dustoff@yahoo.com or 937 371 3643*

*Thanks!*

Phil Marshall  
DMZ Dustoff 711  
Camp Evans and Quang Tri, 1969  
937 371 3643 Cell

.....

*I went to Newton South High School (NSHS), Newton, MA and was in the same shop class with WO1 Robert Clark Ferris, KIA 14JAN67, 173 AHC, 1st Infantry Division. In 2005, I designed, purchased and had installed at NSHS, a brass plaque commemorating the four graduates of NSHS that were KIA in Vietnam. At the time the plaque was dedicated, I could not locate any family for Bob or where his gravesite was. I was successful in having family members from the other 3 KIA's at the dedication. Through recent communications with Larry Dandbridge, I was fortunate enough to be aware of the VHPA website and subsequently view the incident profile for Bob, thus, seeing that he is buried at the Westview Cemetery in Atlanta, GA. Given that, I would like to hear from anyone that served with Bob at the 173rd AHC to be able to let them know that there is a plaque at NSHS remembering Bob that will be there in perpetuity as well as perhaps getting a lead on any family members. I say that because Bob's home of record at the time of his passing was Newton Center, MA but the webpage indicates that he is buried in Atlanta, GA - thus the*

*possibility there may be family in that area.*

*I would like to hear from anyone who served with WO1 Robert Clark Ferris, KIA 14JAN67, 173rd AHC, 1st Infantry Division. I went to high school with Bob and am doing some research as well as wanting to share information about a plaque we dedicated to Bob and the other Vietnam KIAs from our high school.*

CUCM (SCW) Bob Williams,  
USN SEABEES (Ret),  
mcb12vietnam@gmail.com.

.....

## UPCOMING REUNIONS

### TWENTIETH REUNION OF THE 134 AHC

*When: September 11-15, 2024  
Where: Gatlinburg TN  
Contact: Donald Newman (Demon 16):  
av8ordon@bellsouth.net*

### REUNION OF THE BLACK WIDOWS AND SPIDERS

*When: October 1 - 4, 2024  
Where: Fort Novosel Al  
Contact: billmayflorida@yahoo.com  
or Bill May @ (386) 864-1555*

### Reunion of B Troop, 7/17th Air Cavalry

*When: 10/7/2024 - 10/11/2024  
Where: Thousand Hills Resort Hotel,  
Branson, MO  
Contact: Buddy Harp for Rates,  
Amenities and Activities.  
buddyharp@yahoo.com*

# A CANADIAN IN VIETNAM

*By Frederick (Fred) Shuman; Call Sign: Red 2*

The year was 1967 and I was trying to get into the RCAF. I had recently finished Grade 12 in Clinton, Ontario while living with my parents on a small non-flying air force base. My Father was in the RCAF at the time, and I figured I'd get his attention if I became a pilot. The trouble was the Canadian Government was in the process of merging the three branches, (Army, Navy, Airforce), into one unit; The Canadian Armed Forces, (CAF). This caused a bottleneck in flight school, and I was going to have to wait 18 months minimum before I could get in; assuming I would qualify. Well, that seemed like an eternity to me at 19 and besides, I was getting into lots of trouble drinking and fighting and needed to get out of town.

So, there I was at the local pool hall, drinking beer in the back alley, shooting pool and occasionally looking at flying magazines when I happened upon an ad that said; "Who says High School Graduates can't fly, join the New Action Army". Well, why not, I was getting desperate. I filled out the info. requested at the bottom of the ad and mailed it in. Two weeks later I get a package that directs me to a recruiting station in Detroit, Michigan. I was about three hours from Detroit, so I headed out on a Greyhound, (I smashed my 59 Plymouth on a "gravel run" so had to bus it).

Oh dear, Detroit was a mess, race riots and fires in the streets, - I thought I was already in a war zone. The first guy I met stepping off the bus was a tall black man in a purple zoot suit with a very large purple fedora and selling anything and everything. To my knowledge, I'd never seen a black man until then and believe me, I was impressed. I could not understand his sales pitch, so I moved on, caught a cab and made my way to the address on the recruiting package I'd received. To my delight the recruiting Sergeant was happy to see me and said I would have no trouble getting into Army flight school. I told the recruiter I was initially trying to get into the Canadian Airforce hoping to fly jets and he reassured me the US Army had airplanes and I could fly them. I signed up on the spot and headed back to small town Canada. I was pleased with myself - first because I was going to become a pilot and second

because I made it out of Detroit.

Days then weeks passed without a word from the Army. I started calling, but was making no progress. I doubt if I would have gotten into the Army if it wasn't for my Mother, yes my Mother! We drove to the main recruiting station in downtown Detroit and waited to see some Captain or Major. My Mom said we were not going to leave until we saw the "boss". After considerable time we got into his office and the "boss" seemed to be giving us the run-around until my Mom told him she was turning over her only Son to the US Army and they had better damn well appreciate it and get on with the process. That lioness demand seemed to do it. We signed some papers, got some promises and drove back home.

Not long after that I received a date to report to the induction unit at Fort Wayne, Detroit. I could not have imagined what was in store for me. The two-or three-day processing event reminded me of a cattle corral system connected to an abattoir. It was humbling, humiliating, and shocking all rolled into 48+ hours. I kept my head down, wrote the tests, coughed and spread my cheeks as ordered. I must have developed induction traumatization because the next thing I remember I'm in Fort Knox, Kentucky for basic training. Its' early January, 68 and Fort Knox is filled with racial tension between the red-necks of Kentucky and colored fellas from Detroit. It was down-right hostile in my barracks and there were even a couple of stabbings. Thankfully, a redheaded kid named Joseph Papuka (sp) from Detroit helped me survive; nevertheless, I was longing to get through this and begin flight school.

Two interesting events happened to me in basic training. The first was that I was invited to take the FAST test for flight school qualification and the second was that I signed up for jump school. Now I thought the first event was odd since my recruiter had previously told me I was heading for flight school right after basic. I explained this to some SP5 and to my surprise he laughed and told me no such promise existed on my records. I took the test but don't remember

if I got leave after completing AIT, but I did NOT get flight school. The next thing I know, I'm in Fort Benning for jump school. It's June or July now and the heat is getting my attention. It was too much for some of the boys but I'm going to flight school, so I won't quit no matter what. Three weeks and five jumps out of a C-119 Boxcar and it's off to Fort Bragg. I'm getting nervous, very nervous. Every morning, we do this run in the heat then muster in the parade square and names are called out for assignment to "Nam" as a grunt- no worse, an airborne grunt. My God I've got to do something. AWOL is out of the question, my Dad would disown me and I'd be the laughing stock of Clinton. Fear for my future allows me to overcome my fear of the company commander. I made up my mind; I have to present myself to him.

The next morning after the run, the names are being called. At the time I didn't believe in God but that didn't stop me from praying to Him. My name is not called, - thank you Jesus! I go to the Captain and explain that I'm a Canadian citizen and was told I would be an Army Aviator if I joined up. He takes pity on me or didn't know what to do with me, I'm not sure which. He orders me to report to The Colonel, the head honcho. I was so nervous I didn't know if he was a full colonel or a light colonel. He was one notch below the Almighty as far as I was concerned. I blurted out my story with fear and trembling. The Colonel, without any explanation, ordered me to immediately pull my gear out of the "Nam" barracks and set up shop in the HQ barracks. Honestly, I didn't know if I was to be court marshalled, expelled from the Army or left to decay.

The HQ barracks was empty. I stayed there for two weeks by myself while getting fat at the mess hall. One day an Army courier shows up and calls my name. He hands me orders to report to Fort Wolters for flight school. I am relieved beyond measure. I catch a T-39 military jet to Wolters, check in and begin the rigors of primary flight training. You folks know the rest of it. After Fort Wolters came Fort Rucker then Hunter Army Airfield for Cobra transition then a stretch 8 to Vietnam in July, 1969. I was assigned to the 11th ACR in Quan Loi, where I stayed for my entire tour. That, my fellow aviators, is how one Canadian, (among many others) ended up in Vietnam.

**MATT JACKSON**

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

*His brothers in arms will find it accurate and well... nostalgic.*

**UNDAUNTED VALOR**  
AN ASSAULT HELICOPTER UNIT IN VIETNAM, 1969-1970  
VOLUME 1

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# VHPA Writers Group:

## *Report from Reno*

*The VHPA Writers Group* held two well attended sessions in Reno. The group, perhaps better described as a herd of cats than a tight, US Army, overlapping blades, formation flight, may be reaching some resolution within our lifetimes!

From what I understand, HQ has agreed that the VHPA Writers Group may well deserve a page or two on the VHPA website. This will be a very positive step for many reasons, to include providing the potential for gathering a comprehensive catalog of just how prolific we, as a creative literary force, have been and are. Feel free to recon this for further details and VHPA listing requirements from the "head office." I am unsure as to what exactly is in the offering or any details.

Some member news, H. Morgan Miller, author and VHPA member, has been awarded a Silver Medal Indie Award for *Drafted; My Year In Vietnam*. That makes two awards: one Gold Benjamin Franklin Award for the publisher and one Silver Indie Award for the author. Thanks for the news, Julee Brand, the publisher from W. Brand Publishing. And thanks to VHPA member Dave Tela for relaying the information.

I have been in contact with Sharon Johnston, who was kind enough to send me some notes from the Reno meetings, attended in total by 26 members. She is an experienced editor and has potentially offered her services assembling an anthology of stories by VHPA members who don't really care to write a whole book. She also has experience writing grants for funding such projects and I look forward to working with her on this. She can be contacted via email at: [johnstonsharonj@comcast.net](mailto:johnstonsharonj@comcast.net). Hopefully, details can be figured out.

I have a short story being published in July in an anthology titled *Afterthoughts*. The story *Twelve*

(letters home) is historical based fiction, told through twelve letters home written by the main character "JR." The random collection of letters loosely chronicles his final weeks in flight school through several months of service "in-country." The project was funded by grants from various arts and humanities organizations and the W. Warwick Public Library, RI.

I do have a bit more information pertaining to the goings-on at the two sessions in Reno. If anyone is interested, let me know.

Tom Morrissey ([pilotauthor@gmail.com](mailto:pilotauthor@gmail.com))  
Warlord 23  
117th AHC

***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...*

# VETERAN'S QUILT PRESENTATION AND QUILTERS SHOW AND TELL

The 2024 reunion marked the 10th year anniversary of our Veteran quilt presentation program. I'm extremely proud to announce that our quilting efforts resulted in 88 quilts being presented to our VHPA veterans.

This year the quilts were presented to CPT Bart Wells, CW4 Gary A Jones, LTC James H Weddell, CW2 Dan M Malone, CPT John E Montgomery, CPT Michael W Venable, CW2 Gene T Hoffmeyer, CW2 Donald, D Winter, CPT John M Kelly, CW2 Joe M Walker, and CW2 James R Ratley.

At the 2024 closing banquet, I received a "Honorary Membership Award" in recognition of OUR quilting program. This would not have been possible without all of the quilter's donated blocks and donated quilts. I want to say a hardy thank you!



CW4 James R Ratley

Having said that, I'm looking for more blocks for our 2025 presentation. I am accepting blocks and quilts for next year's presentation. Blocks are to be 12 one and a half inches unfinished, made with quilt quality fabric that has been prewashed in red, white/cream and blue colored fabric. Blocks should be sent to me to arrive on/about early January 2025.



CW2 Dan M Malone

*If you have any questions, contact me.*

Kathleen Sherfey

913-631-6811 ~ land line

913-486-7594 ~ cell

[klskms@aol.com](mailto:klskms@aol.com)

*(In the subject line write "VHPA Quilter")*

Pictured Below: CPT John E Montgomery, CW2 Gene T Hoffmeyer, CPT Bart Wells, CW2 Donald D Winter, CW4 Gary A Jones, LTC James H Weddell, CW2 Joe M Walker, CPT Michael W Venable, CPT John M Kelly



# FAMILIES OF THE FALLEN

## *Welcomed at Reunion*

My sincerest thanks to VHPA leadership, staff, donors, and to the 219 VHPA members and their families who attended the Gold Star Family Breakfast. Fifty-five family members of the fallen came to learn more about loved ones who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. They left with the knowledge that you - the members - still care deeply about the men who were lost, and their families.

Usually, a bit of "Wall Magic" happens at the Breakfast. This was the fourth time that Frank Platt has attended in honor of his cousin, CW3 John Floyd Hummel, B/7/1 CAV MIA 1971. "I try to remain cool at these events but it always brings memories back," Frank explained. "I usually try to sit somewhere outside of my comfort zone. I found a table, introduced myself and sat down. The gentleman to my right, William Fitzgerald, was talking about Class 70-5/70-3. I asked him if he knew John, and pointed to John's picture in the breakfast program. He hesitated, then showed me his wrist. On it was a POW/MIA bracelet with the name of my cousin. That was when I kind of lost it. He pulled off the

bracelet and tried to give it to me; I refused. Until John is returned, I want those who have a bracelet to wear it. That way he is not forgotten.

"Families began to step up and eventually it was my turn on the microphone. I related what had happened and asked William to stand up. I told everyone the reason I come is to see my cousin's brothers. Not the same DNA, but still his brothers. With that I told everyone they have a mission: if someone in your unit or class is listed as MIA or KIA/BNR, try to contact their family. If they are out of touch, reconnect. You may have the smallest of piece of information, but it may be exactly what that family needs for closure." Thank you, Frank.

Family members of these KIAs/MIAs attended. If you knew any of these men and have memories or photos to pass along, their families would love it. I will happily connect you with them.



