



# The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

Cover Story on page 9



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19.



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15.

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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

*Thank you...*

for allowing me to serve as your President. I am following a very competent and hard-working group of VHPA members who have committed their time and love for this organization over the past 41 years. I will do my very best to honor their work and perpetuate their successes.

Thanks to my past and present fellow officers on the Executive Council for their support and guidance in sustaining the heart and



soul of our VHPA Membership.

And last, but by no means least, thanks to our HQ Staff led by Sherry Rogers. These ladies tirelessly keep our organization running and successful despite the many challenges we impose!

I'm here to serve and happy to hear your thoughts and concerns.

*Cheers,  
Frosty*

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

New officers were elected at the annual business meeting in Reno. Forest "Frosty" Price is our new President. Jim Crigler is the Vice-President, Dennis Faucher is now the Senior member, Bob Hesselbein is the Mid-term member, and Patsy Leone is our Junior member.

President .....	Frosty Price
Vice-President .....	Jim Crigler
Past President. ....	John Powell
Senior Member .....	Dennis Faucher
Midterm Member ....	Bob Hesselbein
Junior Member .....	Pat Leone
Secretary/Treasurer....	John Shafer

### 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.

We hope everyone that attended R2024 in Reno had a great time!

*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

**D-Day—Battle of the Bulge (Below): 23 Aug–5 Sept; Germany—Third Reich:  
6–19 Sept & sign up for our Italian Tuscany Tour 26 Oct–5 Nov!**



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## WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF YOU DO NOT GO TO COLLEGE?

TLC awards grants for education in the trades

### WHO: AAAA Members and Family Members

- ▶ Must be a current Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) member.
- ▶ The spouse of a current AAAA member or deceased member.
- ▶ The son or daughter of a current AAAA member or deceased member.
- ▶ The grandchild of a current AAAA member or a deceased member.
- ▶ Must be a high school graduate or have your GED equivalent.
- ▶ Must be enrolled in an accredited Trade School, licensing test/course, or certification course.
- ▶ Where else can you invest \$15 to \$26 (membership fee) in exchange for eligibility for up to a \$2500 grant!

### WHAT: Grants for Trade Schools/Grants for Certifications/Grants for Licensing

Examples: CDL/ Plumbing/Electrical/ Welding/Real Estate/ Masonry/Firefighter/Cosmetology/Paramedic/HVAC/ Heavy Vehicle Mechanic/Insurance Sales Agent/Court Recorder/Personal Trainer/Medical Records Technician. And many more trade fields.

### WHEN: Apply Anytime – Rolling applications

### WEBSITE TO APPLY:

<https://app.smarterselect.com/programs/81860-Army-Aviation-Association-Of-America>

**POC:** Contact MG Jessica Wright, (retired) at [Jessica.garfola.wright@gmail.com](mailto:Jessica.garfola.wright@gmail.com) or 717.829.1599 with questions

# LAKE HAVASU

I am certain most pilots have experienced strange things happening during their flying days, so let me share one of mine.

In April of 1964, we took five Huey helicopters from Fort Bragg, North Carolina to Needles, California to support the largest military training exercise since WWII, something called "Operation Desert Strike." The maneuver area covered a large part of the Mojave Desert from Kingman, Arizona to Barstow, California and north to south from near Las Vegas to near the Mexican border.

One afternoon, it was probably 115 degrees outside, and I felt like I was roasting in our operations tent when one of our enlisted men walked in and said, "There's two Navy guys outside who want to talk with you." I responded by saying, "The ocean is 500 miles away! What the hell are they doing here?" He said, "I don't know, but they want to talk with you."

I told him to bring them in and, instead of Navy, two Coast Guard officers came in. They explained they were responsible for covering the nearby Colorado River and that a guy was hoping to break the world's water speed record on Lake Havasu the next day. They said they had two Coast Guard boats to clear the way for his run, but learned we had several medevac helicopters and asked us to be there in case something happened. Since Lake Havasu was only about 40 miles south of Needles, I agreed.

The next morning, I flew there and found a beautiful lake formed in a bend of the Colorado River. It was about 25 miles long and perhaps a quarter mile or so wide at points. We were told the Army had built a hospital there during WWII to treat patients with tuber-

culosis and the concrete foundations from the old buildings were still visible, but the only other signs of life were a fishing camp and bar by the lake. I understand the London Bridge was moved there several years later and the area is now covered with luxury homes, but in 1964 it was mostly barren desert.

As we were landing, we saw a WWII era P-51 fighter plane landing on a dirt strip ahead of us and learned it belonged to the owner of Harvey Aluminum

Company from Los Angeles, who also owned the racing boat. We walked down to the water's edge where several people were gathered around the racing boat (see picture) which looked like a missile



Lee Taylor & Hustler [1964]

Hydroplane History <<http://www.lesliefield.com>>

with its J-79 jet engine out of a Navy fighter plane strapped to a narrow hull.

We were introduced to Mr. Harvey and to a fellow named Lee Taylor who would be piloting the boat. I clearly remember the chief engineer speaking emphatically to Taylor saying, "Now listen, Lee, when we made the run yesterday, there was some surface flaking off the bottom. We have repaired those spots, but for this run, I do not want you to use more than 85 percent power and then we will examine the bottom again before you go for the record!"

A few minutes later, another boat escorted Taylor to the far end of the lake. We watched as he fired up the engine and began coming our way. There was an enormous wake of water spraying out from both sides and it was obvious that he was moving quite fast. The chief engineer was hovering over his monitoring equipment, and I heard him scream, "Damn, he's going for 100 percent power!"

By that time, the boat was not far from us and showed no signs of slowing. About a mile past us, the river made a sharp 90 degree turn to the right and it was obvious that, at the speed he was going, he could not stop or negotiate the turn. At the bend, there was a rock wall, and he was headed straight for it. My co-pilot and I made a mad dash for our helicopter and just as I pulled the start trigger, I saw the boat ricochet off the shoreline and go airborne before crashing into the rocks about 40-50 feet above the waterline.

We rushed there and found the boat precariously lodged in a rock formation high off the water. I got as close to it as I could, and our crew chief exclaimed, "There's no one in the boat!" We began hovering around to see if Taylor had been ejected during the crash and was lodged in the rocks somewhere else when our medic spoke up, "One of the Coast Guard boats is in the middle of the river about a half mile behind us and it looks like they are waving for us to come there!" We immediately flew to their location and saw they had Taylor in the boat and were headed for the nearest shore.

Later, we found out what happened. He had advanced the throttle to 100 percent power and when he realized he could not stop or make the turn in the river, he blew the canopy and jumped from the boat. Unfortunately, he was passing over a rocky shoal at the time and the water was only two or three feet deep. His high rate of speed drove him to the bottom resulting in massive head and upper body injuries.

We flew Taylor to the nearest major hospital which was the newly built Sunrise Hospital in Las Vegas some 150 miles away. About three weeks later, we took a soldier there who had been injured in the training exercise and walked into the emergency room to get a drink of water. One of the emergency room doctors asked whether he could take a look at our helicopter since the Huey was fairly new in those days. It turned out he had treated Lee Taylor when we brought him in earlier. We asked how he was doing, and the prognosis was grim. The doctor told us they had barely saved his life and were not sure what his cognitive situation would be in the future. In other words, it was bleak.

Now, fast forward four years. I had gone from the desert to Vietnam and then my wife and I were stationed at Camp Zama, Japan between Vietnam tours. One weekend, we went to a movie on the military installation where they always showed stateside news

and human-interest stories before the main feature. We were sitting there when a short segment came on about a severely injured American who was recuperating by driving a small van around the California countryside sharpening kitchen knives and scissors. It was a rather heartwarming story because it was obvious that he was significantly handicapped. Then came a surprise! They said his name was Lee Taylor, and that he had been injured while trying to break the world's water speed record at Lake Havasu and was hoping to get well enough to begin racing again if he could find a sponsor.

A few months later, it was back to Vietnam for a second tour followed by several other assignments around the country until we arrived at Fort Lewis, Washington in 1979. Then, in November of 1980 or nearly 17 years after the Lake Havasu incident, my commanding general told me he had been tasked to send a team of officers to Camp Roberts, California to evaluate a California National Guard training exercise. He asked me to head the team and let us use his U-8F to fly there. I think there were six of us on the team and we were admiring the beautiful sights while flying down the Cascade mountain range at about 10,000 feet.

As we neared Lake Tahoe, I told everyone to take a look because that lake is so spectacular from the air. One of the guys in the back was reading a newspaper and spoke up, "Hey Sir, it looks like someone is going to try to break the world's water speed record on Tahoe today!" When I asked what time, his response was "Right now, at 12 o'clock." All of us began looking down but could see nothing resembling a racing boat. I then asked if the newspaper gave the racer's name and I almost fell out of the airplane when he said it was Lee Taylor.

After landing at Paso Robles, California, we stopped at a local restaurant before proceeding on to Camp Roberts. After the meal, we were walking out when one of our officers noticed a young fellow placing newspapers in a nearby vending machine, so he purchased one. We had just seated ourselves in the van when he spoke up and said, "You are not going to believe this! That boat racer was killed at 12 o'clock today. He apparently lost control and crashed. His boat sank to the bottom of Lake Tahoe and, as of now, his body has not been recovered."

I guess the moral of this story is that you should not hang around Doug Moore or something awful might happen!!

# CONSTRUCTION VARIATIONS OF VIETNAM WAR U.S. ARMY AVIATION POCKET PATCHES

By Tom Murphy  
VHPA Life Member #267  
RVN 1969-1970, MERKIN 10

Army Aviation unit insignia worn on the pockets of uniforms often adorn the pages of *The Aviator* and the VHPA annual calendar. Seeing them stirs memories of adventures and times when VHPA members were younger and in their prime “living the dream” of flying Army helicopters.

The rapid expansion of United States Army aviation during the Vietnam War years produced numerous innovations and developments. Tactics and equipment evolved to meet the needs as they arose. One outgrowth of the conflict was the rapid expansion of unit insignias worn on uniform pockets of Army flight personnel. The designs ranged from elegant to silly, but all portrayed the pride and purpose felt by wearers. A colorful and historic collection of U.S. Army aviation pocket patches can help tell the story of the combat birth of that mighty force.

Patches were sometimes produced in formal shops that specialized in their production, and other times made by individuals in very limited numbers in base barber or tailor shops. Materials consisted of whatever was at hand that met the need. The front had to convey the desired colors and design that the ordering unit had specified, while the backing could be anything as it was not seen. Front cloth ranged from light weight poplin to heavier twill. Backings ranged from paper, often from Vietnamese (VN) newspapers and magazines, to scraps or remnants of uniform cloth to cheese-cloth of varying coarseness to a form of burlap.

Being constructed of cloth that had little substance, it is not surprising that many did not survive well. Most laundry facilities consisted of the person performing the washing pounding the garment, along

with the attached insignia, on a cement surface. As expected, the pocket patches suffered. (*Cover Photo 1*).

Construction techniques varied.

**Fully Machine Embroidered:** To accomplish the desired effect a design was transmitted to the cloth with ink or pencil which provided guidance to the seamstress. Thread was attached by moving the cloth beneath the machine’s stationary needle using a zigzag stitch. This produced an insignia that was sturdier than other methods. Sometimes the design was worked onto a colored cloth background (figures 3 & 4), while other times the entire surface was embroidered (*Cover Photo 5*).

**Fully Hand Embroidered:** These patches were made by using the front base material, usually with a stiff backing. Loops of thread of the correct color were then applied to create the design. This was slower than using sewing machines but produced patches of greater beauty that have had strong collector appeal (*Cover Photo 7*).

**Combined Hand and Machine Embroidered:** Often the borders were done by machine for ease and efficiency. The main design could then be applied by hand (figures 9 & 10). Portions of the central design could be a combination of both techniques (*Cover Photo 11*). This produced a hybrid patch that had eye appeal along with being sturdier.

**Applique:** This construction method involved cutting sections of cloth of the appropriate color, size and shape then attaching them to the backing material, usually with machine zigzag stitching. The advantage was quick coverage of large open areas. The detailing was then accomplished with either hand or machine embroidery (*Cover Photo 13*).

**Chain Stitching:** Far less common was the use of chain stitching. While popular with civilians in Asia, the chain stitch was not used to any great extent for

pocket patches. This technique was like full machine embroidery in that the image was "drawn" on the backing material by moving the cloth under a stationary needle. The effect was a softer design with less detail but was heartier than other methods (*Cover Photo 15*).

**Silk Embroidery:** While commonly used for South Vietnamese insignia, a form of silk embroidery was occasionally used for U.S. Army pocket patches. It employed a stream of silk or silklike strands that produced a very tight and precise design on the front while leaving continuous strands on the back.

**U.S. Produced:** Some insignia were produced in the United States and worn in Vietnam. Figures 19 and 20 portray an American patch on the right that was removed from a Nomex flight suit pocket and its VN equivalent on the left. Of note is the merrowed lockstitch border and more precise lettering on the U.S. made patch, both absent on the VN insignia. Vietnamese shops could copy any design presented to them using the methods and materials available.

**Pocket Hangers:** Occasionally patches of any construction would be encased in clear plastic to form a hanger that could be buttoned to a uniform shirt pocket. The advantage was that only one patch was needed for any number of uniforms, including uniforms that normally had no pocket patches such as khakis. Some interesting variations were created. The illustrated 334th AHC hanger (*Cover Photo 21*) contains a brass insert normally found on wooden plaques. Also of note is the difference in hanging tabs, one of which is merely a continuation of the body material compared with a separate piece of different material attached to the body with an eyelet.

All of the insignia discussed were sewn or buttoned to pockets of flight suits, jungle jackets, or khaki summer uniforms. Wear included both single and double patches.

A word of caution is in order. An authentic reproduction of a veteran's unit insignia from Vietnam to stir old memories is one thing. Purchasing a patch that is supposedly original and valuable is quite another. VN pocket patches of all branches have been widely repro-

duced and are freely offered today as originals on auction sites and at swap meets. Since money drives the hobby more than historical authenticity, only experience can help individuals avoid expensive mistakes. Let the buyer beware!