Gold Stars and Red Roses: More than 50 family members attended the 2024 Gold Star Family Breakfast.  
(photo by VHPA Life Member Jerry Mellick)



# Never Forget

CARGILE, 1LT Claude Harmon, Class 69-26, A/123 AVN 23 INF (*family had to cancel due to storm damage*)

COTFELTER, CWO Mark Dennis, Class 68-9, 361 AVN CO 52 AVN BN

DUNNAVANT, WO1 James M. Jr., Class 70-7/70-5, 176 AHC

EMCH, CW2 James Kenneth, Class 69-17, 175 AHC

FOUCHE, SP4 Paul Jerry, A CO 1 BN 8 CAV

HAMMOND, SP4 Terry Michael, E TRP 1 CAV 11 INF

HUMMEL, CW3 John Floyd, Class 70-5/70-3, B/7/1 CAV

JAMES, WO1 Kenneth Bradley, Class 68-509/68-13, B/1/9 CAV

JANTZ, WO1 Robert Wayne, Class 68-503/68-1, 116 AHC 269 CAB

JECMEN, PFC Anton James Jr., D CO 5 BN 7 CAV

KENNEDY, CPT Thomas Joseph Jr., 5 MAR DIV ADV TEAM 2

KINK, WO1 David Robert, Class 69-11, C/1/9 CAV

KNOX, LCPL David, D CO 1 BN 26 MAR

MOLINO, CPT Eddie Jr., Class 69-36, C/7/1 CAV

PHIPPS, WO1 Donald Ray, Class 67-6, A/227 AHB 1 CAV

ROGERS, CPT Hershel Gale, Class 71-16, C/3/17 CAV

RUEPPEL, 1LT Ronald Benton, Class 70-50, B/7/1 CAV

SHARP, CPT Philip Dean, Class 66-15, B/7/1 CAV (prior 162 AHC)

STINN, SP4 John Richard, C/229 AHB 1 CAV

TOMLINSON, WO1 David Cullen, Class 68-501/67-25, A/2/20 ARA 1 CAV

ZEIMET, WO1 James George, Class 67-17, 283 MED (was A/4 INF 4 AVN)

*I'm happy to help you search for family members of your buddy whom you lost in the war; together, we can encourage them to attend next year. Please consider attending the Gold Star Family Breakfast at the 2025 reunion to help celebrate the lives of those we lost. Never forget!*

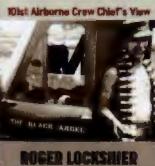
Julie Kink

*sister of WO David Kink KIA 8-3-1969 ~ VHPA Honorary Member #3  
kink100@att.net . cell 651-206-2542*

# BOOK REVIEWS

by Phil Marshall

**Saving INFANTRY and SOG Souls**



## SAVING INFANTRY AND SOG SOULS

By Roger Lockshier

There are lots of Pilot's books reviewed on here but not many Crew Chief's books...here's a Charlie Echo book worth reading.

Roger Lockshier has quite a military background with lots of awards to show for it, including earning his Jump Wings. As most Vietnam books start out, Roger tells us why he enlisted and some of the trials and tribulations he went through before being trained as a Crew Chief at Mother Rucker. Especially of note is one individual in Basic Training, a Cadre member known by his infamous nickname of Dr. Jekyll. No spoiler alert here but it became obvious why Lockshier included him in the book and what happened when Lockshier looked him up months later.

The Author was eventually assigned to the 101st Airborne and flew guns with the Black Angels, arriving in Vietnam with the Advance Party in December of 1967. It's not that many pages of narrative before his "life history" shifts to stories about

## HELICOPTER TRAINING AT FORT WOLTERS

By Wes J. Sheffield

ISBN 978 1 4671 6147 3

The Author gives us a wonderful photo history of Fort Wolters from before helicopter training began until its closing. Who knew that the central Texas location where virtually all of us learned to master those squirrely little trainers was actually Wolters Air Force Base in 1951? Well, the Author, Wes J. Sheffield, knew and he gives us the proof...in spades! LOTS of historical pictures in this book.

One hundred and twenty-seven pages and every page has one or more photos of Fort Wolters, mostly from the early years. Who knew that Ft. Wolters had a library of 15,000 books and 2500 vinyl records that you could check out and take home? I know that I was not aware of that, even when I was permanent party! There's a photo of that included. Were you there the day in 1967 when a storm



Phil Marshall, is a Life Member and was President of the VHPA in 1994. He flew Dustoff in 1969 in Northern I Corps and he is also a Life Member of American Huey 369. He has authored over 25 books to include 19 books documenting the rescues missions that we all flew in Vietnam.



flying missions. And stories there are, about half the book is nothing but "Studies and Observations Group", SOG, missions, how they operated and some very hairy rescues.

As one who appreciates "daring flights of rescue" (my words), Lockshier is not shy with his words or feelings. Both with his own involvement in rescues as a Crew Chief and the rescues that others in his unit flew, the Author goes into much detail and tells each SOG story/mission very well. I guarantee that once someone begins reading a Chapter documenting a mission, the book will not be put down until the mission is completed. And, Lockshier has a plethora of missions to recount. He has done the research and interviewed the participants so that the reader gets several accounts of each mission.

I'm certain that most Vietnam pilots have at least some knowledge of SOG missions; this book will give one a LOT more knowledge about SOG missions, especially if your mission in Vietnam was not supporting SOG. Well done, Specialist Lockshier...and say hello to Private Shithead for me.

heavily damaged 179 TH-55s? A photo is there. Or Day One of the Officer's Club in 1958; early history pics of Wolters like these abound in this book.

Want to reminisce about flying out to the stage fields? There's a stage field map included; Hue to the North, Can Tho to the South and Tay Ninh to the West. Sound familiar? I wish I could remember which field I solo'd at. Scared the he\*\* out of myself that day! But being carried under those standing, crossed rotor blades (page 114) and the "refreshing" dip in the pool was a day I will never forget.

The Author gives much credit to Brian Bagnall, Colonel Willie H. Casper (who saved numerous photos from the dumpster), the Mineral Wells Library and the National Vietnam War Museum for their research and archives. This very unique book is truly a low-level flight down Memory Lane for those thousands of us who spent part of formative years there. As a Warrant Officer Candidate, I didn't get to see much of Wolters itself or it's history...now I have.

# 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 (8472). **AVI**

AVIATOR REPORT completed for 4 New Members and covers the period of: 5.14.24-7.26.24

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*

Atwell Edward D. 'Ed' Reno Nevada Army 71-18	Barnes Charles W. ** Quitman Georgia Army 70-26 HHC 101 AVN 101 ABN in 71-72	Harrison Edward E. 'FastEddy' La Grande Oregon Army 69-11 116 AHC in 69; 187 AHC in 69; 128 AHC in 70	Patterson Raydean H ** Reston Virginia 66-3QC 182 AVN CO in 66; 118 AHC in 66; HHC/145 CAB in 67; A/158 CAB 101 ABN in 70-72
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## VHPA 2025 CALENDAR



The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Assoc. and Acclaim Press are pleased to present the new *VHPA 2025 Calendar*, now available for immediate delivery. This is the 32nd annual calendar produced by the VHPA.

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\*Have photos for future calendars?  
Contact VHPA HQ and ask for Mike Law.

# PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

or...

*We play how we practice...*

*By Dave Landoll*

They should have had spelling, punctuation, and typing classes in flight school. If you took the number of pilots who served in Vietnam and multiplied that number by six you still wouldn't know the number of war stories that are going unwritten from Vietnam. And your story must start with "There I was at 2,500 feet, last, at night, in the rain, out of ammo, out of fuel, and out of ideas." Well, I don't have a story starting like that. I also don't have to change any names to protect the innocent, because I don't remember any names other than my own. My story is also a bit educational. I feel there is a message for old pilots, bold pilots, good pilots, poor pilots, new pilots, even non pilots.

Three other fresh pilots and I arrive at Dong Tam B Company 9th Infantry on the same day they received their first Cobra gunship. Company B at the time had a maintenance officer who had just come back from Vung Tau with a fresh Cobra qualification. They also had one line pilot in Vung Tau getting his in-country checkout. The other experienced pilots were flying the Charlie model.

In their infinite wisdom someone in charge assigned us to go across the street and fly co-pilot with a Cav unit to get some experience under our belts. The Cav unit was flying hunter killer teams. We flew a couple of uneventful hours my first morning out. I sat in the front seat observing and keeping an eye on the loach before heading back to base camp for a break and lunch. On the flight back to Dong Tam Aircraft commander asked if I would like to fly, which of course I did.

After lunch (I didn't need naps in those days) we duplicated the morning mission. Once again it was uneventful. After the mission I was once more invited to take the controls flying back, again, I gladly accepted. We exchanged controls with the normal verbiage, and the AC added "see if you can execute a normal approach this time". I was po'ed and embar-

rassed at the same time.

To myself I was thinking "I'm not in flight school anymore, I am in Vietnam. I shouldn't need to listen to you're too high, too low etc." I felt I only needed to transition from flying to landing in the right area. But, I worked hard to make a good normal approach, and I did not get a critique from the back seat.

Over the next couple of weeks, I was privileged to fly with the same AC as well as other ACs in their unit. However, every time I had the opportunity to fly with others, I worked hard at shooting a good approach. I wasn't about to be embarrassed again. A few weeks, or months, later I became aware in the middle of an approach, what a good approach I was making.

I certainly owe that first AC a debt of gratitude. What he did for me served me well for fifty-three years. My only hope is for one person to learn from my story whether it be flying, football, or digging a ditch. Practice makes perfect, WELL maybe not perfect, but pretty good at least.

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# Let Me Tell You~ About Kansas City

I left the Army out '71. I was reluctant to join any service organization, even the VHPA. In 1995, one of only two men that I had stayed in touch with from my time in the Army, Bill Medsker, invited me to the reunion in Kansas City. Back then, local members were "volunteered" to organize the reunions and Bill was on one of the committees. More about that later. I joined the VHPA and made my plans to attend. I had not been in the air since 1971 so I was totally unfamiliar with air travel at that time. I knew Denver had a new airport but I forgot about the time zones. I ran along the horizontal escalators to barely make my connection to K.C.

After arriving in Kansas City, Kansas, (who knew?), I caught a shuttle to the hotel (in Missouri). What made that interesting is that I came from the West Coast where six-lane freeways were common. I was on a two-lane interstate highway with no traffic. There were signs welcoming the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots to Kansas City. Along the route the driver asked, "Are you any of the Vietnam helicopter pilots?" A guy in the front of the van said, "Yea". I spoke up and said "me too". He introduced himself and said he was going to check in and head for the bar. I told him I'd meet him there. We sat in the hotel bar until way past closing (maybe 3 am) and dispersed to our rooms only to be awakened by some knucklehead in a Chinook doing multiple turns around the hotel around 5 am!. They brought in some helicopters for us to touch and feel. I am sure the pilots knew what they were doing.

I remember getting bused to Parkland and participating in a Fourth of July parade. The streets in this small-town America were lined with people waving the American flag, wearing American flag clothing and cheering us on. We were way past our glory days but they were cheering us! I had never experienced anything like this before. I have fond memories of great concerts and events from that reunion but one of my most vivid is of a meeting with hotel security and my friend, Bill. The

sheriff said, "Bill, we've never had this many men come to our town and drink so much and never had a problem with any of them." There was a bit of silence and then Bill responded, "Well, we're too old to fight. These days most of us are in bed by 10 pm".

I came home from that Kansas City with a renewed appreciation of belonging to a common group. There was none of what I had expected of crying over spilt milk. I only found comradery, old friends and new friends. Although we all had different experiences in Vietnam, we all had the basics in common and no one had to speak about it. There was inherent respect.

Three or four months after that K.C. reunion, I received my very first directory. I was a brand-new member. For a first timer, the directory is very engrossing. Two hours later I was still standing at the counter, perusing the volume when the phone rang. I answered, "Hello", the voice said, "Randy?" I was instantly taken back 26 years. I knew who it was. It was Wally, my A/C who saved my life! He got me out of a crashed Cobra before the dang thing blew up! Wally had been a member of VHPA for a long time but I had just joined and was listed in the directory for the first time. Wally found me! We made arrangements to meet at the following reunion and have kept in touch ever since.

*That's what these reunions are really about. Meeting old friends, making new friends and being among a group of men who did extraordinary things with helicopters. I am looking forward to Kansas City..*

Randy Duncan  
Life member.

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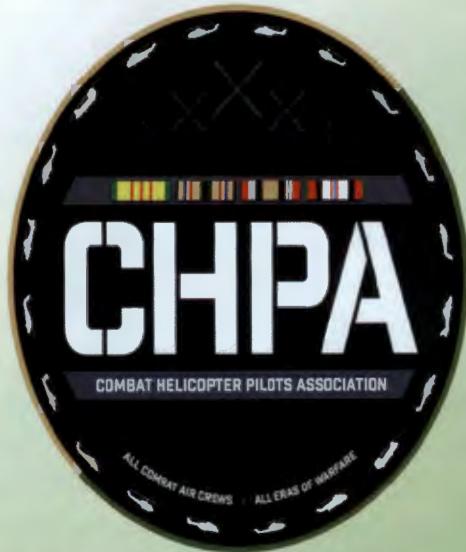
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# On The Way, Wait

by Laurence E. Gesell, USAR, LTC (Ret)

## COVER STORY



Outcasts (L-R): G. Mobley, J. Kirby, L. Gesell, R. Greene, J. Purser, D. Livingston.