.....  
*The author would be happy to provide a color scan of lost unit insignia to VHPA members.*

*It should be sufficient to have a recreation made of paper or cloth for veteran use.*

*AUTHOR CONTACT: tmm\_118@hotmail.com*

#### *Further reading:*

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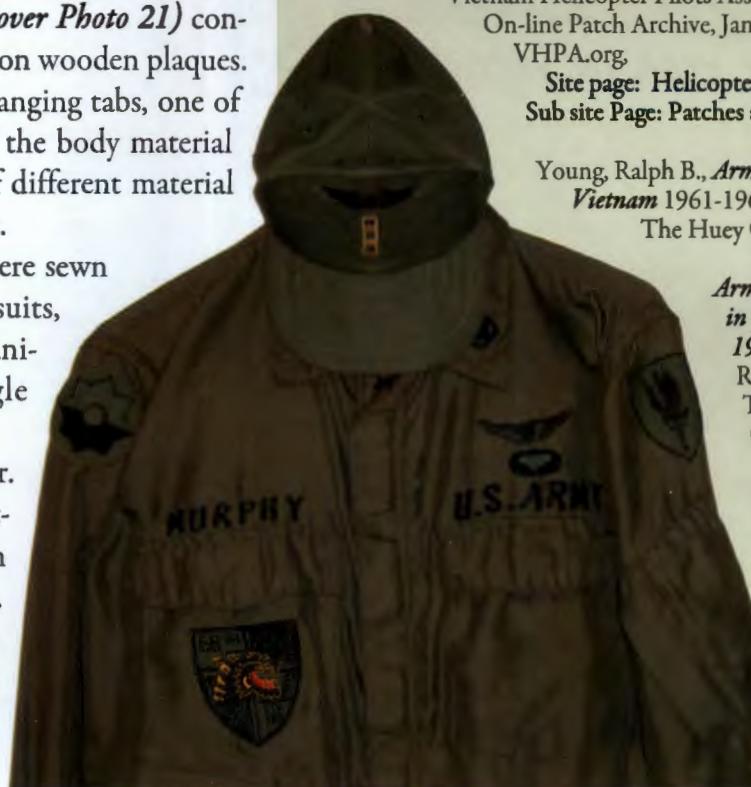
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# Vietnam Helo Operations-VHPA Rotorheads Return

## 3—16 August 2024 &



15—28

April

2025

Tour

Historian: Bob  
Hesselbein,  
C/16 Cav

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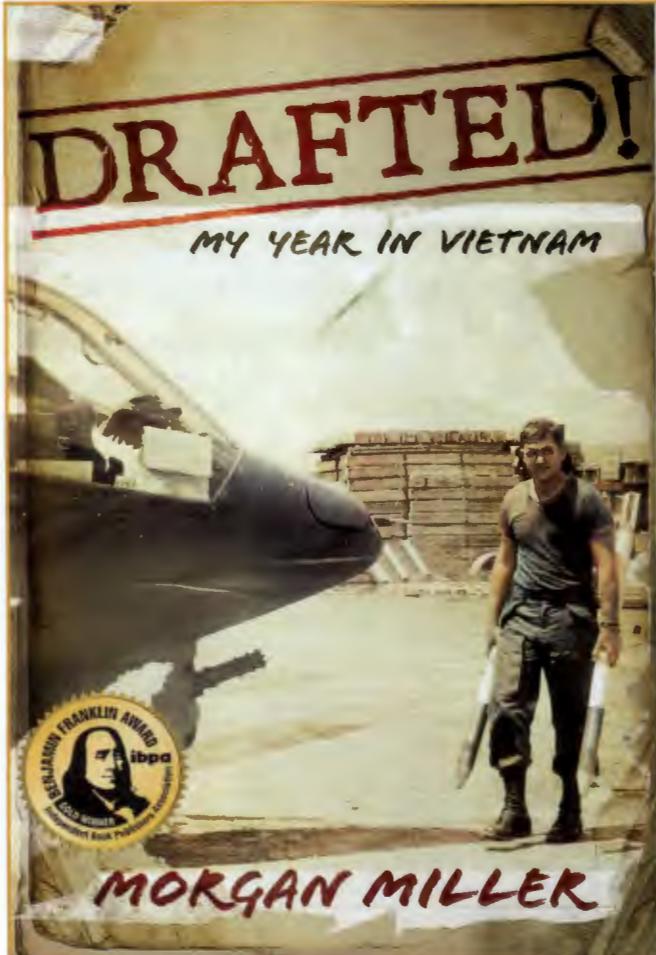
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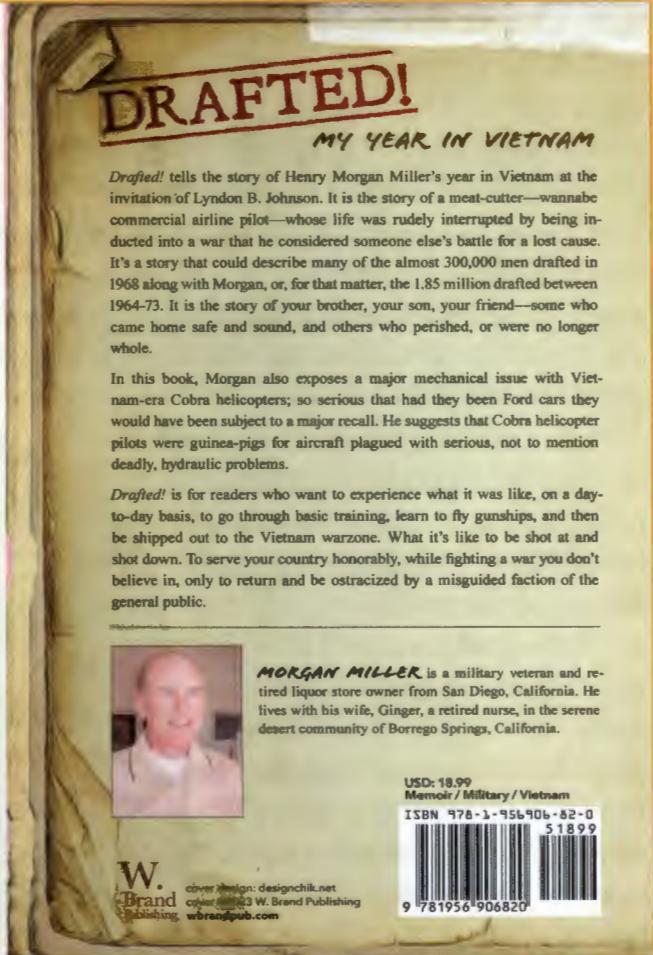
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# VHPA Legacy Update

On November 28-29, 2023, VHPA representatives attended a Legacy Summit with representatives from The Army Aviation Museum, Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA), and Texas Tech University to discuss preserving the memory of Vietnam War helicopter operations, and indeed, the VHPA. The purpose of the summit was to determine steps needed to ensure our efforts and sacrifice are not forgotten. Some high schools do not teach the Vietnam War and colleges history courses are limited. Thankfully, we have people dedicated to preserving our service. This article provides an update while clearing up rumors and misconceptions.

## IMPORTANT FACTS:

### United States Army Aviation Museum and Foundation:

1. The museum prominently displays a VHPA plaque and poster. An original plaque presented in 2005 disappeared, perhaps mistakenly taken by a departing post commander.
2. The museum permanently displays the aircraft we flew, ensuring a lasting historical presence.
3. Current proposals include VHPA recognition of a graduating rotary-wing aviator from each flight class, and merit awards for the top enlisted member seeking aviation certification.
4. An additional project proposes moving the last remaining CH-47 "Guns A Go Go" from Huntsville, AL to the museum.
5. The museum has offered all VHPA members complementary life membership.
6. Lastly, the committee seeks to repeat our Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) success by possibly erecting a monument within the museum memorial garden.

### AAAA:

1. The committee is encouraging the AAAA to grant VHPA members free life memberships.
2. AAAA has agreed to publish VHPA articles in their magazine.
3. AAAA has agreed to make the VHPA a virtual chapter of AAAA.
4. Although the VHPA will no longer add additional funds to the current existing fund, scholarships will continue. Individual contributions, such as those gathered during the VHPA Annual Meeting "passing of the CAV hat" will be added.

erded during the VHPA Annual Meeting "passing of the CAV hat" will be added.

5. The recap of our scholarship program with AAAA over the years has netted 956 qualified applicants with 489 receiving scholarships totaling \$801,500.00. \$213,500.00 have come from VHPA and \$587,000.00 from AAAA. Scholarships from AAAA amount to about 74% of total funds.

### VNCA (TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY)

1. The Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive (VNCA) has an extensive collection of our war artifacts and oral histories, and importantly, possesses expert resident expertise.
2. Today additional collections continue to be added from members.
3. VNCA plans a museum of "Vietnam, The Helicopter War" where our contributions will be highlighted.
4. The existing VHPA endowment funds a merit scholarship to a student studying the Vietnam War.
5. Texas Tech takes student groups to Vietnam every other year and a merit award will be given to one deserving student.
6. Several years ago, the VHPA created the endowment fund, which is an interest-bearing fund paying for VNCA staff to catalog, store, preserve, and post information submitted by VHPA members. This will keep our history alive and available. Our funding of VNCA support was completed some time ago, and no further funds are required. Individual donations do continue, however.

The Legacy Committee continues to pursue ideas that will preserve our shared history and sacrifice, collaborating whenever possible to achieve important outcomes. Memorials such as the ANC Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crewmember Monument will be considered for all service museums possessing a memorial garden or appropriate viewing area. As ideas develop, updates will be provided.

*Please send your questions or suggestions to:*

*HQ@VHPA.ORG.*

*By John Shafer*

**Sales to date of the  
Final Flight of Curious Yellow  
Have generated over \$6500 for the  
VHPA Scholarship Fund!**

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



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.*



AVAILABLE ON: amazon.com  
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## Friends of Vinh Son Orphanage (FVSO) Kontum, Vietnam

Donations are tax deductible with 100% going to the kids, providing support for over 800 Montagnard children who live in 8 Vinh Son orphanages in the Kontum/Pleiku area of Vietnam. For over 20 years, FVSO donors have supplied food and medicine, dental care, education, clean water, housing and more.



*"I WISH YOU ALWAYS HAVE A SMILE ON YOUR FACE"*  
From Y Mari, Vinh Son 6



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# My Flight Instructor: Captain Ron Godwin

*By Rex Gooch*

## Student Pilots

After completing the 12-week Armor Officer Basic Course at Fort Knox, KY, I received my orders for Army Aviation School at Fort Wolters, TX. Having obtained my private pilot's license in college, this was a much-anticipated assignment. I was looking forward to flying helicopters.

On the morning of January 3, 1971, I reported to Fort Wolters and was assigned to flight class 71-28, the green hats. Later that morning, I attended aviation student orientation in a classroom on the east side of Fort Wolters. There, I found myself in the midst of the wildest, craziest, most unruly bunch of military officers I had ever met. These guys are outrageous, constantly joking and pulling pranks on one another—there is little decorum. The contrast between the disciplined setting I was accustomed to at Fort Knox and the frivolity of my classmates at Fort Wolters was eye-opening for someone relatively new to the military. But, in due time, I found myself being equally outrageous. I suppose it comes with the territory—the person who wants to fly a helicopter is the more adventuresome type with a spirit-ed personality.

On the following day, we are immersed in aviation training. Primary Helicopter School comprises extensive classroom learning combined with hands-on flying instruction. We learn physics, mechanics, avionics, map reading, and meteorology in the classrooms. At the airfields, we learn to fly. There, we are tasked with an incredible balancing act of using both hands, both feet, and, most importantly, your brain. But above all, it is FUN! I would soon find out that flying a helicopter is a thrill like no other.

## Flight Training

Flight training starts at 6:00 a.m. with mission

briefings at the main heliport. Two student pilots, referred to as stick-buddies, are assigned to each instructor pilot. After the briefing, the instructor and one student walk to the flight line, perform the helicopter pre-flight inspection, crank up, and fly to a remote stage field for flight training. Stage fields are scattered across the Texas countryside and are named for Vietnamese villages like Vung Tau, Vinh Long, Pleiku, etc. Each stage field has a concrete landing strip, a row of square helipads aligned parallel to the runway, and a briefing room.

Upon arrival at the stage field, the instructor and student practice hovering, takeoffs, landings, flying traffic patterns, and autorotations. The other student travels by bus to the stage field. In mid-morning, the student pilot switches roles with his stick-buddy. Then the instructor trains the second student pilot. After the second session, the instructor and student fly back to the main heliport around noon. Afternoons are comprised of classroom instruction. The following week this schedule is reversed, with classroom instruction in the morning and training flights in the afternoon.

## TH-55 Osage Training Helicopter

Student pilots fly one of two Army training helicopters. Half of our class fly the TH-55 made by Hughes Helicopters, and the other half fly the TH-23 made by Hiller Aircraft. I fly the TH-55, a tiny bright orange aircraft with two seats and dual controls. The Army named the TH-55 "Osage" while student pilots jokingly refer to the small helicopter as the "Mattel Messerschmitt."

The TH-55 was powered by a 190-horsepower Lycoming piston engine and had a cruising speed of 75 mph. The controls were similar to most helicopters—collective and engine throttle on the left

side of the pilot's seat, cyclic between the pilot's legs, and foot pedals. But the TH-55 had one feature that made it relatively tricky to fly—an overspeed governor to limit rotor rpm. If the pilot rolled on too much engine power, this governor would automatically reduce engine rpm, knocking the rotor speed down about 500 rpm. This change in rotor torque caused the helicopter's nose to swing abruptly to the left. Rookie pilots were easily identified when hovering—the nose of the helicopter repeatedly jerked left and then corrected back to center—a funny sight for others and a frustrating moment for the student pilot.

## My Flight Instructor

Most flight instructors were pilots returning from combat tours in Vietnam. They were a proud bunch that demonstrated flying expertise that can only be gained from combat aviation. The instructors are tough on their students, knowing that what they learn could someday save their lives, as well as the lives of others. Flight instructors could also be fun.

My instructor is no different. Captain Ron Godwin served in Vietnam with the B Company, 229th Assault Helicopter Company of the 1st Cavalry Division. Ron was platoon leader for Second Platoon with the callsign "Killer Spade 26." He is a highly competent pilot, having been awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses and a Bronze Star for his combat actions in Vietnam. Ron is highly proficient, exacting, and often references "flying with the Cav."

On my orientation flight with Captain Godwin, we are flying across the Texas countryside east of Mineral Wells at about 1,000 feet altitude. Ron is pleasantly telling me about the TH-55 training helicopter while pointing to navigation features on the ground. Suddenly, I feel my seat bottom drop out, and the small helicopter seems to fall out of the sky. Frantically, I reach for the handhold near the right-side door hinge and turn to look at Ron. I must have had a look of terror on my face because Ron is laughing his ass off. Without warning, Ron had chopped the engine power, dropped the collective, and

entered autorotation. Feeling the helicopter drop out of the sky was a moment of terror for me. I failed to realize the aircraft had entered a downward glide slope of about 1,500 feet per minute, and there was no need to panic. This was a standard emergency procedure for helicopters. But having it sprung on me with no warning gave me the impression the helicopter was dropping like a rock and, frankly, scared the daylights out of me—to Captain Godwin's delight.

While attempting to regain my composure, Ron recovers engine power and climbs to altitude. He describes autorotation as the standard emergency procedure for loss of engine power—a procedure that, if performed correctly, can result in a normal landing, saving the lives of the pilots, crew, and passengers. He tells me that prior to my being cleared for solo flight, I must learn to safely perform autorotations.

Then, to demonstrate the helicopter's versatility, Ron shows me a non-standard maneuver that few pilots dared to attempt—a backward autorotation. While flying at 1,500 feet altitude, Ron points out an open field in front of the helicopter and says, "See that field; that is where we will land." He continues flying until the open area passes out of sight beneath the aircraft. Ron cuts the engine power and enters a standard autorotation at about 60 knots forward airspeed. Then he slowly pulls back on the cyclic, decreasing airspeed to zero. At that point, we are gliding backward. Soon the open field reappears in front of the helicopter. Ron eases the cyclic forward, regains forward airspeed, and enters an autorotation glide path toward the field. When our aircraft is about 50 feet above the open area, he recovers engine power and climbs to altitude. Very impressive! At the end of my orientation flight, I am confident I have a great instructor, although I am questioning his sanity.

## Flight Training

Ron is tough on me. He is an exacting instructor who curses and yells whenever I make a mistake. I soon learn to appreciate his style, and we get along

fine. After about 30 hours of instruction, I learn to hover. What a glorious feeling to master the coordination of all the controls and feel the helicopter hanging motionless, about three feet off the ground. I suddenly realize I can lift that machine into the air, turn left or right, slide sideways, backward, or whatever direction I desire —awesome!

Soon I am flying traffic patterns making takeoffs, approaches, and landings. Then Ron teaches me the renowned autorotation. After setting up his approach to the runway at 1,000 feet altitude, Ron cuts power, drops the collective, and maintains forward airspeed while controlling rotor rpm. The small helicopter descends on a glide path, dropping approximately 1,500 feet per minute. At about 35 feet above the ground, Ron pulls back on the cyclic to flare the nose upward to slow forward movement while simultaneously lifting the collective to increase pitch in the rotor blades. This slows our descent, and the helicopter touches down softly on the runway. After a couple of demonstrations, Ron lets me try it. I soon realize that autorotation is a complicated maneuver that requires quick thinking and proper timing. It takes me several missed attempts until I get the hang of it. We practice autorotations repeatedly, until Captain Godwin feels I can safely land the helicopter in an emergency.



**Rex Gooch & Captain Godwin**

## **Chasing Ducks**

Complementing Captain Godwin's instruction intensity is a great sense of humor, and he seeks every opportunity to have fun. One day I am flying at about 800 feet altitude enroute to the stage field when Ron says, "I've got it," and rapidly takes the controls. Without saying a word, he enters autorotation. As we descend, I see a small pond nestled among a grove of Texas mesquite trees with a large group of mallard ducks resting on the water's surface. At about 40 feet above the water, Ron flares the TH-55's nose upward and pulls pitch to slow our descent. The rotor blade downdraft and engine noise scatter ducks in every direction. Ron increases power and pushes the cyclic forward to normal flight mode as he picks out three ducks and chases after them at treetop level. Ron is having a grand time, laughing and hollering at the ducks. From my perspective, it is an incredible sight, seeing the ducks flying about three to five feet in front

funny! With great finesse, Ron dips, dives, and banks to stay behind those ducks while barely missing the tops of the mesquite trees. Eventually, he lets the ducks go their way and climbs back to altitude. Then he passes the controls back to me and says, "We're having a great day, aren't we?" I laugh and say, "Yes, we are." I will never forget that day!

## First to Solo?

Captain Godwin is determined that I will be first in my class to solo, each day ramping up the instruction, especially autorotations. When the fateful day arrives, my timing is off, and my autorotations are sloppy. After a poor autorotation and a hard landing, our helicopter sits motionless on the concrete runway. Then, we hear on the radio that a classmate, Captain Rich Fisher, is the first to solo. When Ron hears that, he starts cursing loudly, telling me I missed my opportunity to be first. We are both frustrated.

After a pause, I turn to Ron and say, "If you get your ass out of this helicopter, I can fly it around the traffic pattern without killing myself." To my surprise, Ron does not say a word. He opens his door, climbs out, shuts the door, and looks at me through the door's plexiglass window. Then he gives the "Sign of the Cross," touching his forehead, chest, and shoulders with his right hand, and turns to walk away. Now that is funny!

I cannot help but smile as I lift the collective to bring the TH-55 to a hover. I know I can do it! I call the stage field tower for clearance, fly around the traffic pattern, and land safely. Wow, second in my class to solo! I am delighted, and even though a little disappointed, I know Captain Godwin is pleased with my performance.

I continue to fly with Ron Godwin for several days until he signs off on my completion of the Primary 1 phase of flying instruction. My classmates and I move on to Primary 2, flying with other instructors to learn the basics of navigation, cross-country flying, confined area landings and takeoffs, and night flying.

I had many instructor pilots during my Army training, but none of the pilots impressed me as much as Captain Ron Godwin. It may sound trite, but Ron truly wanted me to be "the best I can be." He was intent on making me the best pilot, not only for my

sake but also for the sake of the people who would fly with me and depend upon me for their safety. And, in the midst of his pursuit of perfection, Ron added an element of fun and excitement to the training. Flying with Ron Godwin is a special memory of mine.

## Vietnam

After graduation from Army Aviation School, I received orders for Vietnam. Upon my arrival in-country, I was assigned to Lighthorse—C Troop, 3rd of the 17th Air Cavalry, flying out of Vinh Long Army Airfield in the Mekong Delta.

After a short stint flying front-seat in Cobra gunships, I flew Hueys with the Longknife Slick Platoon. And like my instructor, Captain Godwin, I became an Air Cavalry Huey Pilot. When flying combat missions, I often recalled Ron's advice and guidance; "Slow your approach, Flare now, Watch your altitude" and the all-important; "You really f...ed that up!" In all seriousness, Captain Godwin's exacting instructions and demand for precision laid the foundation for the pilot I became in Vietnam. And for that, I am eternally grateful.

## Post-Vietnam

After Vietnam and several years after departing the Army, I reconnected with Ron Godwin, living on the north side of Dallas, TX. We met on several occasions and enjoyed our time together, sometimes reminiscing about our time flying helicopters.

Many years passed, and I lost contact with Godwin until I reconnected with him in 2019, when we exchanged several email messages. That December, Ron sent me a letter that stated, "I have no hesitation and absolute sincerity in stating that you were the best student I ever had the pleasure of instructing." I was stunned! I never realized Ron felt that way about my flying abilities. I was, and continue to be, highly honored by Ron's gracious comments.

Sadly, on November 15, 2022, Ron Godwin passed away. He is scheduled to be interred with military honors in the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery on March 3, 2023.

*This article is dedicated to the memory of Ron Godwin.*

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I was unaware of the letter that Mr. Sheuerman wrote until I read issue 43-01 of the Aviator. I am writing to express my agreement with the letter that Col. Vasey wrote, suggesting that it is a logical next step for the VHPA to explore a way to "transfer our rich heritage" to AAAA. If that is the case, it would seem logical to me that the Legacy Committee might be the body, together with the Executive Council, to explore this possibility.

The Legacy Committee played a very important role in achieving a memorial in Arlington. I was pleased and honored to contribute financially to that effort.

With sincere gratitude to those who have and are devoting their efforts to passing our legacy on.

Gary Smith Life Member L10970

## ANGEL IN THE COCKPIT: Surviving Vietnam and PTSD ...a Helicopter Pilot's Story

by Joseph Sheridan

**Amazon # 1 best seller...  
AUDIO NOW AVAILABLE!!**



A vivid, fascinating, and compelling story of a helicopter pilot surviving Vietnam and its aftermath. Joe Sheridan's memoir is one patriot's true account of the helicopter war and the brave pilots who fought alongside him.

I just finished your book. What a story! Thanks so

much for your service and bravery! This is a must read for anyone interested in the Vietnam War. Our hero aviators were bad asses-no question about it! You did it right, Mr. Sheridan!

~ ISG (Ret.) Mark Hicks  
– June 13, 2023

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(Kindle, hardcover, paperback, audiobook)  
can be purchased through this Amazon page:

<https://a.co/d/grwwpcc>

JOSEPH SHERIDAN

# Don't drown before you DEROs

It's 11 Dec 72, I'm "short", only 20 days till my DEROs (yep, New Year's Eve, 1972) the Rumors are rampant. Some were saying "anybody with a '72 DEROs will get a Christmas drop, and then there was the opposite rumor, anybody with a DEROs AFTER CHRISTMAS would be extended because no more replacements were coming. Seems like I'd be spending the next three weeks holding my breath.

But the job was still there. I was the AMO (Maintenance Platoon Leader) of 'C' Troop, 16th Cavalry (Air), stationed at Can Tho AAF. My 'turtle' (replacement) had arrived, and we were in the middle of the inventory of all the platoon's "stuff". CPT Alan Thiele was a Field Artillery officer and had not had the benefit of AMOC (Aircraft Maintenance Officer's Course) so I was trying to give him quickie courses in Huey and OH-6 maintenance test flights. And I was cautiously optimistic that I'd be back in the World in less than 3 weeks.

About mid-morning our Ops Officer (CPT Harvey if I remember correctly) came to the hangar to tell me that one of the OH-6's in the Cav Pack had crashed somewhere west of Can Tho (between Can Tho and Cambodian border). The pilot and gunner were OK and were flown back with the rest of the Cav Pack. But the Six needed a sling home. He gave me the coordinates and I had my LOH Maint NCO (unfortunately his name is also lost to my memory) to get the star plate (the thing that got pinned to the head to attach the sling), a set of chain leg slings, and any other 'stuff' we might need. I found CPT Thiele and told him "Welcome to your first recovery".

We found the Six close to the coordinates, in a hover hole not a whole lot bigger than the UH-1H we were going to pick it up with, think "Red Tire Area" but smaller (but then again, after 50 years memory makes small things smaller and big things bigger). We did a quick VR and saw that it was laying, gun side down, in about 4' - 5' of water.

I set the Huey down in a clear area about 50 yds outside the hover hole and started to plan what we had to do to get it home. I had flown with CPT Thiele and felt he was a good enough "stick" to handle the Huey into the hover hole, surrounded by a patch of 40' - 50' trees, so I told my NCO to get the star plate, sling set and his toolbox out. He and I would walk to where the Six lay, put the star plate on (we had to do that by feel because the head was under 2' - 3' of water). CPT Thiele could hover down, and we'd hook the sling to the Huey so he could pull the aircraft upright plus a little more so it would drain as much water as possible out of the belly.

Then CPT Thiele asked the obvious question, "How are we going to communicate while I'm hovering down on you"? We didn't bring a PRC-25 - DUH!. HOWEVER, I had my trusty PRC-90 survival radio (which, fortunately, I hadn't had to use until now). We tried it, he went up non-Guard UHF push and everything worked. OK now we can talk. We thought....

So my NCO and I walked back into the hover hole, I took the chain leg sling set, he took the star plate and toolbox. (a chain leg sling set for an OH-6 consists of four 6' -8' lengths of heavy chain that attach to the star plate and each chain had about another 6' or so of nylon sling. Those nylon straps were all connected to a donut ring that was put on the hook.) The whole shebang weighs about 50 lbs. I wrapped it over my shoulders and started walking. We had to cross a small ditch to get through the trees to the hover hole. At least it looked like a small ditch. It was a helluva lot deeper than it looked. I took two steps in and went completely under water and slipped down on my knees with the fifty pound slings over my shoulders. I tried to stand, but couldn't. Out of breath, and on the verge of panic, I was about to suck in water when I felt a tug on the straps. By the grace of God,

the nylon straps were trailing behind me, and my NCO grabbed them and pulled. The chains fell off and I was able to scramble backwards, and up and out of the water....I wish I could remember his name, I don't think I could ever thank him enough. After getting out of the water, I remember thinking that I almost drowned because of my own stupidity, with 20 days to DEROs....and avoided a hell of a Christmas card from DA to my wife ("a grateful nation regrets to inform you..."). But I am now a true believer in the phrase "God protects dumb animals and fools...." We "reconnoitered" and found a more intelligent place to cross the "small" ditch and made it inside the hover hole with the Six.

Pulling out my trusty, and recently tested, PRC-90 out of the leg pocket of my flight suit, I pressed the XMT button to tell CPT Thiele to crank and be ready to hover down when we got it rigged. I was rewarded with water spurting out of the speaker, a short crackling noise, followed by dead silence. I thought those things were supposed to be waterproof.

What happened next further strengthened my belief that the Lord protects dumb animals and fools. There were two ARVN soldiers (a LT and a sergeant believe it or not) who had been dragooned into securing the crash site. I assumed whoever was flying C&C for the Cav Pack did that (don't remember who he was but I still remember him with warm regards for so doing). And miracle of miracles they had an operating PRC-77. So, I borrowed it, came up troop FM push and voila, we had commo. I called CPT Thiele and told him to crank and bring it into the hover hole.

The Huey soon appeared, and I talked him down till my NCO could hook the donut on the hook. I then talked him up until the Six was upright. I had him pull up a little more until we were fairly certain that most of the water had drained. Then I talked him down till we had slack in the sling and could unhook so he could go outside the hover hole and wait until we could secure the aircraft for the sling ride back.

You have to picture this. He's solo in the left seat. Me and my NCO are about 20' below him, all of us in the hover hole. I ask him to inch down so there's slack in the sling. He does and I transmit "OK, punch

it off".....nothing happens. I transmit "Is the hook armed?". He looks down on me with this "OH Sh\*t" look on his face (remember the manual hook release is on the right side). Then, just as quick as you please, his left hand lets go of the collective and grabs the cyclic, his right hand lets go of the cyclic, goes up and arms the hook. Then his hands drop, and he puts the correct hands on the correct sticks. Must have taken all of 2 seconds. The movement was very swift and smooth. But to me, standing about 12' under the skids of a hovering UH-1H with about 10' of rotor disc clearance, it felt like two hours. He punches it off, the donut ring hits the top of the six, I give him 2 thumbs up and he's up and out.

My NCO and I pull what's left of the Six's blades off, take off anything else that even LOOKS like it might come loose, and make sure the star plate and slings are secure. Then I was faced with another question, who was going to hook the six to the Huey? I walked over to the ARVN LT and handed him back his radio and thanked him in my best pidgin Vietnamese, and asked him if he could hook the donut to the Huey. He replied (in English) "Glad to help". I had my hook man. He agreed and said he would be happy to tell his sergeant to hook it for us. I told him what FM push we were on, called CPT Thiele to confirm commo, I shook his hand and walked out. We brought the tool box and the log-book back to the Huey, I got in the right seat, cranked and called the ARVN LT and hovered back down the hole. The ARVN sergeant was standing on top of the Six, my NCO was hanging out the back door and watched him hook it, said "looks good to me" I pulled pitch and lifted up and out and went back to Can Tho.

Nine days later I was on a C-5 out of Bien Hoa, headed east. Made it back to Newport News, VA on 23 December 1972. I got an 8 day Christmas drop. Never did hear if that Six ever flew again.

I had the good fortune to run into Alan Thiele at the last VHPA convention in San Antonio, and we talked about this incident, and Alan told me that he remembered the event pretty much the same way. (Glad somebody ELSE besides me hasn't lost ALL of their memory cells)

# BOOK REVIEWS

by Phil Marshall

**Angel in the Cockpit**  
By Joseph Sheridan  
ISBN 9798367893014

AR Press, American  
Real Publishing Company

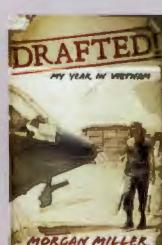
Vietnam Cobra pilot Joe Sheridan opens his book with a harrowing shootdown and escape, virtually right out of the chute, only a few pages from the Contents page. Talk about grabbing the reader! His tactic works. As the reader continues to turn the pages, they meet lots of characters and I do mean characters, these guys are helicopter pilots, right? 'Nuff said. Each with a different personality, they are all germane to Sheridan's story. And Joe Sheridan tells his story very well. One does not have to be a helicopter pilot or even a Vietnam Veteran to appreciate his book in my opinion. Expect to read about many, many missions.