During our first tours of duty in Vietnam, William David "Dave" Livingston and I became close friends. We flew together often as aero scouts where we were mutually dependent on one another. After Vietnam, we talked by phone, but then I lost contact with him. Reading the "Taps" section in the July/August 2023 edition of The VHPA Aviator, I was deeply saddened to see that Dave had passed away. From 1966 to 1967 we were in D Troop of the First Squadron, Fourth US Cavalry (D/1/4/CAV).

The 1/4 Cavalry, or "Quarterhorse" arrived in Vietnam in 1965, attached to the First Infantry Division as its reconnaissance squadron. Fundamentally, it was an armored unit with three, A, B, and C Troops of M-48A3 tank-supported M-113 Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicles (ACAV), and

one attached air unit, D Troop (Air), or "Darkhorse," there was a platoon of infantry, the "Doughboys," and a Long-Range Rifle Platoon (LRRP), known as the "Wildcats." Supporting the ground forces was an aero lift platoon of UH-1B troop carriers or "slicks," called the "Clowns"; a platoon of UH-1B/C gunships, the "Mustangs"; and there was a platoon of aero scouts flying the OH-13S. We were the "Outcasts."

Using its armor, the squadron's primary mission was to conduct route and convoy security along Vietnam's Route 13, the main communications and supply route from Saigon north to the border. Typical of cavalry operations, the Doughboys would be placed in blocking positions on the flanks of division operations. The Wildcats (or LRRPs)

were inserted deep in the jungle where they could conduct clandestine operations searching out enemy positions and strengths. The Outcasts would also conduct reconnaissance missions—by flying so “low” they would brag about coming back from a mission with “leaves in the skids.”

Dave Livingston arrived in country in 1966, a month before I did. From the outset he had been assigned to the Outcasts. I, on the other hand, flew with the Clowns for about three months before joining the scouts. I was intrigued by their enthusiasm, but also by their perspective on scouting. They firmly believed they were making history, if not only by repeating it. Helicopter warfare was still relatively new, as was the notion of using helicopters for the scouting role. Yet, and although aero scouting may have been new, scouting itself was very old.

The mission had always been the same since the Civil War when scouts rode horses. Only the vehicles had changed, and in the new era of helicopter warfare in Vietnam we had few guidelines to follow other than the original, the horse cavalry. Assumed was that aero scouts were the modern-day version of the mounted cavalry scout. But rather than galloping about on horseback, we “rode” light, observation helicopters out over the jungle looking to see what we might find, assault, and report back. The greatest realization of all, though, was to soon find that aero scouting was an extremely hazardous occupation, as perhaps scouting had always been. Borrowing from Samuel Johnson, being shot at, “concentrates the mind wonderfully!”

1966 and 1967 were still the early days of aero scouting, but by the time Dave Livingston returned to Vietnam in 1969, the aircraft and the tactics had already changed dramatically. Dave wanted to continue aero scouting, so he was assigned to B/2/CAV, 101 Airborne Division. By that time, aero scouts were flying the turbine-powered OH-6A Cayuse, commonly referred to as the “Loach,” which was much better suited for the mission. Back in 1966, though, we were not so fortunate—or unfortunate as the case may have been. We flew the older OH-13S Sioux, a Bell Helicopter design predating the Korean War. It was not turbine powered, but at least it had a supercharger. And, from our perspective, it was better than flying the OH-23 Raven, the so-called “Hiller Killer,” as some early scouts did. Generally, the OH-13 was good enough when flying out of ground effect, although the high-density altitudes experienced in Vietnam could limit its payload, including whether we carried an observer or not.

Using a truck mount, we tried attaching an M-60

machinegun to the right skid, but combined with an observer/gunner and 600-800 rounds of ammunition, the aircraft was so underpowered it had to be skidded and bounced along the runway until reaching enough translational lift to get it off the ground. The experiment was soon abandoned. Most of the time, we just carried two or three fragmentation grenades and a few smoke grenades strung on a wire between the pilot and an occasional observer armed only with an M-16 automatic rifle and several clips of ammunition.

In teams of two aircraft, sometimes joined by a pair of gunships, we flew over the jungle “sniffing-out” the enemy. On occasion, we found them before they spotted us, but most of the time we discovered them only because they exposed themselves by shooting at us. Some outsiders are under the misguided impression that aero scouts “wanted” to be shot at. However, the term used in the Army is to “draw fire.” Operationally, the meaning may be nearly the same, but there is a nuance; nobody in his right mind wants to be shot at; although, indeed, we were!

Scouting was dangerous, but it was also adventurous! There was a lot of wildlife to see—colorful flocks of birds, wild boar, even elephants, but also the enemy, and sometimes up close and personal. Yet, engagement with the enemy was mostly indirect. Other than initially taking fire, we would typically mark the target with a smoke grenade, and then stand off and direct a response by calling in close air support, attack helicopters, and/or adjusting artillery. It would take at least three days, but we could even call in a B-52 “Arc Light” strike, and then later hover around in the bomb craters to do the Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA). Other than tossing a hand grenade or two, or firing off a clip of 7.62 mm ammunition, direct engagements were limited. That would change, though, with the introduction of the OH-6A in 1968.

When I joined the scouts in 1966, I was paired up with Dave Livingston as his wingman. I was still a relatively inexperienced “Wobbly One,” referring to the fact that I was a new WO1 aviator. Dave was a first lieutenant, with more experience as a scout, so he was always the team leader when I flew with him. I did not fly with him on his second tour, but what follows are two examples of missions we did fly together: In the first and earliest example, we were out over the jungle, and just off the map I was carrying. We had no observers with us, nor were we accompanied by gunships. While still at altitude, we came upon some Viet Cong (VC) out in the open and dressed in their black “pajamas.” From

our high vantage point, it looked like a trail of little black ants as 15 or 20 at a time moved across an open area and disappeared into a tree line. Livingston called for artillery, but his radio could not connect with Fire Direction Control (FDC). Because I had a newer, frequency-compatible radio, the mission was abruptly handed off to me.

In flight school, I had been taught how to adjust artillery, but I had never actually done it. This was my first opportunity to control a live fire mission; my "baptism by fire" so to speak. Adding to my inexperience came the complexity of FDC assigning three batteries of artillery, each firing from a different cardinal direction: 175mm self-propelled guns from the east, a battery of 105mm Howitzers from the southwest, and another one from the west. I knew where we were, generally, but without a map not specifically enough that I could locate the target by coordinates. All I could do was describe our location by observing terrain features, which was just ubiquitous jungle, defined only by a river cutting through it. Fire control believed they knew where we were by my description of the curves in the river, so they prepared to fire.

In all that guesswork, I could have shot either or both of us down. As I had been taught in flight school, I requested just one "Willy Peter" (white phosphorous) smoke round, so that I could adjust from where it landed. But FDC would have none of it! They wanted to "fire for effect" on the very first salvo! Before I knew it, over my headset came, "On the way, wait" (meaning that the shells were out of the tubes). Then came, "Splash" (meaning they had impacted the ground). I saw nothing around us, but looking far, far to the south, I could see a massive cloud of dark grey/black smoke rising out of the jungle. It took me so long to adjust the direction of each of the three batteries, that by the time I had rounds finally falling on target, we had just barely enough gas to get home. We had to depart station, so we never knew what damage, if any, was inflicted on the enemy. In fact, adjusting artillery across such a broad



**Dave Livingston (R) being refueled; note the steel helmet the First Infantry Division required in the field (even though cumbersome to carry in the small aircraft).**

swath of territory was such a fiasco that I would not have been too anxious to share that story with anyone. In the after-action report, however, Dave Livingston reported what had happened. Instead of being humiliated by my inexperience as an artillery spotter, my name was submitted to receive an Air Medal for Valor. I didn't think I deserved a medal, but I do appreciate that someone did. It was probably Dave.

Several weeks later, our base at Phu Loi came under an intense mortar attack at night. Livingston and I were paired up again and sent on a mission to, "Find where we were fired from." It seemed like an impossible task; akin to finding the proverbial "needle in the haystack." However, we knew the direction; we knew the maximum range of a mor-

tar shell; and we were aware of our own base's counter-barrage strategy. In anticipation of in-coming artillery, there was a planned response of outgoing artillery fire that was programmed to hit designated targets around the perimeter. However, to avoid collateral damage to civilians, nearby villages were left outside of the targeted areas. The enemy knew that, so they would set up their emplacements near the edge of a village, if not inside it. Armed with that knowledge, Dave and I headed north toward the nearest village and, sure enough, we came upon an abandoned mortar emplacement right at the edge of the village, which had been struck by a round that went beyond its intended target range.

It was by sheer chance that the "long" or overshot round fell on the mortar position. Left in and about the dished-out crater were two bodies and some scattered debris. I hovered over one of the bodies; Dave checked out the other. I nudged the one with the left skid of the helicopter to see if he would move. That was a foolish move on my part. The body could have been booby-trapped. But when neither of the bodies moved, we assumed they were dead. Our discovery was reported to headquarters, and we were soon joined by the deputy division commander, who placed an infantry unit on the ground to survey the situation. As it turned out, the one that I had nudged was still alive. I am unaware if they got any information out of him, but the general then ordered us to, "Go and find where they went." The subsequent mission seemed even more impossible than the initial one of finding where we had been fired from. By then, though, Livingston and I had each become much better at tracking from the air, peering down through triple-canopy jungle, detecting movement, and/or locating foreign objects out of place.

By leaving two of their own behind, it must have been a hasty retreat, and we were able to trace the route taken by the sundry pieces of equipment left in their wake. Low level, we slowly followed those clues until they led to an open grassy area. We could trace their trail across the field by the relatively straight path left where the grass had been beaten down. Animals tend to make a different, zig-zag pattern as they meander around looking for food, so we knew it was a human trail. The path led to a tree line and there the clues ended. We were not able to find where the enemy eventually went, but at least we discovered the direction they headed. Livingston had to report our findings personally to the general at division headquarters, and that was the end of it. Finding the abandoned mortar

emplacement, and tracing the direction the enemy took in retreat, we thought was a major accomplishment. Unlike the time when I first tried to adjust artillery, there were no awards given out.

To receive a medal, something heroic must have occurred, someone must be there to observe it; they must take the initiative to report it; and some commander, group, or committee must verify the observation and process the award. Something was missing in that process, so our personal satisfaction for a job well done had to suffice. On this occasion, and other than the two casualties left behind, the enemy had already vanished, so there was no engagement. But on many other scouting forays, finding the enemy and being shot at was a regular occurrence. Months on end of being shot at, or of anticipating being shot at can take its psychological toll. There is no medal to compensate for that. Knowing what aero scouting was all about, and how dangerous it was, I believe it took a lot of courage for Dave Livingston to volunteer to be in that "fish bowl" once again, where he knew he would be shot at regularly. Flying as an aero scout was an extraordinarily hazardous mission, and Dave knew it. And, when he went back to Vietnam, the vehicle and tactics had changed. Scouting had become even more hazardous.

By using the Loach to engage the enemy directly, aero scouts became a more ominous threat, although, paradoxically, they became more vulnerable themselves. They had far more firepower than before, with not only an observer/gunner and an M-60 machine gun, but also a hard-mounted 7.62mm minigun controlled by the pilot. However, by staying in close contact with the enemy, and attacking them directly (rather than indirectly), scouts took more hits and were shot down way more often than before. Fortunately, the teardrop design of the aircraft made it remarkably crashworthy. Some called the OH-6 a "flying egg." When it crashed, the tail boom, skids, and the rotors would separate, and the egg-shaped hull would roll up in a ball. Many stories evolved of crewmembers walking away from those crashes; in some cases, three or four times.

Unfortunately, Dave Livingston's last flight was not one of those miraculous stories. On his second tour in 1969 he was shot down while flying a low recon mission, which, by the way, he volunteered for. As the second in command of his troop, Dave probably did not have to take that mission. He was shot down in the A Shau Valley, one of the strategic focal points of the war in Vietnam. Dave survived



**Outcast OH13S.**

the crash, but he had to be extracted with a jungle penetrator. He didn't die in the A Shau Valley, but life as he knew it certainly ended there. He became disabled and was subsequently medically discharged from the Army. "There are purple hearts, and then there are purple hearts." Dave's was the latter. He suffered the rest of his life partially paralyzed.

David Larcomb was Dave Livingston's troop commander, and he, too, said it was a sad day when he learned that Dave had passed away. As his second in command, losing him was not only personal but mission critical. Larcomb said that the day Livingston crashed "was one of saddest and longest days of [his] time in Vietnam." Dave Livingston was a brave soul, as were all of those who served as aero scouts in Vietnam—Dave maybe just a bit more than most.

Nearly 70 years have passed since the beginning of helicopter warfare. Yet, the cavalry mission remains the same: reconnaissance, security, and liaison. In the scouting role, the OH-6 was temporarily replaced by the OH-58 Kiowa "Scout," but then upgraded to the more heavily armed A/MH-6 "Little Bird." By the 2030s, Little Bird is programmed for replacement by a Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA). However, as demonstrated by wars

in the Middle East and Ukraine, drones, sophisticated air defense systems and modern warfare in general have rendered obsolete the way aero scouting was conducted in Vietnam. Like the horse soldier, the Vietnam era aero scout has, indeed, passed into the annals of history. What I still find so intriguing, though, about the Darkhorse scouts back in 1966, is that they realized then that they were making history, even repeating it.

## **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...*

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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](mailto: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.*

# V H P A C H A P T E R S

## ALAMO CHAPTER

Not a lot of doin's happening in South Central Texas these past several weeks. The weather has been very hot and humid.