For instance, relating his very first flight in a Cobra, in the front seat and in Vietnam, Sheridan tells us "After a couple of roller-coaster minutes, (the AC) quipped 'You did graduate from flight school, right?'" (Sheridan) answered "Oh, yes, Sir, top of my class." After landing and as the AC walked away, "(the AC) turned and yelled 'Hey, Sheridan, there ain't no way you were top of your class.



**Drafted!**  
ISBN 9781956906820  
By Morgan Miller

Mr. Miller's recollection of his early years and his career in the Army to include his time in Vietnam is quite entertaining. Throw in his memories of his "growing up years" before the Army and you will have a very captivating read. For instance, the day he took his pet skunk to school for show and tell...the skunk raised from a new-born and had never been "de-stink glanded" (my words). Yes, THAT skunk. As a teenager, Miller had dreams of a career in commercial aviation and how to get there. Army Aviation offered a career path for him and the Army's proverbial dangling carrot for High School graduates and College drop-out was too big of a temptation. Miller bit. The Author spends a significant amount of time leading up to his career in Army Aviation, but it is very easy to read and interesting. It was probably a typical biography of any



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.



Bullshit!" Welcome to Vietnam!

Throughout the book, the Author is obviously writing from the heart and his writing style is just simply easy to read and understand; he verbally paints excellent "sight pictures". No eight syllable words that one has to look up the meanings of here, either; just good "old-fashioned" simple English for the "common man". Again, easy to read. Whenever I had to put the book down, I looked forward to picking it back up.

Surprisingly, after he relates his time in Vietnam, the Author spends considerable time discussing PTSD at the end of the book. Like it or not, whether we admit it or not, I believe all of us helicopter guys came home with a certain amount of it. I know that I did, and so did Joe Sheridan. He identifies many traits that I could identify with and traits that I see in other VN helicopter crewmen as well as myself. Whether he is repeating "professional" opinions or his own observations, I think he pretty much hit many PTSD points "on the head". It was an unexpected finish to his story and not an unwelcome one. Thanks for telling your story from a gunny's point of view, Sir!

number of pilot "wannabes" and he tells the story well. His time in Basic Training and flight school could very well have been any one of thousands of Warrant Officer Candidates.

Once in Vietnam, he finds himself flying Hueys, Cobras and even a Loach or two with the 3/17 Air Cav. During the last half of his tour he is now the Cobra Maintenance Officer and is tasked with much problem solving, sharing with us what he learns along the way. He is particularly concerned about the "quirks" of the Cobras he is responsible for. His style is to give us the details of his duties in a sometimes light-hearted way and share with us some of his combat missions in a not so light-hearted way, always keeping our interest.

Overall, Morgan Miller gives us a well written accounting of his life before his time in the military and some of his life's highs and lows during his time in the military to include his Vietnam combat operations. It kept me entertained as I turned each page.

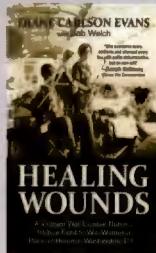
**"Healing Wounds" by Diane Carlson Evans  
ISBN 978-1-68261-912-4, Permutted Press, LLC  
Also available as an eBook 978-1-68261-913-1**

You need to read this book. Diane Carlson Evans was a Vietnam Army Nurse and pretty much the most important person spearheading the Vietnam Women's Memorial at The Wall.

You need to read this book. Not like many of the books I have reviewed for the VHPA that are memoirs, this goes way beyond a memoir of a Vietnam Veteran's memories of a hugely significant time in their life. It had my eyes watering by page seven. Before I finished the book, there were more wet eyes...and some laughter, too.

You need to read this book. Like many of us, Nurse Carlson Evans starts her memoir with her home life before Vietnam and then her time in Vietnam. As a Dustoff pilot, I could relate with much of what she documented, the proverbial "trials and tribulations" of a trauma Nurse. But one only needs to be a Vietnam Veteran to understand what she went through as a post-Vietnam "Unwelcome Home" veteran, just like most of the rest of us. In fact, she relates a story about a very ignorant individual at a Christmas party, "criticizing" (my word) her involvement in Vietnam. I literally shook my head in amazement; I had gone through the exact same thing at a Christmas party at about the same time she did. Almost the same words! The Nurses who served with honor perhaps grudgingly acknowledged that they served in Vietnam and were targets of the same undeserved, prejudiced criticism as the rest of us.

You need to read this book. Here is the kicker: Nurse Diane Carlson Evans is THE reason that the Vietnam Women's Memorial exists today at The Wall in D.C. Of course, she gives credit to everyone else, but it was her 10-year mission to get it done. Talk about roadblocks! She could write a book about all the disappointments and roadblocks. Oh, wait, she did! It's the entire last half of this book. Her's a quote near the end of the book from Evans regarding the Vietnam Women's Memorial: "In the days leading up to the dedication, I was asked if, knowing what I knew now, I'd do it again. 'If you're talking about Vietnam, I'd repeat that experience in a heartbeat' I said. 'The memorial? I'm not so sure.'"



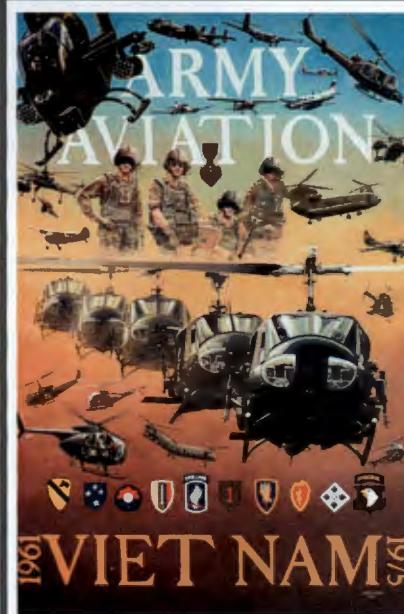
# BOOK REVIEWS

**by Phil Marshall**

Her pure tenacity got it done.

You need to read this book. Most of us, even us Dustoff guys, only got to take care of the wounded for a few minutes at most; our nurses got to take care of them for days and weeks. Most of you reading this review are retired now, so no excuses. You need to read this book. Not only will you get a Nurse's eye view of the war, you will see what it took to preserve part of our Vietnam Veteran's legacy, the Vietnam Women's Memorial.

You need to read this book. I am very pleased that I was asked to review this book, otherwise I would probably have missed it. I must go now. You see, many pages of her book that I just finished have water stains on them and the stains MUST be coming from a leaky roof that needs repair. Where else would they come from? You need to read this book.



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# Coming All the Way Home

Memoir of an Assault Helicopter Aircraft Commander in Vietnam

By Fred McCarthy

Written after 50 years of reflection, reading, and study, this memoir tells both a universal story about war, adventure, and perseverance and, also shares the intensely personal experience of the Vietnam War and its legacy for those who fought in it. McCarthy describes many of his missions, reflects on the nature of being a combat helicopter pilot, and processes the experience through his poetry, letters home, and reflective analysis.

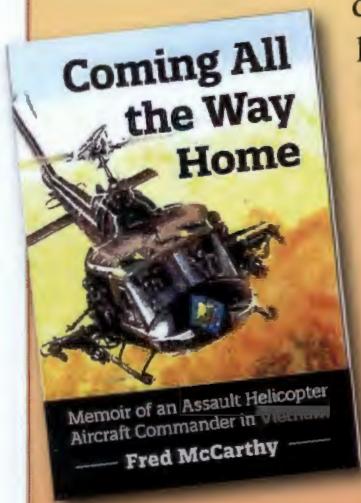
*"It was so good to see an in-depth analysis of the war from the point of view of a participant. During the war we seemed to forget about or ignore the dedication of our soldiers"*

~ Dave Sonnichsen, newspaper CFO and board member

It is available on Amazon Kindle and Barnes and Noble Nook as

**ISBN 978-1-4766-8470-3**

**IEBOOK 978-4766-4357-1 2021**



## Jungle Rot and Khaki Bloomers

*(Fred McCarthy's mother and father served in WWII (they met in the South Pacific).*

**Elizabeth T. (Betty) McCarthy** was a U.S. Army nurse who served in the jungles of New Guinea during World War II. She learned nursing the old-fashioned way. Her “can-do” spirit, sense of humor compassion, empathy, and resilience were as beneficial as the medical care she gave to the soldiers – with a smile. She was a source of joy and comfort to the soldiers she served.



Her story is one of adventure, creativity, and patriotic determination. She would want the reader to know that she wrote this book despite the fact that she struggled with dyslexia and reading. She was very proud of her family. She always hoped that her memoir would one day be published... and now it is!

**It is available on Amazon Kindle and Barnes and Noble Nook as well.**

# Museum Honors the 121st Assault Helicopter Company with Spectacular Legacy Display

The 15th annual reunion of the flight crews and support units of the 121st Assault Helicopter Company was held this year at the mecca of American aviation ingenuity in Oshkosh, Wisconsin over three days in mid-September of 2023. The Experimental Aircraft Association, better known to aviators and enthusiasts as the EAA, honored the “World Famous Soc Trang Tigers” by rescuing from the boneyard a forgotten B Model Huey gunship from their Viking gunship platoon and authentically restoring the helicopter to its glory days of service in the Vietnam War. Hanoi Hanna was rumored to have blasted the airwaves over Vietnam giving these gunships and their flight crews an iconic name that will go down in infamy: “The Blue Diamond Devils of the Delta”

Mr. Chris Henry, EAA Museum Programs Coordinator, addressed the gathering of old war horses and their families/guests with enthusiasm and a memorable and dignified diorama-type display, that invites the public back to the “thrilling days of yesteryear”. The museum was looking for that one unique aircraft for its expansive collection of vintage flying



Members and guests of the 121 Avn Assn attend a gourmet meal in the glow of the eerie green high intensity led lighting effects on the display aircraft reminding them of nighttime missions and motor attacks at Soc Trang Airfield in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. (Photo by Bart Picasso, Viking 21).



Former flight crew members and guests from the 121st Assault Helicopter Company admire the restored B-Model Huey gunship in the EAA Aviation Museum, Oshkosh, Wisconsin; and discuss the mural, control tower, photographs, information, and memorabilia that are featured in the diorama-type display. Mr. Chris Henry, Education Programs Director, EAA Aviation Museum, in blue shirt to the left in background. (Photo by Phil Rashke, Blue Tiger 21).

machines that could represent aviation’s most memorable “helicopter war”; and to give it a distinctive central focus location for generations to come that all might know and feel what it was like viscerally to fly one of these “bad ass” assault helicopters in combat. As Mr. Henry led the group personally into the inner sanctum of the museum’s collection, past many aircraft of notable value and collector status, he deftly and knowledgeably described the details and rationale for each aircraft and its meticulous preservation. We rounded a corner and silence settled over the tour participants as we stared in awe at a seared in memory of 50+ years ago.

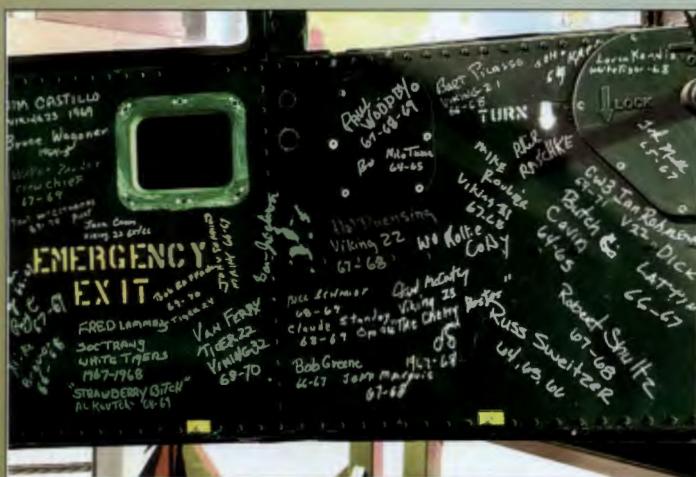
The B Model was resplendent in all of her combat regalia... the distinctive colorful Viking logo on the nose cone with arms filled to overflowing with 2.75 folding fin rockets... The rocket pods on which the crew chiefs and door gunners would climb out, held on only by a slender monkey strap, and would shoot covering fire from hand-held machine guns

under the aircraft as it broke from a tree top level gun run. They were covering our Blue Tiger and White Tiger slicks on a combat assault... the grenades along the rear padded

wall of the cargo area that was filled to over gross weight with ammunition . . . the rocket sight in front of the right seated aircraft commander (AC) with its sighting reticle . . . the left seat of the pilot with its armored side panel and the second set of cyclic and collective controls . . . the cockpit with the hundreds of switches, breakers, and triggers we knew instinctively by feel . . . The radio panels where we listened to multiple transmissions above the background gunfire talking separately to the ground troops, our wing man, the commander, the transports, artillery, all the while listening to a sixties rock and roll song like "Light My Fire" over Armed Forces Vietnam radio . . . the obvious metal work on the fuselage where rounds had pieced the thin fuselage skin and been skillfully patched.

Some of our unit were interviewed by a local TV station and did an admirable job of capturing the feelings welling up inside of us as we sat in our former seats and signed our names and call signs on the inside of the AC's door for posterity and grandkids to see in a future museum visit.

The display includes a beautiful wall length mural that reminded some of us of the infamous seven mountains area where we resupplied special forces units . . . a replica aircraft control tower announcing the comings and goings of mis-



Education Programs Director, Chris Henry, invited flight crew members to sign their names, call signs, etc. on the inside of the aircraft commander's door to be left in perpetuity to celebrate this epic gathering of Vietnam Combat Veterans and dedication of the exhibit. (Photo by Phil Rashke, Blue Tiger 21).



Proud family members, flight crew members, and support personnel of the 121st AHC and related units pose in front of the display aircraft in the cavernous museum surrounded by iconic aircraft elegantly restored and displayed by museum staff members. (Photo by Phil Rashke, Blue Tiger 21).

sions and mortar attacks were confirmed with a loud siren. The story of the Vietnam War and our contribution is told in high quality information panels and pictures strategically placed around the display. That night we were honored to sit in proximity to the aircraft highlighted by special effect lighting and enjoy a gourmet buffet dinner. Mr. Henry invited us to vote on whether a fixed or hand-held machine gun would be in the display. We voted for both, one on each side.

As the reunion of a lifetime came to a memorable close, we were yet again surprised by a local chapter of lovely ladies from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) who presented one of our leaders, Don Jackson, with a Vietnam memorial flag, and each of us with a special commemorative pin. A member of our unit was heard to say "This was the welcome home some of us didn't experience amidst the protests and controversies of our misunderstood war. Those of us who flew these helicopters have many stories to tell. It was a unique experience to have such a respected organization as the EAA tell our story and present us with our own place in history that will endure far beyond our personal stories. We are all eternally grateful for the honor of this experience.

Respectfully,

**Fred McCarthy, Ed.D, CW2**

"Viking 23"

## The Blue Diamond Devils of the Delta

### 121st Assault Helicopter Company

Soc Trang, RVN

1967-1966

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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.*

# VHPA CHAPTERS

## AMERICAN HUEY CHAPTER

### *The Girls Are Finally Home!*

After several years of fund raising and flying events; the National American Huey History Museum has a (virtually) completed Living History Hangar which now houses our four "returned to flight" Vietnam Hueys...and one restored to flight Bell 47 (OH-13). Finally! In early March with blowing snow, our "girls" were flown to their new and permanent home.

While the entire building itself is still under construction and we are still short of our funding goal, the priority was to complete the Living History Hangar so that we could accomplish this year's Annual Inspections in a controlled climate. While our previous (temporary) Hangar and Museum space at Grissom Air Reserve Base was donated to us, it was unheated with floors that would sweat and lead paint chips that constantly rained from the ceiling. Of course, it was much appreciated as we are a 501 c 3 charitable organization, but the conditions were not ideal. Now



the conditions ARE ideal.

As you read this, our Annuals are now complete and we will be ready for our first flying event of the year, May 17 and 18 at the Findlay, Ohio, Hancock County Fairgrounds. The Findley Military Vehicle Armed Forces Day Celebration is one of the largest military vehicle shows in the United States. We will be flying two Hueys there and we will be at the Show both days for display as well as membership flights, weather permitting.

Construction is continuing at the Museum as the Restoration Hangar is also complete; we have plans to restore back to flight more of our inventory of Viet Nam Hueys. One of our goals is to either fly or have on display one of each model of Huey that flew in Viet Nam. Come join us as we continue to add to our legacy as Vietnam Helicopter Pilots. Mark your calendar for the Gathering of Veterans and Patriots at the Huey Museum, August 10 and 11 of this year. You will find more photos and information at [americanhuey369.com](http://americanhuey369.com)

Phil Marshall



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## CALIFORNIA NORTH

On 20 MAR, 13 chapter members and wives met in West Sacramento for a business meeting to discuss the upcoming reunion, volunteering at the reunion, plans for future activities. Additionally, officers were confirmed for the coming year. Our esteemed Secretary, Dave Anderson and his wife Kathy were unable to attend, so Curt Knapp filled in for Dave. Joel and Kay Dozier, Larry and Francesca Loftis were there after long absences, and they signed up to help out at the reunion. Likewise, Al and Marilyn Doucette, Ken and Leslie Lake, Ken and Marcia Fritz, and the always helpful Ed Morris all signed up for shifts as volunteers



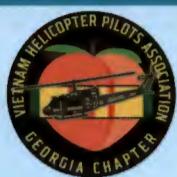
at the upcoming reunion. Because of illnesses, deaths, accidents (Jim Stein?), and just plain old No Shows, we missed many of our pilot friends. Maybe some didn't show up because they aren't going to the reunion or they don't want to work?

Ken Fritz reviewed our financial status which is in good shape. Joel and Ken had some good ideas for future events to include wine tastings near Lodi and a Rib & Chili Cookoff in Rio Vista with live music, craft beers and a car show. We also talked about having a BBQ at Ken and Marica's place. Mike Nord talked about the future of the Mobile Officers Club (MOC).

Ken Fritz

## GEORGIA CHAPTER

Please see below a summary of our activities since 30 JAN.



### 12 MAR

The Georgia Veterans Military Hall of Fame is now headquartered at the State Capitol.

### GEORGIA MILITARY VETERANS HALL OF FAME

An elaborate GMVHOF installment ceremony was held in the North Atrium of the Georgia State Capitol Building and was hosted by the CEO of GMVHOF, Rick White and Georgia's Governor, Brian Kemp.

The GMVHOF now has its home in the State Capitol building.

The event was ushered by members of the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association. Many members of GA-VHPA attended as well.

### 19 MAR

#### Georgia Chapter VHPA Luncheon

Our alternate monthly luncheon was held in Dunwoody, GA, and was well attended.

Our itinerary included Committee Reports from WEBSITE Committee – Jim Crawford.



Gov. Kemp's Office



GA-VHPA VP, Jim Crawford, Inductee Skip Bell, Glenn Carr, and AVVBA CEO John Butler



Gov. Kemp

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Expansion Committee – Clyde Romero



DAV/VA Committee – Chuck Bayless



*With update from DAV Commander Phil Forsberg*

UH-1 Trailer Refurbishment Committee – Doug Lackey



2024 Chapter Events Committee

Chuck Bayless, Bobby Russell, Doug Lackey

Georgia Military Veterans HOF – 12 MAR



Cobb Veterans Memorial Foundation – On Going



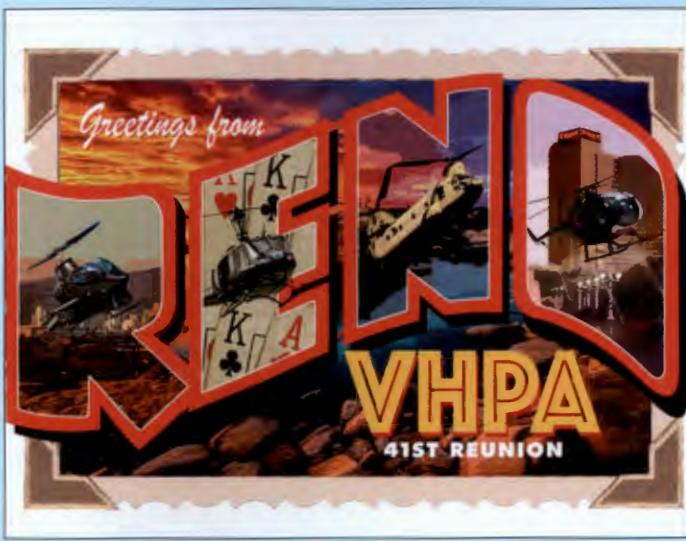
Gala Fund Raiser 20 APR

PDK Good Neighbor Day – 17 May  
Registered with AH1G Cobra from AAHF  
Fuel Costs - \$1,800  
(\$20, \$50, \$100 Donations needed)



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

VHPA, 14-17 May – RENO, NV!



## Other Air Shows

Commemorative Airforce, Peachtree City

Veterans Day – 11 NOV (Monday

- Registered – UH1 with Trailer
  - Gala
  - Sponsorship

Our Luncheon Speaker: Clyde Romero –  
“How We Won The Cold War”

If you missed this one, you missed another stellar performance. From a former WO1 Loch Driver to an Airforce F-4 Driver, to running major Airforce DC-8 intelligence platforms, this retired Colonel knows what he's talking about. Informative and entertaining to say the least. *Thanks again, Clyde.*



Savannah, GA  
and Columbus,  
GA-VHPA and  
VHPA members  
please note:

Please send me an email if you would like to discuss projects that would support membership activities in your areas. (dlackey@peachstatetrucks.com)

Doug Lackey, President  
VHPA Georgia Chapter  
770-365-6558

## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

The Michigan Chapter continued a couple of regular monthly gatherings through the winter hosted by Mark Benjamin.

Wednesday 7 February brought together another wonderful group at the VHPA luncheon at the Hotel Indigo in Traverse City.

While once upon a time, a group like this would talk about parties, ladies, adventures and such; this meeting really degenerated into considerable meaningless chatter as we talked about: Our aches and pains. Average age is about 75+ a bit so aches and pains are sort of a hot topic.

Various versions of the usual flying stories were told. Clay Maxwell asked the group if anyone had ever seen a D Model Gunship. Answer is, generally no; however, a few D guns were observed with the Australians. Bart



Halliday discussed his time in VN flying the USMC H-34s in the early to mid 60s. Of course, Bart went back for a second tour flying with an A-4 squadron. All good stuff!



February 7th in Traverse City photo left to right clockwise are: Mark Benjamin, Barry Witt, Paul Fitzsimmons, Walter Topp, Bart Halliday USMC, Bob Matlis, Ron Reinhold, Clay Maxwell, Linda Maxwell.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Various versions of the usual flying stories were told. Clay Maxwell asked the group if anyone had ever seen a D Model Gunship. Answer is, generally no; however, a few D guns were observed with the Australians. Bart Halliday discussed his time in VN flying the USMC H-34s in the early to mid 60s. Of course, Bart went back for a second tour flying with an A-4 squadron. All good stuff!

Various members of the group have recently been presented with a Quilt of Valor. These are presented by NW Michigan Quilt of Valor Foundation representative Jean Perkins. Bob Matlis suggested we come up with some financial support for the people who take the time and make the effort to create these beautiful works of art. Next thing you know, there was \$430.00 on the table. Thanks so much everyone!!!

March 6th found another great group at the Northwestern Michigan VHPA lunch meeting. Sara's late husband, Al DeMailo, and Walter Topp were both in the same WOC Class 66-23. Though in different units, all went to Vietnam at

March 6th in Traverse City photo left to right clockwise are: Sara Tager DeMailo, Al DeMailo, Bob Matlis, Bart Halliday (USMC) Paul Fitzsimons, Shirley Benjamin, Mark Benjamin, Walter Topp, Bob Keller.

about the same time.

Discussion centered on various assignments during and after Vietnam. Also, some stories about guys assigned as LRRPs (Paul Fitzsimons) and how none of us wanted his job.

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

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

Submitted by Rich Deer, President



## NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

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.

At the March 12th meeting, upcoming activities are discussed, including the Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony at the Huntsville Madison County Veterans Memorial (with Huey Buc-3), Armed Forces Day at the Veterans Memorial Museum (with Huey Buc-3), the annual Memorial Day Ceremony and Wreath Laying, and the Redstone Arsenal Army Birthday celebration (with Buc-3). We also talked about upcoming maintenance required on Buc-3. Art Jacobs (former VHPA president



and NAVHPA member) gave a rundown on a couple of VHPA items of interest, including the Legacy Committee's work with the Vietnam Center & Archives at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX.

Many of our meetings conclude with a 'war' story of about five minutes. Members (and spouses) volunteer for the opportunity to share a story (pretty much anything, within reason, goes here) of interest to the group. For the last two meetings, Marshall Eubanks has read passages from the 1967 pamphlet, "Traditions, Customs and Courtesies of the Army." Oh, how things have changed – remember 'calling cards,' 'receiving lines,' and 'social graces?' The ladies all laughed at the absolute need "for officers' ladies to wear hats and gloves at outdoor ceremonies"!

March 21st was a beautiful day for getting Buc-3 cleaned up for it to go on display at our Vietnam Veteran's Day.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

We participated in Vietnam Veterans Day celebration on March 23rd. The event is hosted by the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1067 in Huntsville. Every year we take our Huey UH-1C/M gunship, Buc-3, to the event for all to enjoy. The aircraft has always been a big hit with all the Vietnam Vets. Always brings back good and bad memories for some of them. Of course, all the kids just love getting in and moving all the controls around and flipping all the switches their little hands can get to. Good thing Buc-3 isn't flyable. Springtime is when the demand for the aircraft starts and will go through November. It gets us old boys out to tell all our stories about "there I was"!!!

Our special guest was Connie Popel, a Vietnam Donut Dolly. Four years ago, Connie was the speaker at our Christmas Dinner. She has attended more of our meetings. We have gotten to know her and appreciate what she did in Vietnam. While a college senior and not knowing exactly what she wanted to do, she saw a Red Cross recruiting poster looking for single, female college graduates, 21-25 years of age, for the Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO) program, also known as Donut Dollies. She applied, was accepted. After two weeks of training in Wash DC, she was off to Vietnam in Sep 1969. She served until Nov 1970 at Cam Rahn Bay, Da Nang, and Bien Hoa, setting up recreation centers and conducting

recreational programs in the field. There were about 1200 women who worked for the Red



**NAVHPA members and spouses enjoying the social hour prior to our March 12th meeting and dinner at the Huntsville Country Club.**

Cross in Vietnam, of which 627 were Donut Dollies. Wearing her Donut Dolly shirt, she was a big hit – many folks wanted to talk to her, and she enjoyed every minute of it. During the ceremony, VVA recognized her by having her up front while her bio was read.



**Washing Buc-3 on March 12. Rick Davis is spraying off soap. Marshall Eubanks, Chapter President, is supervising. Bob Monette is Assistant Supervisor.**



**Buc-3 all shined and ready for the Vietnam Veteran's Day in Huntsville on March 23rd.**

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



**Vietnam Doughnut Dolly Connie Popel poses in Buc-3 during Vietnam Veteran's day.**



**Chapter President Marchall Eubanks being presented the VVA Presidential Support Award.**

NAVHPA has been supporting VVA's annual Vietnam Veterans Day celebration and the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Lecture Series for many years. In appreciation of our support, VVA awarded NAVHPA their Presidential Support Award.

NAVHPA Activities Director Bob Monette was at Ft. Novosel (formerly mother Rucker) recently and sent pictures of the paver provided by the NAVHPA to the US Army Aviation Museum.

We have a dedicated page on Facebook. You can see it by searching for "North Alabama VHPA" in the search



**NAVHPA paver at the US Army Aviation Museum.**

bar in Facebook. See what we are doing.

The North Alabama Chapter meets in Huntsville, on the 2nd Tuesday of most months at 4:30 PM (1630) at the Huntsville Country Club. Stop in when you get a chance. If you live in the North Alabama and Middle Tennessee areas, (and even if you don't) we invite you to join our chapter. You can contact us at [navhpa@gmail.com](mailto:navhpa@gmail.com) or through the Facebook page. Come on out!! We know all those war stories need to get out of your system. Let us hear yours!

**Ralph Weber**

## NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

Happy 35th Birthday to NC VHPA! Our organization was formed on March 4, 1989 when, as was stated in the first North Carolina Chapter newsletter, ..."sixteen virtual strangers could sit down together and in three hours (including a break and lunch) lay the foundation for this Chapter". Officers elected during that first meeting were: Carl Seager, President and Treasurer; Bill Beardall, Vice-President; Jerry Seago, Editor of the Newsletter; and Barbara Seago, Secretary. NC VHPA has flourished and garnered an admirable reputation in representing Vietnam Veterans over those 35 years thanks to the initiative and unflagging efforts of Jerry, Carl and Barb. And



**Bill Doran reciting the Missing Man Table memorial. Photo by Barbara Seago.**

aided by a strong membership, NC VHPA is proud to have presented the history of Vietnam War helicopter pilots, the crews, and their families at activities and to audiences unnumbered over the following years.

As we have done on the first Saturday in February for the past three decades, NC VHPA read the names of the North Carolina servicemen who are still Missing In Action from the Vietnam War during a ceremony conducted at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Raleigh. The ceremony, hosted by North Carolina Vietnam Veterans, Inc., is held every month and is performed by various veteran organizations to honor and remember those who have yet to be welcomed home. There were 66 names on

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

the MIA roster when the readings first began. As of this writing 38 names are still to be read. Dave Samuels again presided over this year's ceremony and Bill Doran recited the Missing Man Table memorial.

Our next activity over the weekend of February 23-25 was in Kinston, NC displaying the UH-1H Medevac and the OH-6 Cayuse at the 14th Annual Freedom Classic baseball tournament between the Air Force Academy and the Naval Academy teams (Navy lost 4 - 3

for America's veterans, active duty personnel and emergency services personnel." (per Richard's website). They had only a short time to absorb the camaraderie of this veteran-operated shop before having to drive back to Kannapolis for the Annual Business Meeting.