The folks in the north hibernate in the winter, we hibernate in the humid summer. Not really, lots of things to do in airconditioned comfort.

Our monthly luncheons are ongoing. The guys and their ladies gathered for a great lunch at a Greek Restaurant in June, but we are taking a break in July as folks are traveling, etc. Some couples have elected to meet in Fredericksburg for a small get together. Can't beat the Texas Hill Country at any time of the year.

Our August luncheon has taken a bit of a turn. Instead of a luncheon, we are meeting for brunch in the small village of Bulverde. We found a quaint restaurant in the village that provides a wonderful and relaxing setting. Looking forward to it.

The chapter is also planning for our annual Christmas Party/Dinner, which is scheduled on 7 December at the Army Residence Community. This is always a great time.

The chapter continues support of the Huey 369 project and



Great Group.



Jan Clark



The Stouts and Janet Anne Boykin.

the Vietnam Archives Project at Texas Tech.

The chapter is alive, well, and active. President Tim Worley occupies the left seat and continues to lead the chapter to a successful year.

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

## ALASKA CHAPTER

Memorial Day services at our annual Byer's Lake ceremony was a nice celebration to honor our fallen brothers. A small but wonderful group of our Chapter members were present and presented the memorial wreath in honor of fallen Vietnam Helicopter pilots and crews.

Byer's Lake is about 135 miles from Anchorage and the ceremony is held the day before the actual Memorial Day. Starting with a breakfast on Saturday morning, some drive up and stay the night in a local hotel with a dinner and a nice gathering that night, and next morning drive up to the Memorial. Others drive up and back the same day. After



Rumble in the Mountains by about 200-250 motorcycles who lead the procession into the memorial, a 30-minute ceremony follows. After the ceremony we hold a "before you head back" picnic in the parking lot!

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Always a favorite way to celebrate the weekend. Monday (actual Memorial Day) members can partake in numerous individual ceremonies around the area.

We look forward to our next gathering on August 3rd for a memorial picnic honoring our Chapter members who now reside in Heaven and dedicating the American Legion Park to David Buirge, our past Vice President.

Our Chapter recognizes and honors the bravery and dedication of the soldiers on this year of the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day assault. Incredible soldiers, with an incredible task!

*As always, there is pride in knowing we flew!*

Lynn Kile

[www.VHPA-Alaska.org](http://www.VHPA-Alaska.org)

## AMERICAN HUEY 369 CHAPTER

We are now well into our 2024 flying season with our busiest months being July, August, and September. Also, work on the National American Huey History Museum continues; the Museum is now the home of our flying aircraft and it will soon be the home of our display helicopters. When completed, it will truly be a World-class Museum.

Our flying schedule this year takes us to Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and of course, our home base in Indiana. The aircraft are always flown to the events and an over-flight of the event upon arrival always turns eyes and ears to the sky to enjoy the sight and sounds of a Vietnam Huey. Our goals are to preserve the aircraft, maintain them in flight-worthy condition, educate the public (especially our



youth) and honor the men who flew them.

If you have ever thought about attending an event with us, there should be no reason for you to hold back. All you need to do is show up and be ready to enjoy the camaraderie that is part of every event, to include any volunteer work sessions. One does not need to break a sweat at an event or have any expertise, just show up and make yourself available for an enjoyable weekend. All Veterans and Patriots alike are most welcome. Many times, someone will show up to see what our flying events are like and next thing we know, they are back again and again.

*Maybe at the next event  
it will be you?*

Phil Marshall



Construction continues on the National American Huey History Museum, Bunker Hill, Indiana. Across Route 31 from Grissom Air Reserve Base.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## FLORIDA CHAPTER

Our Chapter was invited to participate at the 50th Anniversary of the SUN n FUN Aerospace Expo held at Lakeland Linder Airport, Lakeland, FL April 9 – 14, 2024. On April 8th, the VHPAF set up the mini museum, sales tables with canopy and prepped the OH-6A for static display. During a pause, the VHPAF held its Bi-Monthly meeting. With a location on the edge of the War Bird Ramp, our presence generated quite a lot of interest. Our members entertained a steady stream of inquisitive visitors. An interesting group that appeared on a daily basis was the British Royal Air Force Air Cadets attending the U.S. Aviation Camp. Many of the visitors were the varied veterans themselves and/or the children to great grandchildren of veterans. This presented an opportunity to discuss U.S. Army Aviation's role in South Vietnam.

Our Chapter was also invited to participate in the 2024 Melbourne, Florida Vietnam & All Veteran Reunion held at Wickham Park. The event featured a replica of the Vietnam Wall in Washington, DC. We arrived on Wednesday, May 8th with our Sales Trailer and the OH-6A to be set up as a static display. The next day through Saturday, May 11th, we were all set to educate visitors and answer any questions pertaining to Vietnam era helicopter support in the Vietnam War. Among the people who looked at our Loach and expressed interest were veterans from all wars and conflicts, civilians, and many children who were fascinated with our display. The event was a worthy endeavor to educate the public and honor our fellow veterans.

Additionally, the VHPAF was invited to participate at the



The VHPAF setting up at the Sun N Fun Airshow at Lakeland Linder Airport.



L to R: John Hawn, Randy Woods, Diane and Gary Harrell volunteered for the 2024 Melbourne, Florida Vietnam & All Veteran Reunion held at Wickham Park.



Left to Right: John Hawn, Tom Tomlinson, and Dan Brunger volunteered for, "Loach Duty," at the 2024 Melbourne, Florida Vietnam & All Veteran Reunion held at Wickham Park.

Memorial Day Observance Weekend, May 25 - 27 at the Highlander Building and Pavilion Complex in Clermont, FL. It was hosted by South Lake Base (Submarine Veterans), who provided on site transportation to our group, American Legion Post 55, VFW Post 5277, and the City of Clermont. Our OH-6A was on prominent display. The Patriot Ghost Riders, a veteran's organization, displayed the Vietnam Memorial Traveling Wall. Dr. Joe Ponds, our President, was



The Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall on display at the 2024 Melbourne, Florida Vietnam & All Veteran Reunion held at Wickham Park.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



101-year-old Mr. Daniel Keel, one of the original Tuskegee Airmen, poses with Dr. Joe Ponds, FL Chapter President and the Clermont, FL guest speaker for the city, 2024 Memorial Day Observance.

the guest speaker to a crowd of over 400. Also, in attendance was a Tuskegee Airman, Daniel Keel, 101 years old.

Have you ever wondered what became of the infamous Tuskegee Airmen of World War II? Did you know they were among the first black helicopter pilots in the Vietnam War? Did you know that Charles Alfred "Chief" Anderson Sr., known as the Father of Black Aviation, was the chief flight instructor of the Tuskegee Airmen, and trained a "next generation" of Tuskegee Airmen who flew helicopters in the Vietnam War? Dr. Joe Ponds, Florida Chapter president and



Dr. Joe Ponds, VHPAF President, delivered a Memorial Day message in Clermont, FL that brought a wealth of experience and insight to the ceremony while sharing his profound reflections on service, sacrifice, and the enduring legacy of our veterans.



The VHPAF's OH-6A on static display Memorial Day at Clermont, Florida.

author of The 600 m.o.l. – Black Helicopter Pilots in Vietnam, Second Edition: Tuskegee Glory, gave an awesome and inspiring presentation of his book at the 2024 VHPA Reunion in Reno, Nevada this year. He was also the Keynote Speaker for the 2024 Florida Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day in March.

Our 32nd Annual Reunion will be held September 25-27, 2024 at the SHERATON TAMPA BRANDON HOTEL. We would love to have you join us. Registration forms are on our website: [www.VHPAF.org](http://www.VHPAF.org).

*Submitted by Dan Brunger, VHPAF Chapter Secretary and Dr. Joe Ponds, VHPAF Chapter President*

## MICHIGAN CHAPTER



The Michigan Chapter continues to attend functions and hold gatherings keeping the chapter alive and well.

One item that missed in the last submission to the Aviator was about a number of Michigan VHPA chapter members including Bob Rich and Glen Veno participating in a "Michigan Helicopter Association" meeting at the McMahon Helicopter Services new location in Plymouth, Mi. on January 24th. Paul Boucher President, Michigan Helicopter Association, was the moderator.

Bob Rich reported that we first were served sub sandwiches and soft drinks provided by the Helicopter Association, and



April 3rd Traverse City.

then had a tour of the new McMahon helicopter facilities at Canton-Plymouth Metetal Airport. Pat Ryan with the FA's FAST TEAM presented a helicopter safety seminar on wake turbulence associated with helicopter operations. We also had a number of Yankee Air Museum members in attendance who talked about their Huey operations and celebrated the retire-

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

ment of one of their pilots. We all felt very welcome and had a great time at the meeting. The next gathering in Traverse City on April 3rd repeated at the Hotel Indigo. The April 3rd Traverse City photo shows the following individuals who attended L to R clockwise: Tom Burgess, Ken Hand, Paul Fitzsimmons, Walter Topp, Ron Reinhold, Mark Benjamin, Bob Matlis, Mason Grahl, and Ron Hofmeister.

It was nice to see Ken Hand and his friend Tom Burgess making the trek all the way to Northern Michigan for this event. Ron Hofmeister, Vice President, Grand Traverse Area Veterans Coalition, briefed us on upcoming veterans' events in the area.

Also welcomed was Mason Grahl, USMC Vietnam vet. After two years, Mason left college and joined the Marine Corp. After initial training he went to Vietnam with 26th Marines, 7th Marines, 3rd Recon Battalion. After his service, Mason returned to Eastern Michigan and completed his B.S. degree. He went on to Wayne State University where he received a Master's in Education. Mason was a teacher, a coach and an athletic director before becoming Principal of his alma mater, Wyandotte Public Schools.

Discussion centered around how we ended up in service in the first place. Nice review. Despite everything, all had a positive view of their experiences.

The May 1st Traverse City meeting was well attended. Lee and Carol Luck made the two hour run from Mikado, MI to join in. Also, first timer, Denny Petersen joined in as well.

Jean Perkins along with her Vietnam veteran husband Gary, presented a Quilt of Valor to Lee "Captain Lucky" Luck. All in all, a very nice time was had by all.

In the May 1st Traverse City photo L-R clockwise: Service Dog's name unknown, Denny Petersen, Barry Witt, Walter Topp, Mason Grahl, Carol Luck, Lee Luck, Ron Hofmeister, Bob Matlis, John Lefler, Kim Lefler, Mark Benjamin, Bart Halliday, Gary Perkins, Jean Perkins.

The May 21st Michigan Chapter business meeting covered a lot more than just some business. 26 people gathered at the One North Restaurant on the west side of Lansing for lunch, meeting old friends and making new ones. The restaurant has an extensive menu and by all accounts heard the food was very



Michigan Helicopter Association composite.

good and the two assigned servers were very efficient, friendly, and most accommodating.

Gary Copp introduced Ann Booren representing the Prayers N Square quilt ministry to present Quilts of Valor to six members and associates of the MI VHPA. Assisted by Bobbie Davis the Quilts were presented to Al Peterson, Noah South, Roger Blaha, Ken Hand, Mark Cosgrove, and

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Carol Luck Captain Lucky Luck

May 1st Lee Luck with Quilt of Valor.

Bobbie Davis the Rich Deer. Al was wife Kaye, and Ken by his wife Beth. Ann told of the Quilts of Valor program in detail and a bio of each recipient's military service was read as each received their Quilt. Ann & Bobbie explained the very detailed process involving many different people to create each Quilt. Kathy & Jim Carter accompanied Ann & Bobbie in support of the program.

The business meeting was conducted by Rich Deer. (This written report is a more detailed than what was covered in the meeting due to time constraints.) It included a membership report listing 127 members and associates. He explained that members were those who flew helicopters in Vietnam during the war and that the National VHPA only recognizes those qualifications for membership. However, individual chapters such as the Michigan Chapter are not bound by that criteria and we have 28 associates among the 127. Most of them are Vietnam Veterans who were enlisted crew chiefs, door gunners, and maintenance or officers flew fixed wing aircraft. Others include veterans from other conflicts and other veterans including many who served in the Michigan Army National Guard. Virtually anyone interested in becoming an associate is eligible.

Since the last business meeting in May of 2023, 3 members have left and 7 have been added. The additional members and associates include some recruited for the Quilt of Valor pro-



May 1st Traverse City.



Quilt of Valor Recipients

Al Peterson, Ken Hand, Rich Deer, Roger Blaha, Noah South, Mark Cosgrove



May 21st Quilts of Valor.

gram, continued membership additions from Mark Benjamin's efforts in the Traverse City area, and contacts made to Rich Deer from the invitation posted in the chapter postings in the VHPA Aviator magazine. Any contacts are immediately drafted and added to the roster.

Unofficially we have 117 Army, 8 Marines, 4 Air Force, 1 Navy, and 1 Coast Guard in our ranks.

As we age, keeping the roster current becomes more challenging. There were three emails that kept getting rejected though two have hopefully been corrected. If something seems amiss with an individual an attempt is made to contact. And on occasion a search for obituaries.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



John Wemlinger



Ann Booren

May 21st Presenters.

Gary Copp was inducted into the Michigan Aviation Hall of Fame on May 18th. He joins several other Michigan Chapter members who have received this honor. Congratulations Gary!

The National Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Annual Reunion was held in Reno, Nevada May 14-17 and six members of the Michigan Chapter were listed on the Morning Report as attending.