In previous years, NC VHPA held its Annual Business Meeting during the afternoon following the February POW/MIA Ceremony. This year, in response to members requesting a venue closer than Raleigh to the

central and western parts of the state, the meeting was moved to March 2nd at the Old Armor Beer Company in Kannapolis. A "meet and greet" commenced at 11:30AM, a tasty, filling buffet lunch was enjoyed by all participants, and the meeting was then convened by Jerry Seago (President Ben Gay and Vice-President Joe Armstrong were unable to attend). Jerry led the group through the meeting's agenda, two topics of which are notable to mention here: Jerry continues to coordinate transferring more of NC VHPA's display aircraft to worthy activities that can provide suitable homes in the future for the helicopters. Presently, the North Carolina National Guard has received an OH-6 and the AH-1 and discussion is in progress for the Museum to receive a UH-1H and two OH-6s. He is also looking into transferring two helicopters to the North Carolina Museum of History. Jerry next reports NC VHPA again has a busy season coming up with four confirmed and two possible display events scheduled between May and November.



NC VHPA at Kinston Freedom Classic Baseball Tournament. Photo by Jerry Seago

to Air Force). NC VHPA mingled with other military displays by local veterans' groups that were set up around the stadium..

In the early hours of March 2nd, members Ed Hughes, Jerry Seago, Brock Nicholson, Allan Hoffman, Jim Breznay, and Vic Rose rode 30 minutes in NC VHPA's travel van Di Di Mau from Kannapolis to Mooresville, NC to enter for the first time Richard's Coffee Shop and Military Museum. There they were welcomed and initiated into a unique "...gathering place, support system, living military museum, gift shop, eatery, and 501c3 non-profit dedicated to honoring and advocating



NC VHPA members at Richard's Coffee Shop and Military Museum. Photo by Vic Rose



NC VHPA Annual Business Meeting. Photo by Jim Breznay

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

On March 29th, Tom Braaten, Ed Hughes and Master Sergeant (Retired) Danny Elize brought a "Loach" helicopter to Union Point Park in New Bern, NC to support VVA Chapter 886's remembrance of Vietnam Veterans Day. Ed relates, "A nice, steady crowd visited the displays and the OH-6 between 1000 and 1600." Ed and Danny served together in the Persian Gulf during Operation Prime Chance, and Danny's experience also extends back to three tours in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division, first as an infantryman, then as an aviation maintainer and crewchief.

To view our 2024 scheduled activities, please visit our website at [www.ncvhpa.com](http://www.ncvhpa.com).

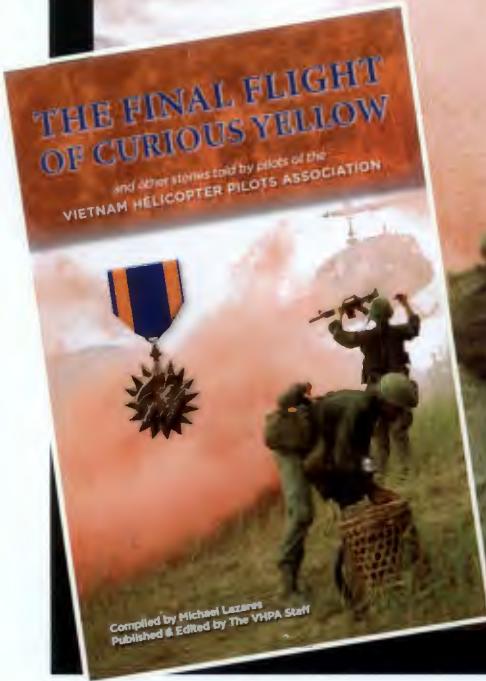
Submitted by Vic Rose



Tom Braaten instructing new crews. Photo by Ed Hughes

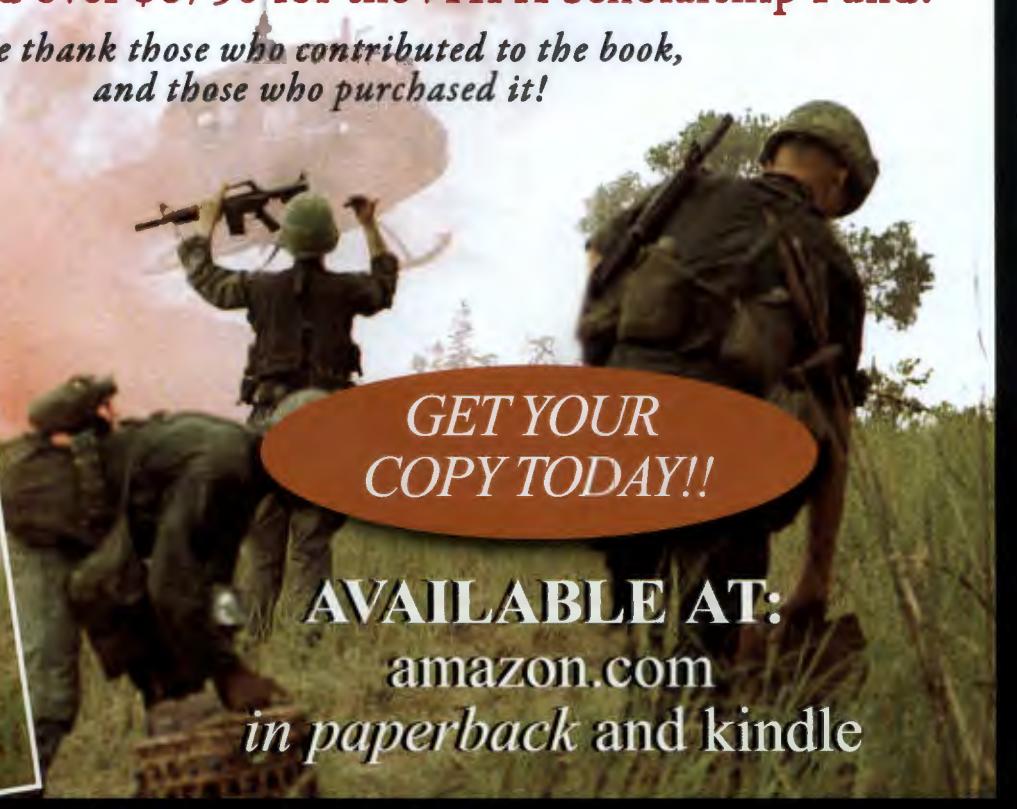
**Sales to date of the Final Flight of Curious Yellow  
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*We thank those who contributed to the book,  
and those who purchased it!*



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# WELCOME TO THE VHPA!

Look the list over and if you recognize anyone, give them a call, drop them a line or send them an e-mail welcoming them into our Association. Full contact information is available either on-line in the Member Services section of our website, or through our staff at HQ by calling 1-800-505-VHPA (8472). AVI

AVIATOR REPORT completed for 20 New Members and covers the period of: 2.12.24-5.9.24

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*

Anderson Kenneth R. ** Mesquite Texas Army 68-514 68-24 196 ASHC in 69-70	Hammond Marvin EDWARD 'Ed' ** League City Texas Army 68-503 68-3 159 MED DET in 68; 57 MED DET in 68-69	Rainier Washington Army 68-513 68-23 1 AVN 1 INF in 68
Bijold Gerald P. 'Jerry' ** Las Vegas Nevada Army 67-8 B/2/20 ARA 1 CAV in 67-68; HHT/2/11 ACR in 71	Jones Douglas W. 'Doug' ** Maysville Oklahoma Army 69-7 281 AHC in 69-70	Read William P. 'Pat' ** Cuyahoga Falls Ohio Army 68-15 68-25 92 AHC in 68-69
Capouya David M ** Stockton Springs Maine Army 66-17 162 AHC in 66-67; 25 AVN 25 INF in 69-70	Keeton Lewis H. ** Granite Falls Washington Army 68-509 68-13 B/4 AVN 4 INF in 68-69; C/16 CAV in 71-72; C/3/17 CAV in 72	Tow James L ** Falmouth Massachusetts Army 13 CAB in 68-69
Deal Clifford L. 'Lanier' ** Ocala Florida Army 71-6 11 ACR in 71; ACT/11 ACR in 71-72	Keller Dennis L ** Beaverton Oregon Army 68-19 54 FAG in 69	Tregerman Lee H. 'Lee' Kalamazoo Michigan Army 68-5 C/101 AVN 101 ABN in 68
Guier Kenneth ** Pensacola Florida Army 68-24 68-42 114 AHC in 69-70; 203 ASHC in 71-72	Kwiatkowski Lawrence A. 'Larry' Gold Canyon Arizona Army 69-37 69-35 129 AHC in 69-70	Trimmer Robert W. ** Reno Nevada Army 68-511 68-19 71 AHC in 68-69
Halpin Thomas P. ** Easton Pennsylvania Army 68-23 68-41 114 AHC in 69-70	Malone James E ** Mobile Alabama Army 69-44B 118 AHC in 70-71	Vickrey Charles W. 'Chuck' Gardnerville Nevada Air Force 38 ARRS DET 13 in 70-71
Halwachs Thomas Eugene ** Monterey California Navy HA(L)-3 in 70-72	McConnell Donald N. 'Don' ** Quincy California Army 68-501 67-25 114 AHC in 68 Odd Steven J 'Steve' **	

# My Old Girlfriend 038

*By Bob 'Buffalo' Monette*

When you attended your 50th High School reunion (I know you are old enough) did anyone come up and say, "You look better than ever" I guess this only happens to me; Not.

Over this past Memorial Day weekend I met up with an old girlfriend of mine I hadn't seen in 50 years. Not only did she look fantastic, but she also looked better than ever. 70-16038 was my assigned AH-1G while on my second tour and serving with F Troop 9th CAV. F Troop was the last combat unit in III Corps and most departed mid-February 1973. My AH-1G and the UH-1C were officially entered into the Battleship Cove Maritime Museum Fall River, MA on Friday 26 May 2023.

While other ladies in my life have, 038 never let me down, and visa versa. She fought the Battle of An Loc in 72-73, taking crews into and out of the longest battle during the Vietnam War. She took her share of hits but never failed to show up for every battle when called upon. Much of the credit goes to the

best crew chief ever, SP5 John C. Larkin. If anyone knows where John is, please let me know.

My lady was converted into a TOW Ship but is being returned to a G as she was in Vietnam.

Although Battleship Cove is Naval Museum, Rich Angelini and team through grants, donations, and untold hours from numerous dedicated volunteers have made her and the UH-1C gunship a permanent home that is preserving history forever.

She is lovingly housed in a new hangar-like, climate-controlled enclosure that will include additional VN memorabilia and hopefully an OH-6 if and when they can find one.



AH-1 G COBRA 70-16038



Russ Anderson in the middle with two VN Crewmembers

The UH-1C is parked beside the AH-1G showing the progression of Attack Helicopters in support of the guys on the ground. Supporting Taipan 609 was her original crew chief Russ Anderson (in the middle) who flies in from Texas to continue his work to maintain and preserve his old pal. Other members of the 135th Assault Helicopter Company that attended the Grand opening were Mickael Guard, Tom Kirk (our VHPA Managing Editor), and Ammon Webster.

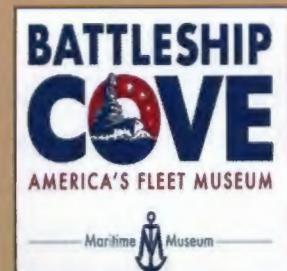
Also, Members of the 176th Assault Helicopter Company were well represented with Bill Case, Barry Lamkin, Richard Rossman, Rod Kennedy, Roy Rydinsword, and Jeff\ Sandy Kern during the opening of Vietnam: The Helicopter War. Each one of the gents flew in Taipan 609 in combat during the Vietnam War.

Members of F Troop 9th Cav also flew in from several states to be a part of this great event. Bruce and Francine McKenty, WA, Linda and Michell Burgess, DC, Mike Syverson, MN, Doug Madigan, FL and Wayne McSwiggan and local boy. We attended the VIP reception on Friday which was a very memorable event. On Saturday we were treated to a lunch served on the USS Massachusetts which is a centerpiece of the Battleship Cove Museum. We then stayed to mingle with the attending public and answer any questions they tossed our way.

We also revaluated many War Stories and picked up a few new ones from the Charlie Model Team.

Many thanks to the entire staff at Battleship Cove. You are preserving history that many are soon to forget. I highly recommend that you put this fantastic museum on your bucket list of exciting and educational things to do. It is a tribute to, Naval History, Military Heritage, and Memorial that now displays part of The Helicopter War.

Many thanks go out to Friends of Army Aviation out of Ozark for their donation of a 2.75-inch XM-260 7- shot rocket tube. This extremely generous donation will greatly assist in her continued restoration and back in a Vietnam configuration.



70-16038 in Saigon getting ready to ship back to the USA. Job Well Done!



L-R F/9 CAV Wayne McSwiggan, Magnet Ass Bruce McKenty, Buffalo Bob Monette, Mike (Perch) Syverson, Sabre White Doug Madigan



John Larkin and Me on Cease Fire Day  
27 January 1973

# Memories of a TAC

*Excerpt from Honorable Intentions*  
by Russell Jones

In late 1969, after release from the hospital and a few months of rehabilitation, I was assigned to Ft. Wolters, 1st WOC, as a TAC Officer.

When the candidates were in their last two months of training, the workload for the TAC was light. By then, on average, 30 percent of the candidates had been dropped from the program. Most eliminations occurred during Pre-Flight training, which was usually a result of the TAC officers' decisions based on dishonesty, continued lack of attention to detail, or inability to comprehend and follow orders. Many more candidates were lost in the early stages of flight training, and others failed due to academics. But after three months, the remaining candidates were doing fine, passing flight checks, getting good grades academically, and earning weekend passes.

My wife kept occupied working part-time on base as a beautician. When I had time off, we spent hours at the local park or lake Possum Kingdom. I bought a BSA 650cc motorcycle and, with other officers who had cycles, would occasionally ride through the countryside.

I couldn't help but be proud of my Flight Platoon as I watched them march off to classes one Friday afternoon. Their appearance was up to the strictest military standards, and they felt good about themselves. They no longer had to run at double time. TACs weren't accompanying them everywhere, and they'd call their cadences. This day, they marched to their song. When they reached the cadence's end, they threw their arms in the air and shouted, "Whoopee! We're all gonna die."

They were aggressive, brash, cocky, confident, and intelligent men. Maybe they were not wise enough, however, to realize that they would be involved in the most dangerous job there was in Vietnam. Yet they were willing to serve with honor, and I couldn't help but think that they had faith in

their political leaders who were sending them off to war and confidence in their military trainers. They had faith in me and that I was doing right by them. Was I?

When they returned from the flight line, they immediately changed into their dress uniforms and formed with the rest of the company. I met with them briefly before they headed off for a weekend pass. They seemed giddy, anxious to get away.

"Enjoy the weekend. Company dismissed," I said. "Big. Red. One," they shouted and then quickly departed.

I should have noticed that the barracks were empty, and not one candidate remained behind. I gave last-minute instructions to the unfortunate candidate who had Officer of the Day duty and headed for my motorcycle to go home. Except it wasn't where I usually parked it.

What the hell? Did I park it out front? I walked around the front of the building, but it wasn't there either. I walked into the front office and confronted the Officer of the Day. "Candidate, you know anything about my motorcycle?" He jumped to attention. "Sir, Candidate Roberts, sir. No, sir." I eyeballed him for ten seconds. He's not lying. Damn, someone's stolen my motorcycle.

I didn't want to call the military police in the candidate's presence, so I walked upstairs to my office where, two floors up, was my motorcycle, all polished up. Not a single candidate was around to help me bring it back down the stairs. I couldn't use the duty officer as he was required to stay in the office, so I headed to 2nd WOC where I knew plenty of candidates would be in the barracks. I shanghaied three, and we safely returned my motorcycle to ground level.

When I saw my Flight the following Monday morning, I said and acted as if nothing had happened, but I had my plans. That week went smoothly, and when Friday came around, they were all dressed up for their weekend pass. I wasn't scheduled to be on duty, but I was there.

"Candidates, we have a problem," I said as I held a small matchbox. "During the inspection of your rooms today, I found a dead aviator on a windowsill. You'll pass by and pay your respects on your way back to your rooms. We'll have a proper burial for this lost brother in the morning."

There was a collective moan as they had anticipated a weekend pass. Then they marched by, quietly looking in the box in my hand that contained the body of a fly that had buzzed itself against the glass all day, dying legs up. After giving out a few assignments for the ceremonies in the morning, I quickly left. They were angry. I couldn't help but think back to the night I was in pre-flight when the TAC harassed us into the wee hours.

The following morning, they were in their dress greens. Six candidates were pallbearers. One candidate was assigned a shovel, and he wore fatigues. Another candidate had the task of giving the eulogy, and several other candidates volunteered to say something about the departed. We marched across the street to a spot in the wooded field, the six pall-bearers lugging a medic's litter, which carried only

the tiny matchbox. Where they found the medic's stretcher, I didn't know and didn't ask.

It's impressive how soldiers, because of their training, will come together even in ridiculous circumstances. The eulogy was at least five minutes long and fitting for any soldier. The several candidates who gave remembrances sounded like they had known and flown with the departed aviator for years. The candidate with the shovel had his little ceremony as he shoveled a bit from the four points of a compass.

With instruction to change into their fatigues, the company returned to their barracks. There were moans again as they thought they'd have the rest of the weekend off. They had no way of knowing that the TAC officer wives had been busy bringing all the candidates' wives, girlfriends, and family members living in the area to one of the picnic sites on base. The TACs brought beer, sodas, hot dogs, and chips, and all had a good time. The candidates were ready to graduate from the Army Primary Helicopter School and move on to Fort Rucker.

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# TAPS

## 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.

**Babcock, William H, Jr.**  
USA; Flight Class: 67-18;  
RVN: 67-68 B/1/9 CAV 1  
CAV, 68 POW; Callsign:  
SABER 25.



It's my sad task to report the passing of William H. Babcock, Jr., a B Trooper whose Huey gunship was shot down near Hue on the first day of Tet 1968. The four-man crew was captured by enemy forces and separated, two held by one group of NVA and two held by another. Then-1LT Babcock and the door gunner were rescued by another B Troop gunship crew, led by WO1 Tom Maehrlein, but the other two prisoners were executed by their captors.

Bill Babcock spent the later years of his life in Indonesia, where he died in a hospital Friday, February 23. I am told his death is attributed to pneumonia, but he had also had Parkinson's Disease and was in ill health with heart issues for some time.

**\*Bahnson, John C. USA, BG Ret.; Flight Class: 57-3FW; RVN: 65-66 118 AVN, 68-69 ACT/11 ACR, 691/11 ACR; DSC, SS (4OLC), DFC, LM (3OLC) BS (OLC) BSv, (3OLC) PH (OLC); Callsign: THUNDER HORSE 6.**

John C. "Doc" Bahnson Jr., 89, died, Feb. 21, in Rochelle GA., of heart failure, with his wife, family and friends at his side. He was born Nov. 8, 1934, in Albany GA. He was a graduate of Marion Military Institute.

He was inducted into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame, the Georgia Aviation Hall of Fame, was selected an "Eagle" for the USAF Staff College "Gathering of Eagles,"

was selected by the Armor Association for the Gold Medallion of the Order of St. George, and in 2016 was named a Distinguished Graduate of the U.S. Military Academy.

**Barnett, Michael J. USA; Flight Classes: 68-8, 68-10; RVN: 68-69 282 AHC; Callsign: VULCAN.**

Michael John Barnett, 76, passed away on January 17, 2024, after a battle with pancreatic cancer. Michael was born on May 6, 1947, in Portland OR. He graduated from high school in Sandy OR. and attended one year of college at Portland State.

He retired from Roadway Trucking in 2002 and moved to Arizona to enjoy the area and to support his aging parents.

He is survived by his wife Valorie.

**\*Borden, Kenneth W. USA; Flight Class: 69-49; RVN: 70 119 AHC, 70 116 AHC; Callsign: HORNET 27.**

Kenneth Borden of Saint Louis MO passed away on May 14, 2021, at the age of 72.

**\*Bosan, George S. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 53-D; RVN: 67-68 14 TC BN; Callsign: RAMROD TAL-LEY.**



G. Steven Bosan of Mechanicsburg died November 3, 2023 at home surrounded by family.

Steve was born April 21, 1922 in Newark NJ.

He was a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. He was study-

ing to become a Forest Ranger at Utah State College in 1942 when he enlisted and was sent to Officer Candidate School. He became an officer in a Combat Engineer Battalion which participated in the crossing of the Rhine River as part of Patton's Third Army.

Steve spent the post-war years as a draftsman for a fire suppression system company in Florida where he met his wife of fifty years, Louise.

In 1950 the outbreak of the Korean War resulted in his return to active duty and flight school. Learning to fly both fixed wing aircraft and helicopters he commanded a light aviation detachment in Korea. In 1979 he started working for the Hospital Association of Pennsylvania as Director of Facilities Management for 17 years.

He was a Life Member of the Army Aviation Association of America for over 60 years.

Steve met many historical figures including Jackie Kennedy, Adlai Stevenson, Prince Phillip of England, General George Patton, and even danced with Olivia de Havilland at the Hollywood Canteen during World War II.

He became active in attending World War II re-enactments, reunions, and gave many interviews on his experiences in the army.

# TAPS

**\*Buirge, David C. USA, LTC Ret; Flight Class: 66-21; RVN:67-68 604 TC CO, 70-71 539 TC; Callsigns: HIGHLANDER, PIPESMOKE.**



David Clark Buirge was born in St. Paul MN, on December 1, 1946. He enjoyed participating in track, cross country and basketball at Washington High School. He enlisted in the Army in Dec. 1965, and attended Boot Camp at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Dave had a 20-year career on Active Duty, achieving the rank of Lt. Colonel. He retired from the Army in Dec. 1985 and began his 21-year career in Civil Service in August of 1986, as the Installation Transportation Officer for Army Alaska. He survived many medical challenges over the years, but never let it stop him from living life to the fullest. He climbed a mountain, jumped out of a perfectly good airplane, and built a log cabin in his 70's.

He is survived by his loving wife, Kathy.

**\*Canon, Melvin L. Jr. USA, CW3 Ret.; Flight Class: 67-7; RVN: 67-68 B/227 AHB 1 CAV, 67-68 C/227 AHB 1 CAV; DFC (OLC), BS; Callsign: MASHER 17.**



Melvin Leon Canon Jr. pulled pitch and ascended to his eternal home in the early morning hours of February 28, 2024. He was born on February 26, 1942 in Shreveport LA.

In 1970, Mel left active duty and transitioned to serving in the Army Reserve as he began his adult civilian life. Over the next nearly five decades, Mel built an impressive array of employment positions throughout the aviation, fire management, and IT professions such as: CEO and owner of a commercial helicopter company Commercial helicopter pilot, Law enforcement officer, and Computer Network administrator as well as other computer related positions.

One of Mel's greatest acts of service to his fellow veterans was the creation of the Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crew Network (VHFCN.org). The VHFCN is a non-profit veterans' organization for aircrew members who served in Vietnam during the period 1961-75, including hundreds of helicopter pilots, crew chiefs, and gunners from around the world. This network actually played a pivotal role in bringing Mel and his wife, Susan, together.

He is survived by his loving wife, Susan.

**Conaway, Stephen A. USA; Flight Classes: 68-505, 68-3; RVN: 69-70 C/228 ASHB 1 CAV; Callsign: CRIMSON TIDE.**



Stephen Conaway died at home on February 19, 2024. He was born on October 25, 1946 in Santa Ana CA. After his RVN tour, he completed a Bachelor's Degree in Geography from Cal State Chico. He then began a 39-year career as a commercial helicopter pilot in many locations.

Steve and his twin served in the first Cav at the same time while in Vietnam.

He is survived by his wife, Kathy.

**\*Cook, Elmer M. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 62-1W; RVN: 63-64 114 AHC, 68-69 1 AVN BDE; DFC, LM, BS, MSM, PH, ACM.**



Elmer Melvin "Mel" Cook passed away peacefully in his sleep on February 29, 2024, at home in Alexandria VA, with his wife Bette and son Joe by his side. He succumbed, at age 97, to congestive heart failure. He was born on October 7, 1926, in Delavan IL.

Mel was a descendant of military men who fought in every war this country has been engaged. Mel continued the legacy and served 32 years in the U.S. Army through three wars – World War II, Korea,

and Vietnam. The capstone of Mel's career was induction into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame where he was cited as "the epitome of the finest traits and capabilities of our flying warrant officers." In 2000, he was invited by President William J. Clinton to accompany his final Presidential delegation to visit Vietnam.

After retirement, Mel served 18 years as the Director of Play at Army Navy Country Club, Arlington, VA, where he was privileged to become a friend and golf partner with a President. Mel continued military camaraderie through professional associations such as the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA), the National Museum of the U.S. Army (founding member), Friends of the National World War II Memorial in Washington DC, U.S. Army Warrant Officer Association, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, 114th Aviation Company "Knights of the Air", American Legion (Auxiliary Post 39), and Army Navy Country Club.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Bette Mayes.

**Cooper, Larry E. USA, COL Ret; Flight Class: 68-2; RVN: 68-69 C/159 AVN 101 ABN, 69 A/159 AVN 101 ABN, 69 B/228 AVN 1 CAV; Callsigns: PLAY-TEX/LONGHORN/PACHYDERM.**

Larry E. Cooper died on July 6, 2023 in Wilmington North Carolina. Larry served his country as a member of the U.S. Army for more than 35 years. He initially served as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, from 1958-1960.

He left the service in 1975. He earned a degree in business from Methodist College graduating magna cum laude in 1976. After joining the North Carolina National Guard, he took command of the armory in Wilmington from 1978 to 1982.

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

# TAPS

Cully, Raymond J. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 70-46; RVN: 71 A/2/17 CAV 101 ABN, 72 B/2/17 CAV 101 ABN; Callsign: BANSHEE 40.



Eikenberry, Tod A. USMC; Flight Class: 60; RVN: 62-63 HMM-162, 68-69 VMO-6; Callsign: SEAWORTHY.

Tod was born April 12, 1938 in IN and died May 7, 2017 in Pensacola, FL. No other information provided.

Eliot, Jay L. USA; Flight Classes: 68-511, 68-17; RVN: 68-69 190 AHC; Callsign: SPARTAN.

Jay Elliot died at home on December 25, 2023. He was born on January 31, 1944. Jay graduated from Fresno State with a BS in Business Administration. His civilian career was as the CEO of the Elliot Corporation of Fort Worth, TX.

Jay was a past president (1988) of the VHPA.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Joe.

Gladysz, Jerome S. USA; Flight Class: 66-4; RVN: 66-67 A/229 AVN 1 CAV; DFC; Callsigns: SERPENT / HACKSAW.



Jerome "Jerry" Gladysz passed away, surrounded by family, on December 22, 2023. Jerry was born in Cleveland, OH in September, 1942. Jerry graduated from John Carroll University in Cleveland.

Jerry had a commendable career in marketing and public relations and started his company, Market Relations, in 1992. He also was passionate about learning and he received his Executive MBA from Texas Christian University in 2005. His true passion had to be writing. He published 3 books – two for Taos Ski Valley and his final book called Dying to Fly was published in 2020.



\*Dubuisson, William D. Jr. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Classes: 67-5, 67-3; RVN: 67-68 162 AHC, 69-70 196 ASHC; Callsigns: COPPERHEAD 41 / FLIPPER.



Our beloved father Major William (Bill) Doak Dubuisson Jr. passed away peacefully at home on June 26 2023 at the age of 77. He was born in Mobile, AL on September 20, 1945 and grew up in Ocean Springs, MS. He later attended The University of Southern Mississippi where he earned a Master's Degree in Psychology in 1976.

Bill was an alcoholic and it had been over 49 years since his last drink.

Bill lived his life as a family man, a soldier, a counselor, a sponsor, a teacher, and a friend.

\*Jarrett, Richard S. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 57-12; RVN: 64-65 UTT, 65 68 AHC, 65 1/1 CAV 23 INF, 67-68 AH-1G NETT; SS, PH; Callsigns: PLAYBOY 16 / SABRE 3 / STRIKER 6.



Richard "Dick" S. Jarrett, passed away on July 13, 2023. He was born on April 8, 1932. He graduated from Michigan State.

Following his exemplary military service, Dick transitioned to a new chapter in his professional life, joining Bell Helicopter. Utilizing his extensive experience and expertise, he excelled in the field of international marketing, contributing significantly to the company's success. Dick's passion for aviation continued to shine as he leveraged his knowledge to foster positive relationships across the globe.

He is survived by his loving wife, Betsy.

\*Kennebec, John E. USA; Flight Class: 58-1; RVN: 65-66 178 ASHC, 66-67 B/228 AVN 1 CAV, 68-69 610 TC CO, 69 179 AHC; Callsigns: BOXCAR / PANTHER / SHRIMP BOAT.



John Kennebec was born in 1930 in Wabasha, WI, and passed in Redmond, WA in 2023 after many years of retirement in the Ozarks. No other information provided.

\*Litton, Joseph P. Jr. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 71-24; RVN: 66-67 INFANTRY, 71-72 F/4; DFC, PH, BS; Callsign: CENTAUR 26.



On the morning of March 2, 2024, Joseph Paul Litton, known affectionately in his childhood as Paul and throughout his career as Joe, passed peacefully at the age of 80. Born on May 27, 1943, in Atlanta, GA, he grew up in Raleigh, NC before enlisting in the military at the age of 17.

# TAPS

After retiring from the military, he embarked on a successful 15-year career as Operations and Human Resource Manager at The Hartford, retiring in 2002. He also received his BS in Business Administration and MA in Public Administration.

He is survived by his loving wife, Rosa "Linda" Litton.

**\*Lucking, James R. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class 67-19; RVN: 67-68 121 AHC; 70-71 478 HHC; DFC, LOM, MSM; Call Signs: Tiger / Viking 21 / Hurricane 21.**



James Richard Lucking passed away in Frisco, TX on July 28, 2023. He was born in Hastings, Minnesota on October 17, 1941. Jim enlisted in the United States Army on October 21, 1958 at 17 years old and served as an enlisted man until November of 1966 achieving the rank of Sargent. In October of 1967, Jim went to Warrant Officer Helicopter Flight School and was promoted to Warrant Officer.

He is survived by his wife and best friend, Elizabeth.