Treasurer's report listed \$1,213.81 as the balance when the meeting started. Dues have not been solicited though several members have sent dues and made donations. (With expenses including a donation to the Prayers N Squares ministry along with spontaneous dues and donations received at the meeting the new revised total is \$1,019.81.)

A list of possible activities was assembled by Glen Veno with copies available to those attending. Any individual interested in representing the Michigan Chapter at any of these events is asked to contact Rich Deer to arrange for support. Otherwise, individuals are welcome to attend any they wish.

The legacy of the Michigan Chapter going forward as a social organization was established in the May 2023 meeting and nothing has changed that intent. We are a Last Man Standing organization as is the National VHPA. Rich Deer noted that should he become unable to continue as president that his family will attempt to contact one of the Members at Large to pass on the archives and treasury. It's expected that any final monies left over would be sent to the National VHPA.

Guest speaker Vietnam Veteran and author John Wemlinger gave a memorable presentation with many stories that soundly resonated with the veterans in the room. His descriptions of his books revealed they are not typical war story novels, but about life and challenges after the war. John was accompanied by his wife Diane and their niece Sherrie Boak.

The last event of the meeting was the drawing for door prizes



June 5th Traverse City.

which included several books by John Wemlinger, a couple helicopter models, and a mystery bag.

Other attendees not already listed included Glenn Youngstedt, Bob Rich, Al DeMalio & wife Sara Tajer, Dennis Klein, Jeff Butler, and Bob Carusi.

On June 5th, Mark Benjamin hosted another Traverse City gathering with a change in location. We moved from the Hotel Indigo to Willie's Rear on South Airport in Traverse City.

In the June 5th Traverse City photo are from left to right clockwise: Clay Maxwell, Linda Maxwell, Joe Meredith, Don Pond, Charlie Eliason, Mason Grah, Walter Topp, Dennis Petersen, Paul Fitzsimons, and Sandy McLeod. Not pictured: Mark Benjamin.

Since it is now a Brunch at 1030 and in a new location, we went around the table and introduced ourselves to each other once again. We all have such similar yet different stories to tell.

Dennis Petersen showed his recently received recognition of 50 years as an accident free pilot as well as 50 years of service as a certified Airframe and Power Plant mechanic. Both awards were received from the FAA.

All agreed that the facilities at Willie's Rear in Traverse City are more than adequate and we will now be meeting there for brunch each and every SECOND Wednesday of each month starting July 10th at 1030 hours.

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

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

*Submitted by Rich Deer, President*

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



## NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER, VHPA

This late Spring and Summer has been beastly hot here in the Rocket City and environs. The North Alabama Chapter had planned to support Armed Forces Day celebrations and an event at Redstone Arsenal in May and June. But, as the temperature rose, enthusiasm waned. Finally, Marshall Eubanks, Chapter President was forced to cancel those events.

Several chapter members attended the national reunion in Reno, NV.

We had our regular monthly meetings. At the meeting on May 11th, we raffled off two very nice prints donated by an anonymous donor. The two members who won seemed very happy with their prize. Or, in fairness, their spouses seemed pleased.

At the Memorial Day celebrations in the city of Huntsville, NAVHPA members Ralph Weber and Sam Maki were honored to place a commemorative wreath within the Veterans Memorial. The NAVHPA was one of over 30 veterans and fraternal organizations placing wreaths. A good crowd of yellow shirted NAVHPA members, spouses and even one auxiliary Sheriff's deputy, who is also our treasurer, came out to honor the fallen and to support Sam and Ralph.

A few days later, Sam Maki penned the following note: "I had the privilege of placing our chapter's wreath along with Ralph Weber this Memorial Day, 2024. Now, to some that might not be a big deal, but for me it meant a lot. This story starts with a hat and the passing of my mom in 2015. My dad was never big on military gatherings and such. My mom passed away on my dad's birthday, 22 May 2015. We couldn't get



The prints raffled off at the May NAVHPA meeting.



Member Don LeMaster having a good time



Waiting to lay the chapter wreath. We stood in the shade because it was hot!



The North Alabama Chapter VHPA memorial wreath.



A good crowd for the Memorial Day 2024 wreath laying ceremony.

mom buried in the Veterans Cemetery for about two weeks, so my wife and I had to stay for awhile. An old high school and Vietnam veteran, Dennis Klingman, asked me if I'd join him in the Middlefield, Ohio Memorial Day parade. I said yes and bought my dad a

WWII hat in hopes that he would walk with me and other veterans in the short walk from the fire house to the local cemetery where the event of recognizing those who give their lives for our freedom. Dad flew P-51's in WWII and that was one of the reasons I always wanted to be a pilot. From 2015 to 2021 dad and my family attended the parade but he didn't want to walk.

After mom's passing, my dad wore his WWII veteran's hat a lot. In fact, in his 90's, he thought he should start going to the VA. So, I signed him up. Fast forward to Memorial Day 2022. I asked my dad if he'd go to the parade and walk with me. He said he couldn't walk that far. Fine, 'I'll push you in a wheelchair if you'd allow that.' He agreed. All the folks that were going to the parade gathered at the fire station. Dennis Klingman saw my dad in the wheelchair and said he'd help push dad in the parade. Off we went. Dad was waving at the folks as we approached the

cemetery for the formality of it all. He had a good time. We loaded him up and he went back home.

May 2023. On the 22nd we celebrated my dad's 99th birthday. I asked him if he was up to do the Memorial Day parade this year. Yep, he wanted to. He had no idea what Klingman and I had in store for my dad. Again, Dennis and I pushed dad through the parade with him waving at the folks. We got to our spot and the veterans did their thing and their talks. When the mayor got up to speak, he asked to bring my dad

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

forward. We pushed him to the mayor and my dad was recognized for his service in WWII by a Proclamation from the village of Middlefield. Now my dad was born and raised in the Village of Middlefield. He never thought he'd be recognized for anything he'd done in life. As he said, "I'm just a working man and did what I had to do". We siblings were hoping that dad would be around for one more parade, but it didn't happen. On 12 August 2023 dad went to be with mom.

We didn't go to Ohio for the Memorial Day parade in 2024. The chapter asked if I'd like to place our wreath this year. Yep, I'd be proud to. But come 2025, I plan on being up in my little Village of Middlefield walking that short distance from the



Ralph Weber and Sam Maki solemnly salute our fallen brethren on Memorial Day.



Members, Spouses and friends of the NAVHPA on Memorial Day.

firehouse to the cemetery with my buddy Dennis Klingman. Hopefully for a few more years after that." -Sam Maki.

For the Armed Forces Day celebrations, the NAVHPA had agreed to support the Tour of Honor rider, Duane Houdyshell in his quest for a picture of him, his motorcycle and Buc-3. Since we canceled, we agreed to give him another opportunity.

The National motorcycle organization ([www.tourofhonor.com](http://www.tourofhonor.com)) conducts an annual season long contest of being photographed with member motorcycles in front of memorials that honor those who protect or have protected our countries life and liberties. Every year seven

memorial sites are selected from each state (four sites for smaller states) for the photo competition. There are approximately 300 sites chosen nationally every year. These sites are selected from:

1. Gold Star Familys
2. Huey/Cobra Helicopters
3. Doughboys
4. 9/11 Memorials
5. Veteran Cemeteries
6. War Dogs

The above data are not a complete list of all sites – but

do a very good job of identifying most. The NAVHPA's BUC-3, a UH-1 C/M gunship, tail number 66-00623, is not in their database, so Duane was anxious to get photos to submit.



A crowd of yellow shirted NAVHPA members with Duane Houdyshell,

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Therefore, on 28 Jun 2024, NAVHPA members gathered at Buc-3s hangar to pull it out and provide Duane with his photo-op. We pulled Buc-3 out of her hangar to give better light and when Duane arrived had a passerby take the pictures he needed. Then, in true Aviator fashion, many of us went to the Nook and had a beer.

The NAVHPA meets every month at the Huntsville Country Club for a social hour, business meeting and buffet dinner. We have 40-50 attendees every month, depending on the members' travel, family, and medical concerns. After the social hour, a business meeting takes place using a format that allows us to complete the meeting in 45 minutes or less, followed by a buffet dinner. If you or someone you know is visiting or moving to the North Alabama or Middle Tennessee



UH-1C Buccaneer 3 (Buc 3) slowly emerges from its hangar for a photo-op.

area, please let them know we are here and eager to find new folks to talk to. We are on Facebook as 'North Alabama VHPA'.

*Submitted by Ralph Weber*

## NORTH CAROLINA VHPA

NC VHPA continued its 2024 display season with participation at local festivals and at two more notable events.



Ed Huges and long-time friend and fellow veteran, Danny Elzie, had a productive three months with the OH-6 by closing out April at the Onslow County Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day, exhibiting at the Bridgeton, NC Blueberry Festival in mid-June, and then entering the Loach in The Great Trent River Raft Race on June 22d in New Bern. Ed says the helicopter didn't qualify in the paddle board, nor the rafts and pedal rafts, nor the kayak/canoe categories, but did enter as



"pontoon, self-propelled" (the only entry in this category) - no results yet as to its placing in the race.

May 10th thru 12th found a larger NC VHPA group at the MCAS Cherry Point Airshow near Havelock, NC with the UH-1H slick, OH-58 scout, UH-1M gunship, UH-1V medevac, and OH-6 scout. There was a delay getting onto the base at 5PM with five towed helicopters cluttering up the main gate roadway, and again just short of the display ramp waiting for others to find their places, but once in we set up quickly. After checking into our hotel, our group drove back onto the air station to Miller's Landing conference center for the air show participants' "meet and greet"... a large gathering, a delicious buffet dinner, and a chance to mingle with other performers, notably the Blue Angels and Air Force F-22 Raptor demonstration teams. Saturday and Sunday saw great weather for an airshow on both days. We initially thought that our vintage helicopters would be placed nearer to the current models of Huey, Cobra,



Phil Keith, Jerry Phelps and Brock Nicholson "talk shop" with one of the Blue Angels support team members.



Danny Elzie and Ed Hughes display at events April - June 2024.

Blackhawk and Apache for better comparison between the "then" and the "now", but we didn't get that to happen. No problem – we still stayed busy with our fair share of a record-breaking 80,000+ air show attendees on Saturday and an estimated 50,000

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Just a few of our NC VHPA ladies.

on Sunday. Of special note regarding this air show was the last public flight demonstration of the AV-8 Harrier, which is retiring after four decades of service. And the F-22 Raptor is LOUD!



Joe Armstrong, Outlaw 24, and Ben Gay Joker 73, at the MCAS Cherry Point air show, standing in front of a UH-1V, similar to the one they flew in Operation Desert Storm.

Friday afternoon proved much more difficult than the minor 'roadblock' we created previously when getting into MCAS Cherry Point. Brock Nicholson led the way in with the UH-1H and he struggled for over two hours maneuvering forward and backward through a forest of concrete pillars at the raceway's northside Sundeck to finally get into his parking slot. It's

Two weeks later we are at Charlotte Motor Speedway for the weekend of racing, culminating in the Sunday running of the Coca-Cola 600. Getting into the display site on

debatable whether Brock should be credited with a gymkhana or a slalom event?

Midway through Brock's effort, Jerry Seago made a command decision to not even attempt moving the Mike-model gunship onto the Sundeck and the remaining three aircraft were much easier to get into place.



Brock Nicholson gets the Huey through the pillars at the northside at the northside Sundeck.

Friday night's practice runs and Truck Series race didn't garner much attendance at our location, nor did the Xfinity Series race on Saturday afternoon – lots of sitting around and moving lawn chairs to stay out of the sun. A lesson learned, too, that day:



NC VHPA helicopter display at Charlotte Motor Speedway's

Hearing the race cars speed around the track over two days and prior exposure to the thundering noise of jet aircraft at the Cherry Point airshow resulted in a stop at a nearby Bass Pro



NC VHPA receives a visit from MOH recipients Robert Patterson and Joe Marm.

Shop for much better hearing protection before returning to the hotel Saturday evening - the spongy ear plugs just weren't cutting it.

Sunday proved to be better as we were called early to the raceway because the crowds were now gathering at our display on the Sundeck. Two experiences during that afternoon made the whole weekend worth the effort: a visit by Medal of Honor awardees CSM Robert Patterson and COL Walter J. Marm (both Vietnam War veterans), and a flyover of the speedway by President Trump's private jet. When the 600-mile race began a few minutes after 6PM, it was earmuffs back on and let's watch the race!

*Submitted by Vic Rose*

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

We held our June membership meeting at Post #1 of the American Legion in Denver and provided Zoom conferencing for those who could not attend in person. We had 17 members in attendance and 5 Zoomies, plus one new member, Dave Palladino. He came as guest of Mike Silva who was stationed with him in Chu Lai with the 123rd Aviation Battalion, another "Pelican". He became a member at this meeting. Officers were Nominated and Elected. Yes, You guessed it; All current officers were nominated and voted on in a land slide Election. Dale House President, Bill Bates Vice President, Jim McNamee Treasurer, and Doug Neil Secretary. Terry Olson Operations Officer, Carlo Cavalluzzi Quartermaster.

## NORTHERN COLORADO VA CLINIC:

In the latter days of March several members attended a Veterans Appreciation Day at the Northern Colorado VA Clinic as guests of Kelli Wood, Manager of that facility. Bill Bates said this about our visit:

"Display items from the Helicopter War Museum were delivered to the facility by Rick Beaver and I around 0800 hrs. Already present were Doug Neil, John Mitchell, Larry Tomek, and Richard Overstake. The Honor Guard (Wing Walker) provided the flag presentation for the Pledge of Allegiance and concluded with a six minute precision drill. A loud round of



Set up at the NORCO VA Clinic.