**Mahalich, Norman USMC; Flight Class: 62; RVN: 65-66 VMO-2, 67-68 VMGR-352; Callsign: DEAD LOCK.**

Norman Mahalich, born on May 6, 1942, died on January 15, 2021. No other information provided.

**Marchbaks, Keith L. USA; Flight Classes: 69-11, 69-7; RVN: 69-70 155 AHC; Callsign: FALCON 3.**



Keith L. Marchbanks, age 65, passed away peacefully at his home in Mesquite, Nevada on October 22, 2014. He was born January 19, 1949 in Montrose CO. Keith grew up in Eureka, Montana where he graduated from L.C.H.S. in 1967.

Following his release from the Army, he worked for Bell Helicopter from 1973 to

1977, after which he received his Undergraduate Degree in Accounting. He then re-enlisted in the US Navy where he had a distinguished career while earning his Master's Degree in Defense Finance.

He is survived by his wife Ruth.

**McCabe, Charles H. USA; Flight Classes: 68-509, 68-13 RVN: 69-70 B/2/17 CAV 101 ABN.**

Charles Henry McCabe, Jr., age 76, of Vail, Arizona passed away on Friday, January 20, 2023. Charles was born in Pittsburgh, PA. No other information provided.

**\*McCain, Dwight A. USA, CPT Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-12, 68-18; RVN: 68-69 45 MED CO; PH: Callsign: DUSTOFF 12.**



Dwight Allan McCain left this world suddenly on January 18th, 2023. We know he is in Heaven skiing the clouds and paddling the wind currents. He was born in Wenatchee WA in 1944. Dwight Graduated from WSU in Army ROTC. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Medical Service Corp.

After his military service came to an end, he and his wife moved to Bellingham to attend school and work. The family moved to Longview, WA where Dwight worked in the schools as an elementary counselor. It was from Longview in 1977 he realized his ambition to bike ride across the country, twice, then headed over to bike across Europe where he enjoyed meeting and talking to strangers, learning about the world and exploring.

A passionate outdoors man, Dwight was active in any number of community events, volunteer organizations and a tree pruner for the city. He was instrumental with helping maintain the 4th of July X-country ski area with the Panhandle Nordic Club, President of the Cd'A Canoe and Kayak Club,

and he was part of the Kayak Support team for the swimmers of Ironman since the beginning, the Cd'A Crossing and Race the river, where he rescued a swimmer having a heart attack from drowning. He belonged to the Retired Ramsey Teachers group, fondly known as RnR.

He leaves behind his wife, Marty McCain.

**Middendorf, Richard J. USA; Flight Class: 70-12; RVN: 71-72 C/7/17 CAV, 72 H/10 CAV.**

Richard "Rich" J. Middendorf (82) passed away on February 13th 2024 in St, Charles MO, surrounded by his loving family. Richard was born on August 2nd 1941 in Pittsburgh, VA.

During his Vietnam tour, he was a P.O.W. twice, and had the helicopter that he flew shot down five times. He was very active at his local American Legion Post 312, holding positions as Chaplain and Commander during his membership, and helped organize monthly Spaghetti Dinners, Friday Night Bingo, which he led at the Veteran's Home. Rich was also a member at the VFW 4219 in Orchard Farm, MO. He also participated and spoke at March to the Arch for several years.

Somehow he made time to donate 13 gallons of blood to The American Red Cross over his lifetime, an accomplishment he was extremely proud of!

**\*Miles, John D. USA; Flight Classes: 68-43, 68-523; RVN: 69-70 92 AHC; Callsigns: STALLION 19, SIDE-KICK 11.**



John David Miles, 76, died on February 22, 2024, at Ogeechee Area Hospice in Statesboro, GA. He was born on August 15, 1947, in Savannah, GA. He graduated from Metter High School in 1965 and attended South Georgia College in Douglas before volunteering for service in the

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U.S. Army. He later earned a degree from Georgia Southern University.

Following his military service, he joined Angus Newton as a partner in Metter Ford Company and later became proprietor of the dealership. He was especially active in civic affairs. He served as the mayor of Metter and represented Candler County and parts of adjoining counties in the House of Representatives of the Georgia General Assembly. He also served as state president of the Jaycees of Georgia. In retirement, he became an active member of the Register Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon and choir member.

**\*Morowczynski, Stephen USA, CW4  
Ret.; Flight Class: 69-15; RVN: 69-70 92  
AHC; BS; Callsign: STALLION 10.**

Stephen Morowczynski died on January 11, 2024. He was born on February 9, 1949. He graduated from University of Illinois College of Pharmacy, class of 1976. Retired after working 41 years as a pharmacist.

Vietnam Veteran helicopter pilot with 37 years of distinguished military service.

He is survived by Lynda Morowczynski (nee Columbare).

**\*Scofield, Gary L. USA;  
Flight Class: 66-21; RVN: 67  
498 MED CO; Callsign:  
DUSTOFF 47.**



Gary Lee Scofield, 79, of West Fargo, N.D., died on February 10, 2024, at the Fargo VA Hospital. No other information provided.

**\*Scott, David I., USA/USCG CDR  
Ret.; Flight class 63-3;  
RVN: 65-66 197 AHC;  
DFC (OLC), BS, PH;  
Callsign: DRAGON 31.**



David Scott passed away January 13, 2023. David was born May 18, 1937 in Newton IA. He joined the Army after

completing ROTC while attending Iowa State University, Ames IA. When he completed his 12 months in country, he returned to be an instructor at the Army Aviation School, Ft. Wolters TX. While he was instructing, he was called in and was promised another tour in Viet Nam within 12-18 months.

He then decided he had a family and did not want to go back to Viet Nam. David transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard and completed another 16 years as a rescue pilot. He had wonderful assignments in MI, AK, MA, and finally retired in New Orleans, LA in 1983. While in the USCG David received 2 DFCs for search and rescue missions in MA and LA. He completed 22 wonderful years flying.

In 1994, David and his wife moved to McGregor IA and opened a Bed and Breakfast and ran it for 10 years.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Carolyn.

**Skiba, Robert A. USA;  
Flight Class: 67-9; RVN:  
67-68 117 AHC; DFC, BS;  
Callsign: WARLORD 13.**



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Robert (Bob) A. Skiba on January 17 in New Port Richey Florida. He departed surrounded by his loving family and was comforted by his devoted wife Carolyn.

Bob's legacy extends beyond his 36-year military service; he was well versed in multimedia and had studied marketing at University of Massachusetts where he earned his MBA. Bob studied theology and for a time in the late 1970s – early 1980s he was the Pastor of Emanuel Baptist Church of West Springfield. God, Family and Country was his heart. Bob continued to serve the Lord as a deacon, member of the choir and teacher at the former Tabernacle Baptist Church now LifePoint Church in Chicopee.

**\*Smith, Larry D. USA, LTC  
Ret.; Flight Class 68-4; RVN:  
69-70 238 AWC; Callsign:  
GUNRUNNER 36.**

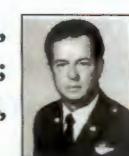


Larry Smith died on January 9, 2024. He was born December 26, 1944 in Milan MO.

He was a long-time active member and Sunday school teacher at the First Baptist Church of Stone Mountain GA.

He is survived by his loving wife of 56 years, Phyllis.

**Sutton, Stephen L. USAF,  
COL Ret.; Flight Class: 56-U;  
RVN: 72 37 ARRS; LM, BS,  
DMS; Callsign: Jolly 1.**



Stephen Lee Sutton passed away peacefully on January 9, 2024, at age 92 at his home in Charlottesville VA. He was born on January 5, 1932, in Hollywood CA.

Steve received his undergraduate and master's degrees from UCLA and served as Associate Professor in the ROTC program. Upon graduation, he joined the United States Air Force, serving for the next 29 years.

Transitioning to the private sector, Steve then spent 24 years as Director of Legislative Affairs for Northrup Grumman Corporation in Washington DC. He was named "Lobbyist of the Year" by a Capitol Hill consulting group. He also served on the Board of the non-profit Green Door, which helped people with mental illness work and live independently.

**Szczepanski, Richard D. USA; Flight  
Class: 64-3; RVN: 64-65 145 AVN BN;  
DFC.**

Richard Daniel Szczepanski, a resident of Destin Florida and formerly of Ozark, died early Monday morning, February 5, 2024. He was 83 years old. Richard was born on May 21, 1940 in Buffalo NY.

Following his tour of duty in Vietnam, Dick joined the United States Army Test

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Board at Ft. Rucker Alabama as a test pilot. In 1966 he set the world speed record for closed circuit course in a Hughes OH-6 helicopter earning him the Distinguished Flying Cross. After his honorable discharge from the Army, Dick enrolled at Auburn University and graduated in 1970 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Throughout his career, Dick held positions focused on ordnance research and development, and testing beginning with the United States Air Force Armament Lab at Eglin AFB. He joined Orlando Technology, Inc. in 1979 where he was in charge of designing and building their Rock Hill Test Range in DeFuniak Springs FL. Dick retired in 2010 as Director of Engineering with General Dynamics in Niceville Florida. Dick was a talented and dedicated engineer.

He is survived by his loving wife of 56 years, Mary.

**Taylor, Larry L. USA; Flight Class: 67-10; RVN: 67-68 D/1/4 CAV 1 INF Callsign: MUSTANG 6.**

Larry Taylor, a member whose heroism in command of a team of helicopter gunships under heavy fire during a nighttime patrol team evacuation in 1968 earned him the Medal of Honor died January 28 at his home in Signal Mountain TN. He was 81.

Taylor, who left the Army as a captain in 1970, received the military's highest valor award from President Joe Biden in September 2023, the culmination of a six-year effort by advocates and lawmakers, including MOAA's Chattanooga Chapter, to upgrade his Silver Star. MOAA chapter and national officials attended the White House ceremony alongside Taylor's family members, DoD and VA leadership.

**\*Torbert, James R. USA; Flight Classes: 68-8, 68-10; RVN: 68-69 281 AHC; Callsigns: INTRUDER / MOM.**



James Robert "Jim" Torbert of Marietta Georgia, passed away peacefully on February 17, 2024 when his heart was done fighting. This was just one day after celebrating his 80th birthday with his family. Jim was born in St. Louis MO.

During college, he joined the ROTC and learned to fly. Upon his graduation from TCU, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army.

After the Army, Jim moved back to St. Louis MO and became Director of Admissions at Maryville University. Jim's job with Northern Telecom moved the family to Atlanta Georgia. After his early retirement, Jim enjoyed his post-retirement careers at both Campbell Stone Senior Apartments and Trader Joe's in Sandy Springs.

The family joined Sandy Springs Christian Church, where Jim was a member and leader for over 30 years. He volunteered his time, talent, and love in many ways: preparing and serving countless meals in the church kitchen, cooking for many Mexico mission trips, supporting veterans' organizations and the USO, and speaking in schools about his experience in Vietnam.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Marilyn.

**\*Vaught, Larry G. USA, Ret.; Flight Class: 70-4; RVN: 67-68 E/17 CAV 173 ABN, 71-72 A/2/17 CAV 101 ABN; BS; Callsign: ASSAULT 46.**



Larry Gifford Vaught passed away August 27, 2023, at the age of 83, after an extended hospitalization and rehabilitation, caused by multiple health issues. He leaves behind his loving wife Cristina (Cres) Vaught.

He hung up his Cav spurs after 20 years in the Army and transitioned to the Federal Civil Service, training senior leadership

within Department of Housing and Urban Development, on leadership. Like he did with his family and his work colleagues, he was always instructing and training and bringing up the next generation of leaders for the United States of America.

Larry grew up in Kansas City, MO and outside of Saint Louis MO. He dropped out of the University of Missouri to work at General Motors, where he was one of the youngest managers. Work at GM didn't agree with him, and he joined the Army. Initially enlisted, he soon attended officer candidate school.

In 1985 after his army career, Larry moved home to Kansas City, MO and became a Federal Civil Servant in HUD. He spent 20 years in HUD as an Academy Training Officer, retiring in 2005.

**Whisonant, Louis R. USA; Flight Classes: 68-509, 68-15; RVN: 68-69 68 AHC; Callsign: TOP TIGER 33.**



Louis Whisonant, age 77, passed away January 8, 2024. He is survived by his wife Debra. No other information provided.

**\*Zorn, Burl A. USA COL Ret.; Flight Class: 61-1RVN: 63-64 DELTA AVN BN, 67-68 273 HHC; BS, MSM, ACM (3OLC); Callsigns: DELTA / SKYCRANE.**



Burl A. Zorn passed away February 23, 2024, in Melbourne FL. He was born in Minneapolis MN in 1936. He joined the Army through the ROTC program in 1959. He continued with his military service, obtaining the rank of COL. Burl did a recording couple of years ago, with the Library of Congress, about his military career:

[www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.120138/](http://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.120138/)

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## OBITUARY SUBMISSIONS

Individuals wishing to supply a notice of death and/or information such as online link(s) may do so by email to [aviator@vhpa.org](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.

**Barbec, Ellis USA; RVN: 63 93 TC CO, 63 121 AVN CO, 66-67 178 ASHC;** passed in April 2019 in Cameron, NC.

**Barton, Eugene J. Jr. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 69-46** of Cameron, NC passed away on February 6, 2024.

**Blake, Thomas D. USMC / USA Ret;** died on February 20, 2024.

**Carty, Donald L. USAF COL Ret.; RVN: 69-70 40 ARRS** passed away peacefully on 7 March 2024 in Seattle, WA; SS, DFC (OLC).

**Costello, John P. USN CPT Ret.; RVN: 66-67 HS-8; SS;** passed away March 6, 2024.

**Denney, Robert C. Jr. USA; Flight Class: 67-13; RVN: 48 AHC;** died on March 3, 2024.

**Doane, Robert USN; RVN: 68 HC-1, 68-70 HC-7; MSM (STAR), NCM (OLC);** died on February 5, 2024.

**Hardy, Lloyd M. USA; Flight Class: 62-7RVN: 63 A FLT 19 TC CO, 63 611 TC CO;** died on January 18, 2024.

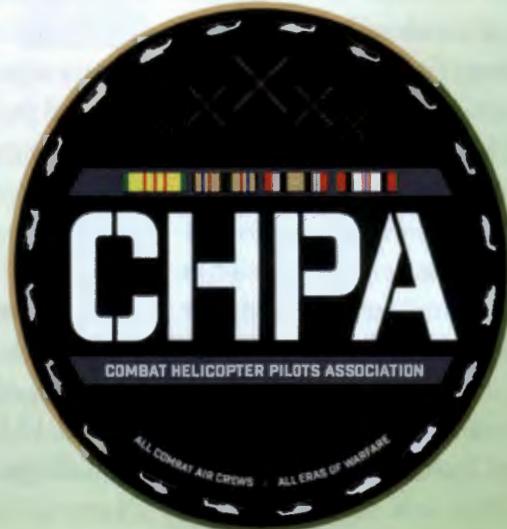
**Miller, Daniel J. USA; Flight Classes: 68-514, 68-24; RVN: 69-70 281 AHC; SS (OLC), DFC;** died on May 27, 2022.

**Quattlebaum, Charles W. USA; RVN: 69 92 AHC;** died on September 26, 1996.

**Trapp, Charles E. Jr. USAF COL Ret.; RVN: 69-70 38 ARRS;** died on January 8, 2024.



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