L to R Bill Bates, Richard Overstake, Doug Neil, Kelli, Rick Beaver, Larry Tomek, Chris Towne, John Mitchell.

applause was given by everyone for the performance.

Inside, RMC members unpacked the display items onto two five-foot tables. After a few short minutes, Security personnel inspected the smoke and frag grenades we had on display. We stated they were disarmed, and the Security left without further comment. Coffee and Donuts were provided by an auxiliary. There were four other organizations participating.

The coordinator, Kelli Wood, thanked us for our participation. The recognition of the Vietnam Veterans was the primary focus as pins and stickers were given out. Throughout the morning our display attracted visiting veterans who were unaware of our organization or our contribution to the Vietnam History, our primary focus."

## FIRESTONE CHARTER ACADEMY:

On May 8th we brought the Helicopter War Museum to the Firestone Charter Academy at the invitation of Teacher Jessica Morley and Principal Jessica Cervantes. Ms. Morley's 7th and 8th Grade History classes visited the Museum. Approximately 64 students in all. The students



Introduction by Carlo Cavaluzzi.

were polite, engaged, and asked a lot of questions. As we spoke later of the visit, all of the docents agreed there is still hope with the new generation. Ms. Morley said, "All of the kids expressed so much gratitude for their experience with the tour, and it clearly left a lasting impression for them. A couple boys told me that they "definitely want to go into the military now. Wow! ". Participating docents were Bill Bates,



Set up at the NORCO VA Clinic.

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Rick Beaver, Carlo Cavalluzzi, James Clark, Bruce Girvan, Bob Harris, Dale House, Phil Lanphier, John Mitchell, Doug Neil, Richard Overstake, and Chris Towne.

## GALLERY 6 ART EXHIBITION (VETERAN PROJECT):

On May 17th, Member Cliff Lawson had an Art Exhibition of his Portrait Art. A project that he had been working on for the last 6 years. Cliff Lawson stated:

"The owner of the prestigious Gallery 6 in the Denver Art District, Scott Wilson, will be having a showing of about a third of the 180 veteran portraits I have made. It is coincidental with the annual Veteran Art Project that has their program in different cities each year and this year it is in Denver. Other galleries will be showing that work on Wed. the 15th.

So, Gallery 6 has set up Friday, May 17th 1800-2000 as 'MY' show. Each of you on this list has one of your images on display. One of around 65 images. The gallery owner has a guest list of some local Denver "dignitaries", but I am hoping to have a few of the subjects of my project attend. There will be beer and wine

and soft drinks, and you might even get a chance to meet my family. And I know my wife would love to meet some of you."

The event was well attended by numerous Chapter Members. The offer of wine and beer attracted a large crowd.



Some of Cliff's portraits with Mike Silva.



Cliff Lawson with Donny O'Connor and family at Gallery.

This writer had his portrait on display along with 64 other portraits many of which were chapter members. Many Thank You's to Cliff Lawson and the owner of Gallery 6, Scott Wilson, for making this such a memorable evening.

## COLORADO FREEDOM MEMORIAL:

Next, we were invited to the Colorado Freedom Memorial (CFM) by Rick Crandal Founder/Executive Director of the CFM for Memorial Day Ceremonies on May 25th. Bill Bates



Freedom Memorial.

was OIC for this event. He reported that the participating docents were:

Bill Bates, Rick Beaver, Carlo and Barbara Cavalluzzi, Phil Lanphier, Terry Olson, and Wick Clark.

Bill stated: "The City of Aurora provided a quiet generator for our electrical needs. The provided generator ran about an hour then, ran out of gas. Luckily, I had brought a gallon and electricity was restored in minutes and was uninterrupted for the rest of the day.

The crowd touring the HWM was estimated to be 250 to 275 guests. Included was a number of active duty and veteran personnel. Several people after seeing the displays and talking with docents were visibly emotional. All of the visitors complimented favorably on the displays and our mission of keeping the Vietnam War history alive. Donations reflected the visi-



Bianca and Vietnam Veteran.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

tor's appreciation, and one visitor left a \$100 bill. Many thanks to our generous donors. All and all the visitors showed as much care and reverence as the docents do. The HWM was full of visitors before the opening and continued until after closing.

The band leader of Bianca and the Flyboys, a 30's and 40's jazz band, invited everyone in our group to a gig at Forney Museum on about October 1. In appreciation she said, admission would be free to everyone in our group. I will contact her and firm up all the details in July."

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. Visit our Web site at [www.RMCVHPA.com](http://www.RMCVHPA.com) for any updates.

We continue to look for artifacts for the Museum. Please contact our Chapter President and Museum Curator, Dale House with anything you'd like to donate or loan to the museum. We can be contacted through



L to R Bill Bates, Terry Olson, Phil Lanphier, Ric...

our mailbox at: [RMC.mailbox@yahoo.com](mailto:RMC.mailbox@yahoo.com)

## Authors,

*Dale House, Bill Bates, and Cliff Lawson*

## UPPER MIDWEST CHAPTER

Our March meeting was held at the Crooked Pint Ale House in St. Paul. A couple of pints were consumed, and a significant amount of BS was dispensed. We had a quorum this time, so a little business was conducted.

Early May brought five of us to the annual reunion in Reno, Nevada. It was a good turnout for us to have that many chapter members there. Jim Crigler, one of our chapter members, was elected Vice President. Overall, the reunion went well although attendance has been dwindling over the past few years. It's probably a sign that we are getting older and long trips are more difficult.

Memorial Day brought us to the Woodbury City Hall for their program. We had four chapter members participate even though it rained halfway through the program. Very few people left during the rain, and it did quit early enough for a Huey to make a low pass over the event.

Thanks to Dave Schmitz and Barry Hammerback for doing that. The display Huey was there as well and it's always a hit with the kids as well as the not so young kids. While I was



there, I met a VNAF Major, who was one of my students in the 231st VNAF squadron while I was attached to them as an IP in H Model Gunships. We got to chat for a while until he had to leave to be part of the color guard.

Our next event will be a cookout for some of the residents at the Minnesota Veterans Home July 18th. This is a beautiful facility that was initially the "Old Soldiers Home" right after the Civil War. A couple of the original buildings remain, but the residential facilities are quite new. This is our third time doing this event, and it's gratifying to see the appreciation of the residents.

**Don Abrams**

**Chapter President**

## 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

If available, more obituary information for the individuals in TAPS can be found at [VHPA.org](http://VHPA.org) at the Died After Tour Name List.

**\*Allen, Steve USA, CW4 Ret; Flight Class: 71-5; RVN: 71-72 361 AVN; BS, PH; Callsign: PANTHER 35.**



Steven Allen, 79, of Pleasantville CA passed away peacefully with his devoted family by his side on May 22, 2024.

Following his tour, during which he was wounded, Steve returned to a helicopter IP assignment.

**\*Armstrong, Daniel T. USMC, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 11-63; RVN: 65-66 HMM-361/HMM-161**

Daniel "Danny" Armstrong died at the age of 83 on June 8, 2024. He was born in Los Angeles CA on October 6, 1940. While in college, at The University of Redlands, Dan joined the Marine Platoon Leaders Class with his best friend the summers after his sophomore and junior years. As soon as he graduated college in 1962, he became a 2nd Lieutenant and was sent to flight school in Pensacola FL for 18 months.

During his 5 and 1/2 years of active service in the Marines, he went to Vietnam flying helicopters for 13 months.

Dan flew for LA Airways before starting a career in 1971 as a banker at Home Savings of America where he retired after 26 years as an Executive Vice President. After retirement, he was on the Board of Directors for Goodwill Industries, Orange Community Bank, and dedicated time at Fairview Community Church.

He is survived by his loving wife, Judy, of 60 years.

**\*Barton, Chester P. USA, COL Ret; Flight Classes 68-12 and 68-508; RVN: 69-70 222 AVN BN; Callsign SKYMASTER.**

Chester Barton died on December 26, 2023. No other information provided.

**Belhumeur, Larry USA; Flight Classes: 66-15, 66-13; RVN: 66-67 118 AHC, 67 240 AHC; DFC.**



Larry Belhumeur passed away December 23, 2023. He was 79 years old. Larry is survived by his wife Dale Belhumeur. Larry was born in Milwaukee WI and moved to Tucson AZ in his early teens where he graduated from Rincon High School and then attended the University of Arizona pursuing an engineering degree. He left the U of A before graduating to join the United States Army where he became a medevac helicopter pilot. His distinguished service saved countless lives in Vietnam.

**\*Bourgoyne, Russel N. USA; Flight Classes: 68-19, 68-33; RVN: 68-69 128 AHC; BS; Callsign: TOMAHAWK 10.**



Russel Bourgoyne was born in Baton Rouge on February 24, 1947. He was graduate of Baker High School. He enjoyed his misspent youth at USL and the Oilpatch. He was hired by Enjay Chemical Company/Exxon Esso.

He retired from Exxon Mobil in 2003 with 36 years of service. He was a Life Member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, Combat Helicopter Pilots Association, AAAA, and Alcoholics Anonymous, whose members were an

important part of his life for over 40 years. After Vietnam, he returned home and immediately married his best friend and sweetheart, Sylvia Lynn Burris. Russel and his wife Sylvia were active in the East Feliciana Parish School System, St. Andrews by Episcopal Church, where he was a senior warden and lay eucharistic minister, and the Clinton Garden Club. Rusty served as an advisor to Explorer Scouts Post 60.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years and girlfriend of 10 more years, Sylvia Lynn Burris.

**Canon, Melvin Leon Jr.**

*A correction to a previous issue is provided for Mr. Canon. He was born on November 26, 1942, not February.*

**Chambliss, James R. USA, COL Ret; Flight Class: 66-5; RVN: 67-68 D/3/5 CAV 9 INF, 70-71 FLIR NETT; DMSM, MSM (3OLC), DFC (2OLC), BS, SM; Callsigns: CRUSADER / STAR TREK 6.**



James R. Chambliss, a devoted husband, father and grandfather, was born November 17, 1946 in Dallas TX.

After his commissioning as a First Lieutenant of Artillery in 1969, he completed his education graduating from Cameron College in Lawton OK, in 1974 with a Bachelor's Degree in Business and later a Master of Science Degree in Business from Boston University. His military education includes the Field Artillery Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the United States Air Force Air Command and Staff Col-

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lege, and the National War College. His assignments also included positions in the Pentagon where he served as a Department of the Army Inspector General and later, Chief, Warfare Policy Branch, Directorate of Strategic Plans and Policy, in the Office of Joint Chiefs of Staff.

After a distinguished military career of 33 years, 3 months, and 3 days, Colonel Chambless retired to Grapevine TX with wife Jacqueline and was a Project Manager for IBM for ten years.

He is survived by his wife, Jacqueline.

*\*Conaway, Steve A. This recent obituary listed Steve's place of birth as Santa Anna CA. A correction was submitted, noting he was born Oct. 25, 1946 in Orange CA.*

**Cook, Robert W. III USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-511, 68-17; RVN: 68-69 C/7/1 CAV; Callsign: COMANCHE 3.**

Bob Cook passed away December 20, 2023 after a short bout with brain cancer.

After active duty he joined the US army Reserve as a Med-Evac pilot with 348 Medical Detachment Rescue Ambulance out of Orlando FL. Also known as the Mickey Mouse outfit because Disney world allowed them to have Mickey Mouse's face imposed over the Red Cross on their aircraft and patches.

He did active duty in desert Storm. Cookie as we knew him was an entrepreneur. He worked in the Florida agricultural industry, built homes and was a financial consultant in his later years.

He is survived by his wife, Laura.

**\*Cooper Lowell D. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-9, 68-11; RVN: 68-69 C/101 AVN 101 ABN; Callsign: BLACK WIDOW 13.**



Douglas Cooper was born on September 2, 1946. He died on October 7, 2023. No other information provided.

**\*Davis, Lowell B. USA; Flight Classes: 68-17, 68-29; RVN: 68-69 198 BDE 23 INF; Callsign: SLOW MOTION 0.**

On March 7th, 2024, Lowell B. Davis (Barry) passed away peacefully at the age of 76 with his family at his side. He was born on February 21, 1948, in Millinocket ME.

Barry was many things: an Army Captain, a helicopter pilot, a fisherman, a loving husband, and a father of three, to name just a few. He was most well-known as the owner of Two Rivers Canoe & Tackle and was a generous member of the Katahdin area community; many people will undoubtedly remember him fondly.

He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Nancy.

**Ford, Wayne H. Jr. USMC, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 55; RVN: 65-66 HMM-16, 66 HMM-263, 68-69 HMH-462**



Wayne Ford was born Oct 16, 1933 in Rocky Mount LA and passed away April 26, 2024 in Bossier City LA. He attended Northeast University and later attended LSU to study petroleum engineering, but his love of country and flying led him to the Marine Corps where he served 25 years as an officer and helicopter pilot.

Upon his return from Vietnam, he was appointed to the Presidential Helicopter Squadron HMX-1 in Quantico VA as a command pilot where he served six years flying Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter along with many international dignitaries.

Following his military career, he was employed by Air Logistics In South Louisiana as a helicopter transport pilot, carrying men and supplies to offshore oil rigs in the gulf. He ultimately became a base commander and formed bonds with the men he worked with that lasted long into retirement. For many years after he left Air Logistics these long-lasting friends would gather for the Annual "Shootout" at the farm in Plain Dealing.

He is survived by his wife, Lois Ford.

**\*Gerken, Kenneth G. USN, LCDR Ret.; Flight Class: 35-61 N; RVN: 64 HU-1 DET Q, 65-66 HC-1 DET 49; NCM.**



Kenneth Graham Gerken, 85, of West Townsend, passed away peacefully at Lahey Hospital, Burlington, March 19, 2024 surrounded by family. Ken was born on April 25, 1938 in Woodhaven New York and grew up in Stony Brook LI NY.

Ken attended Stony Brook Prep School, Long Island NY. After graduation from Roanoke College in Salem VA, he enlisted in the United States Navy Aviation Helicopter Program. In 1978 Ken was presented the Navy Commendation medal for heroic achievement.

After military retirement Ken received his Teacher's Certificate and Master's Degree from Fitchburg State College. He taught Physical Education in the Shirley and Westford School Systems and officiated high school sports in the region. Ken also flew the corporate helicopter for Simplex Corporation in Gardner.

He was an active member of the community of many Townsend organizations: Townsend Ecumenical Outreach, New Beginnings United Methodist Church, Rod & Gun Club, VFW Post 6538, Senior Center and Lions Club. Ken and his wife Susan were honored in 2013 with the William E. May Endowment Award in recognition of "Extraordinary Acts of Generosity" presented by Friends of the Townsend Seniors.

He leaves his wife of 33 years, Susan.

**Ghere, John R. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 60-4; RVN: 65-66 B/1/9 CAV 1 CAV; DFC Callsign: GORILLA.**



John Ray Ghere of Onondaga, passed away February 3, 2022, at the age of 87. John was born in Anthony KS, October 3,

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1934. He was a 1953 graduate of Eaton Rapids High School. He was a graduate of Central Michigan University and ROTC.

After Vietnam and active duty, he joined the Michigan Army National Guard as a pilot and later commanded Company A, 38th Aviation Battalion for four years. He was then assigned to the State Headquarters working on military support plans and operations where he also received a Meritorious Service Medal. He then later retired as a Colonel from the US Army Reserve in 1994. John is recognized in the US Army Aviation Flight Line Gallery, the Michigan Aviation Hall of Fame, and the CMU ROTC Hall of Fame. He was a member of the Quiet Birdmen (QB) Lansing Hanger.

After active-duty, John was a farmer for over 30 years, a passion he loved. After a few years of teaching at Eaton Rapids and Jackson High Schools, he focused on farming more and growing his farm. John served a term as Onondaga Township Supervisor as an active member of the community. John was instrumental in starting up Onondaga VFW Post #6986 and served as post commander.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara.

**Gonzales, Ralph F. Sr. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 62-7Q.**

Ralph F. Gonzales Sr. passed away peacefully from this world on May 2, 2024, after a long battle with Frontotemporal Dementia. He was born in Tampa FL on July 17, 1941. The family moved to Lakeland FL where he graduated from Lakeland High School in 1958. He then attended Florida Southern in Lakeland, FL.

After leaving there, he moved to Point Barrow AK to work on the Distant Early Warning System (DEW line). He next volunteered for service in the United States Army during the Vietnam War. After being honorably discharged from the military, he returned to Tampa and

completed his BA in Business from the University of South Florida in 1973. He then went to work for Exchange bank and then transitioned to an executive position in the family business.

He is survived by his wife, Denise.

**\*Hallock, Michael W. USA; Flight Classes: 68-8, 68-3; RVN: 68-69 335 AHC, 69-70 5 AVN DET; DFC (2OLC), BS (2OLC), PH (4OLC); Callsigns: COWBOY / MUSTANG 27 / SCHOOLBOY 3.**

Michael William Hallock, a proud and dedicated United States Army helicopter pilot, passed away on May 6, 2024, leaving behind a legacy of honor, service, and love. Born in Burbank CA, Michael's life was marked by his unwavering commitment to his country, his family, and his passions.

Beyond his military service, Michael was a man of many talents and passions. An avid boater and sailor, he found solace and joy on the open waters, a love he cultivated throughout his life. His expertise extended beyond the seas, as he was a gifted wood-worker who once owned his own mobile marine repair and consulting business, leaving behind a mark of craftsmanship and dedication in his work.

**Hamilton, Bernard M. USA; Flight Class: 69-23; RVN: 69-70 11 CAG 1 CAV.**

Mr. Bernard N. Hamilton, 77, of Charleston SC, entered eternal rest on January 2, 2024.

**\*Hunter, Richard L. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 67-1, 67-3; RVN: 67-68 336 AHC; DFC, PH, ACM, AFCM; Callsigns: WARRIOR 23 / TBIRD 8.**

Richard Lewis "Rick" Hunter, 77, of Clendenin WV, passed away suddenly on June 5, 2024, in Charleston WV. He was

born on May 1, 1947. He graduated from Palmyra High School, and received a degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Embry Riddle.

After assignments at Ft. Hunter, he joined the US Air Force, and attended Pilot Training at Luke Air Force Base, AZ, becoming an F4 Fighter Pilot, and served at Hahn Airbase, Germany for over 4 years. Rick returned to the US to continue flying F4s in Kansas until he left the Air Force to fly commercially. He moved to Bridgeport WV in 1980 to fly for Aeromech Airlines and Florida Express for several years. He joined the 130th Airlift Wing in 1981, and transitioned to flying C-130 E and H aircraft on a myriad of missions, all around the world. In addition to his flying duties, Rick served in numerous ground positions. He retired from the 130th Airlift Wing in 2002, after 36 years of dedicated military service.

He is survived by his loving wife of over 33 years, Brig Gen (Ret) Paige Parish Hunter of Clendenin.

**Hyers, James E. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Classes: 61-9, 62-7; RVN: 66-67 116 AHC, 68-69 58 TC BN, 68-69 142 TC CO; Callsigns: STINGER 96 / HORNET 3 / BLACK MARIA 6.**

James Earl Hyers passed away August 13, 2023, at the age of 87. Earl was born and raised in Jacksonville FL. After graduating the University of Florida with an accounting degree, he was commissioned with a Regular Army Commission in 1958. His career among many assignments included two tours in Vietnam, attendance at the Command General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, Battalion Commander of the 205th Transportation Battalion in Hanau, West Germany and ultimately managing all DoD business as the Army Plant Representative for Bell Helicopter in Texas. He retired after 29 years. He worked for UNC (now Bell Helicopter)



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and DynCorp before retiring.

He happily served as board member and/or volunteer for many organizations in his 34 years in Ozark, including the Boys & Girls Club, The Wiregrass and Dale County United Way, the Ozark Rotary Club, the Dale County Public Library, the Wiregrass Honor Flight Hub, Daedalians and several other military organizations. He was a dedicated member of the First Ozark United Methodist Church. He was proud to be a Mason and a Veteran.

**Islin, John A. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 56-14; RVN: 64-65 118 AHC, 70 HHC/11 CAG 1 CAV, 70-71 HHC/227 AHB 1 CAV; Callsigns: MIRTH / THUNDERBIRD.**

John A. (Jack) Islin, 1933-2024.

Jack was in class 56-14 at Gary Air Force Base TX, because the Army did not have its own primary flight school. He graduated from Ft. Rucker and joined the new, just formed, combat aviation organization in the Fourth Armored Division. He went to helicopter school, was assigned to the new Tactical Transport Platoon with H-19's and H-34's, became the training officer, and moved to Germany where he demonstrated and taught Air Mobile Operations from 1958 to 1961.

As a Captain, he went to Camp Wolters TX with the small cadre to design, develop, and implement the FIRST armed helicopter school. He was also assigned to be the Chief of the Warrant Officer Candidate Program. He volunteered for Vietnam and arrived there in June of 1964. He left for Command and General Staff College where he came out on the list for Lieutenant Colonel after only nine months in grade as a Major. Graduate School followed. Assigned to the Pentagon, he was an Executive Officer to the Asst. Vice Chief of Staff and took every opportunity to push air mobility and the aviation pro-

grams: UTTAS, Attack Helicopter, RSRA, ABC and Chinook upgrade. Following Vietnam, it was the Industrial College, where he was kept on a Research Fellowship, and then an assignment to the Pentagon and the Secretary of the Army. He was a Deputy for Research and Development of Aviation Systems and continued to push the Aviation Programs. He received an early promotion to O-6 and then retired at exactly 20 years.

He became the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the American Helicopter Society, then the Director of the new Sikorsky Development Flight Test Center in Florida and then a Group Senior Vice President at Citicorp Diners Club. He was inducted into the Abington Senior High School Hall of Fame in Abington PA.

**\*James, Stephen E. USA, Ret.; Flight Class: 70-42; RVN: 71 92 AHC, 72 B/7/17 CAV, 72 H/17 CAV; Callsign: PALL-BEARER 32.**

Stephen E. James, 77, of Bee Branch passed from this life to Heaven on June 20, 2024. He was born May 27, 1947, in Little Rock AR.

Stephen was a beloved father, Vietnam veteran, and attorney. He led a fulfilled life working for the Van Buren County Prosecuting Attorney's office for over 30 years. He retired from the Army and National Guard after 21 years of service. When he wasn't hard at work, he spent much of his time traveling with family, reading military novels, and flying planes.

**\*Marcy, John USA, COL Ret.; RVN: 67 A/3/17 CAV, 68 190 AHC, 711 TC BN; DMSM, MSM, BS (OLC), PH, ACM; Callsigns: SILVER SPUR / GLADIATOR 3.**

John Marcy was born Feb 11, 1942 in Lackawanna NY. He passed away on April 30, 2024 at the age of 82.

John attended Queen of All Saints Elementary School, Canisius High School, and graduated from John Carroll University. He entered the Army in 1964 serving in a multitude of Infantry, Aviation and Procurement Assignments. His military career spanned a variety of command assignments, and was highlighted by a five-year assignment as the Assistant Program Manager (Log) during the development of the US Army's Apache Helicopter Program.



Upon retirement from the Army, Colonel Marcy and his wife remained in Hudson OH where he pursued a 2nd career in Aquatics Management. He retired once again from the Hudson School System where he directed the Aquatic Programs for the Elementary School as well as the Hudson Recreation Department. During retirement he continued a close association with aquatics by consulting for developers, volunteering for the Red Cross, and managing several swimming pools throughout the Hudson area.

In 2020, John and Paula relocated to South Pasadena FL. He continued to serve the community as a Director on the Board of Directors at Baywatch of Harborside.

He is survived by his wife, Paula (Linton).

# TAPS

**Martini, Duke USA; Flight Classes: 68-521, 68-39; RVN: 69-70 D/1/10 CAV; Callsign: SHAMROCK 16.**

With heavy hearts, we announce the death of Duke L. Martini (Kent WA), who passed away on April 1, 2024 at the age of 76. He was born on February 15, 1948.

He is survived by his wife Aena, Martini.

**McGee, John B. USA, LTC Ret; Flight Class: 63-4T; RVN: 67 A/4 AVN 4 INF; Callsign: BLACKJACK 26.**

John Bernhard McGee, 82, of Arvada CO passed away on June 17th, 2022 in Broomfield CO. John was born in Boone IA in 1940. During his last year of high school, John enlisted in the Iowa National Guard, where he began flying & maintaining helicopters and airplanes as well as repairing radios in jets. He graduated from Boone High School in 1958. He received an Associates Degree from Boone Junior College and later majored in Accounting at Drake University. After Drake University, he attended the Iowa Military Academy & graduated in 1961.

He retired from the Iowa National Guard as a lieutenant colonel in 1978. In the ensuing years, he stocked fish by airplane in Oregon, performed helicopter logging in the state of Washington, and fought forest fires all over the Western United States. He also piloted avalanche bombings to protect mountain roads in CO, and was a pilot for Flight for Life in Denver, Spokane, and Las Vegas.

John is survived by his wife, Sharon L. McGee.



**\*Miller, Christian J. III USA; Flight Class 68-2; RVN: 63 93 TC CO, 64 121 AVN.**

Christian Miller passed away on December 29, 2023. He was born in 1937 in the state of CT and raised in a small town

called New Canaan. He attended New Canaan's public schools and graduated from New Canaan High School. After graduating High School, he moved to Philadelphia PA to attend the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania. At the Wharton School, Chris received a Bachelor of Science in Economics with a focus on Transportation. While in College, Chris participated in R.O.T.C. and earned a commission. July 1965 saw Chris' departure from the regular Army, and a relocation to San Francisco CA. From his arrival in 1965, and until its closure in 1976, Chris was an S-61N helicopter captain with SFO Helicopter Airlines. With SFO Helicopter Chris flew helicopters transiting between the SFO Airport and the Oakland Airport. Once in the Bay Area, Chris continued to serve with the Army Reserve for another 22 years. After 27 years in the armed forces, both regular and reserve, Chris retired from service in 1987, having accumulated over 10,000 hours of Civilian and Military flight time.

With the closure of SFO Helicopter Airlines, Chris decided it was time to put his college degree to work. He made a move into Real Estate. In 1977 Chris entered the profession with a local independent real estate firm. After studying and hard work, Chris attained his real estate broker's license. As a real estate agent, Chris was always working to improve his skills and achieved many designations: Graduate Realtor Institute (1978), Certified Real Estate Brokerage Manager (1981), Certified Residential Specialist (1988), and Seniors Real Estate Specialist (2002).

The dishonorable treatment of veterans coming home from the Vietnam war left a lasting impression on Chris and he made it his passion to never let our veterans be treated that way again, so in 1990-91 Chris put together a letter writing cam-

aign for local troops, which led to his appointment as co-chairman of the Pleasanton Support Group for all the troops from Pleasanton deployed to Desert Shield/Desert Storm during the Gulf War. In 2003, Chris helped start and became Chairman of the Pleasanton Military Families Support Group to support local troops and their families, involved with Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq). Still to this day If you drive down Main St. you will see yellow ribbons hanging from the lights, each with the name of a current Pleasanton native that is serving in the Armed Forces. This was one of the many lasting impacts Chris Miller had on the community. As humble as Chris was giving back to Pleasanton over five decades-plus, community leaders certainly noticed. His list of accolades stands second to none: Mayor's Award in 2020, Ed Kinney Community Patriot Award in 2020, Pleasanton Weekly's Man of the Year in 2009 and one of our inaugural Tri-Valley Heroes (2012: Community Spirit).

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Marty Miller.

**\*O'Connor, Michael P. USA; Flight Classes: 68-519, 68-35; RVN: 68-70 116 AHC, 71 334 AHC; SS; Callsign: STINGER 91.**

Michael (Mic) O'Connor slipped away from us and went West on April 6, 2024, after a six-month battle with cancer. He was comforted throughout his illness by his former wife, Merri Mattson. Mic was born on December 8, 1947, in Spokane WA. His family moved to Tacoma a few years later, and finally settled by the time he was in the fifth grade, in Eugene OR.

After military flying, Mic continued flying helicopters in locations including England, the Middle East, Asia, and South and Central America. He ended his helicopter career flying Sky Cranes in the Pacific

# TAPS

Northwest on logging operations. He moved to the fixed wing side of the industry and flew for commuter airlines affiliated with Alaska Airlines. He was hired by Alaska Airlines and had an excellent and rewarding career as a Captain flying Boeing 737s. Mic retired in 2007 and lived peacefully in Elk WA.

He is survived by his former wife, Merri.

**\*Pepper, Jeffry L. USA; Flight Class: 69-25; RVN: 70 187 AHC; BS, PH; Callsign: CRUSADER.**

Jeffrey L. Pepper passed away on May 28, 2024 at Boone Hospital in Columbia MO with "family" at his side after a valiant battle with complications of cancer. His passing on Memorial Day as a proud and loyal veteran was symbolic and fitting. Jeff was born August 17, 1947 in St. Joseph MO. He attended Weston Missouri Schools, graduating there from high school.

After Vietnam, Jeff attended Northwest Missouri State College, Maryville MO where he studied business administration, then Missouri Western College, St. Joseph MO 1971-1972, again studying business administration. He also studied at Airline Operations Training, Inc. Flushing, NY 1972, consisting of six months comprehensive study of airline operations and dispatching. Although a Midwestern guy, his work and studies placed him in various parts of the United States.

Some of his work experience included St. Joseph Hospital Life Flight, Platte County Communications Center, and Air New England. He was very active in various organizations in these places, using his knowledge of flight for improvement, safety, and furthering helicopter emergency flight availability.

He relocated to Columbia MO in the early 1980s for proximity to the Truman VA Hospital as his combat wounds continued to require care. Some of his interests

include music, particularly jazz. He was a member of the DAV, VFW, American Legion, Army Aviation Association, Cousteau Society and VHPA.

**\*Phillips, Arthur F. USA, CW4 Ret; Flight Class: 64-3W; RVN: 66-67 179 ASHC, 67-68 B/228 ASHB 1 CAV, 69-70 12 CAG; Callsigns: SHRIMPBOAT, BLACK CAT.**

Arthur F. Phillips passed away on June 19, 2024, at the age of 86 in Ozark AL, after a courageous battle with cancer. He was born on November 24, 1937, in AL.

His life was one of service and adventure. He joined the US Army as a young man and proudly served for 26 years, retiring as a pilot. His passion for flying was a testament to his love for the skies, and he continued to fly until he was grounded due to heart issues. His military career was not just a job but a calling, and he carried the discipline and respect he learned in the Army throughout his life.

He is survived by his first wife of 42 years, Ilona Phillips.

**Price, John USA, CW4 Ret; Flight Classes: 69-43, 69-39.**

John Waitman Price was born in Charleston WV on October 4, 1948. He passed on March 4, 2024. John graduated from South Charleston High School in 1967. He worked at a plant in Charleston cleaning out military vehicles. In fact, since he was small enough to climb inside, he had the job of cleaning out a fuel cell in a tank and almost did not make it back out due to the fumes. In 1967 the family moved to Fairfax VA and in 1968 he decided to join the Army, following in his father Jim's footsteps.

Back in the States six weeks, John started Advertising Associates which included the Fairfax Advertiser later to become the Fair-

fax Mirror, a local newspaper in Fairfax City. He really enjoyed working in advertising and sales, he later worked with the Record Newspaper in Rockville MD. Upon returning home also joined various organizations such as the Fairfax American Legion Post 177, Fairfax VFW 8469 and became a founding member of Centreville Moose Lodge 2168. Later in life joining the Frostburg Elks 0470.

After the newspaper business he moved on to "try on many different hats" as he loved to say. He was a car salesman at Koons Chrysler Plymouth in Tysons Corner for many years. Garrett County Maryland Volunteer Fire Fighter, bartender at the American Legion Post 177 and a real-estate agent for Americorp Mortgage Services Inc. He eventually would end up in the VA National Guard Reserve still flying Hueys, loving every minute in the air and sometimes loving even more getting back on the ground safe.

He worked as a driver for JL Tree Service and LabCorp. He also worked for Classic Printing Center in Chantilly, he was a Home Paramount pest control salesman and a census worker. He was known as the "The Toy Man" for many years, servicing more than 40 plush animal machines from Northern VA up to Western MD, PA, and WV for Soft Toys Inc. He also worked with Artel telecommunication company pulling various communication cables in local Bell Atlantic and Verizon server buildings with his son Jim. In recent years he continued on with another division of Advertising Associates, supplying a variety of promotional products for local businesses.

He is survived by his wife, Sandy.

In lieu of flowers, donations to Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Scholarship Fund in memory of John Waitman Price at <http://vhpa.org> would be greatly appreciated. This is a program to benefit descendants of Vietnam Helicopter Pilots who are members of the VHPA.

# TAPS

**\*Raible, Ronald P. USA; Flight Classes: 67-1, 66-23; RVN: 67-68 B/7/17 CAV; DFC, PH, ACM; Callsigns: RUTHLESS RIDER / WHITE 24**

Ronald Paul Raible of Delray Beach FL passed away on May 29, 2024, at the age of 79. Ronald was born on April 19, 1945, in Kingston NY. Ronald graduated from Kingston High School, Kingston NY, and Chamberlayne Junior College in Boston MA. He received his bachelor's degree from Barry University in Miami FL.

Ronald was one of the original owners of Prime Management Group, Inc. (now First Service Residential) in Boca Raton FL, a full-service property management company until he retired in 1997. After retirement, Ronald moved with his wife Bonita (Bonnie) to New York and then moved to Callawassie Island SC, where they resided for over twenty years.

**Ranson, John H. Jr. USA, CW5 Ret; Flight Class: 70-37; RVN: 71 173 AHC; LM, BS, Callsign: CROSS-BOW 34**



John Howard Ranson, Jr. passed away on March 27, 2024. He was born on October 13, 1950 in Charleston SC. He graduated from the University of South Carolina in 1976 with a Bachelor's Degree in Science and Math. He was a member of Northeast Presbyterian Church, National Guard Association, Army Aviation Association of America, and United States Power Squadron.

After his RVN tour he joined the National Guard, where he was employed as a fulltime Technician and was assigned to various units. He was qualified as a Standardization Instructor Pilot in OH-58, UH1, UH-60, U8, U21, C12 and C26 aircraft. He participated in operations to Iceland in 1993, Singapore in 1995, Panama in 1998, and the National

Training Center at Fort Irwin CA in 1999. His last assignment was at Joint Force Headquarters as the Standardization Instructor Pilot where he was promoted to Chief Warrant Officer Five on June 30, 2003.

A year from retirement, he accepted another deployment to Kosovo with the 2/151st Security and Support Helicopter Battalion in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and KFOR-12. John flew more than 16,000 accident-free flight hours during his distinguished career. He retired on October 12, 2010 with over 41 years of service and resided in Columbia SC. He was inducted in the SCARNG WO Hall of Fame on February 27, 2011.

He is survived by his wife, Susan Mundy Ranson.

**Russell, Lonte G. USA; Flight Classes: 71-1, 70-49; RVN: 71-72 D/1/1 CAV 23 INF; Callsign: SABER 14**

Lonte Russell was born on September 8, 1950, and passed away on April 13, 2019. Lonte was a resident of Sacramento CA. No other information shown.

**\*Ryder, Francis O. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 68-22; RVN: 69-70 4 AVN 4 INF.**

Francis Orie Ryder passed on January 10, 2024. He was born on December 31, 1943 in Athol MA.

After the Army, Fran worked as the Director of Facilities for Saint Paul's School. He spent 10 years transforming the school into a modern campus and transforming the lives of countless students.

Fran and Marilyn were inseparable. They moved 12 different times, raised three children, and opened multiple real estate businesses. They were married for 55 years.

He is survived by his wife, Marilyn.

**\*Spencer, John J. Jr. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 62-7 FW; RVN: 64-65 92 FW TP, 67-68 1 AVN CO (RR), 68 138 AVN CO (RR), 71-72 HHC/12 CAV 72 F/4 CAV; DSM, DFC (4 OLC), BS (OLC) LM; Callsigns: EFFENDI 20 / BUFFALO / CENTAUR 6.**



John Judson Spencer, Jr, 85, of Columbus GA died March 23, 2024 at Columbus Hospice House. John was born October 29, 1938 in Magee MS.

At the age of 22, he followed in his father's footsteps and joined the US Army. Commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant out of OCS at Ft. Benning, he chose to become an Army Aviator. John flew fixed wing and rotor wing aircraft for the Army and was able to fly the majority of the Army's aircraft inventory over the course of his career. He served three tours of duty in Vietnam.

After his wartime experience, he worked in the Training and Doctrine command at Ft. Monroe Virginia and then the Infantry Board at Ft Benning, as a test officer where he soon became an expert in night vision technology.

Upon retirement he opened his own business, Technology Associates, and consulted with defense industry and the Army to help ensure our soldiers had the very best in night vision equipment. "We Own the Night" was more than a motto to him and he worked into his 70's making and keeping that a reality.

**Wilson, Roland W. USA; Flight Class: 70-4; RVN: 70 68 AHC, 70-71 334 AHC; Callsigns: MUSTANG 5 / GREMLIN 30.**

It has come to my attention that Roland W Wilson, aka Ron, passed on May 21, 2020 in Phillipi WV. Ron was very supportive of his fellow soldiers and always a pleasure to work and be with.

*Submitted by Life Member Craig Clapper*

# TAPS

## OBITUARY SUBMISSIONS

Individuals wishing to supply a notice of death and/or information such as online link(s) may do so by email to [aviator@vhpa.org](mailto:aviator@vhpa.org). Those wishing to write their own obituaries may submit same to that email address as well. Space constraints may limit the amount of text allowed. For self-produced versions, any edited narrative will be provided to its author for review as soon as feasible. Pilots meeting VHPA membership criteria, but have never been a member, will have a one line entry. Regardless of whether or not an obituary is abridged, an unedited version (full text) of all submitted obituaries will be posted on our web site at <https://www.vhpa.org>.

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

**Hilmar, Roberts N. USA; Flight Classes: 67-5, 67-3; died on August 31, 2023.**

**Hudon, Wilfred R. USA, CW4 Ret.; died on May 8, 2024.**

**Murphy, Cornelius M. USA; Flight Classes: 68-515, 68-27; DFC; died on June 14, 2023.**

**Oldenburg, Delbert E. USAF, LTC Ret.; RVN: 68-69 20 SOS; DFC (OLC), PH; Callsign: GREEN HORNET; died on May 11, 2024.**

**Rivera, Roberto USA; Flight Class: 68-22; RVN: 71-72 162 AHC; died on February 17, 2024.**

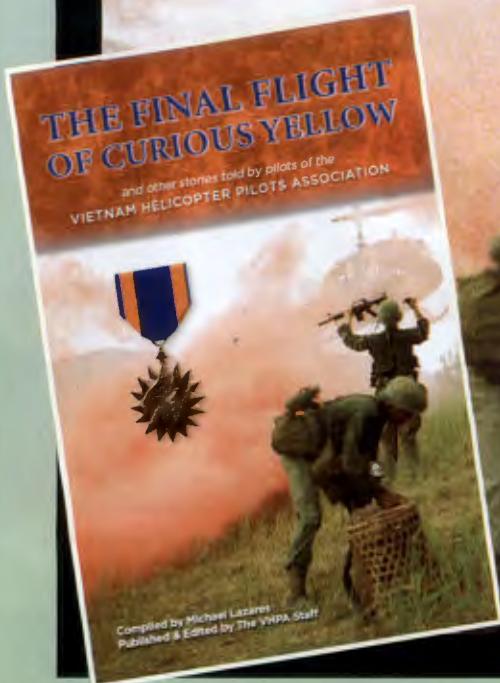
**Schnell, Hudson A. USA, LTC Ret.; RVN: 71 162 AHC; died on January 30, 2024.**

**Waite, Darrell M. USA., LTC. (2OLC); died on April 13, 2020.**

**(Dr.) Wasmond, Joseph. USA; Flight Class: 69-21; DFC (OLC), BS; died on April 19, 2024.**

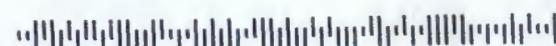
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