



# THE **VHPPA** NEWSLETTER

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

Winter 1991 Vol. 8 No. 3



M0296 02/91

*Lift Platoon 68th Top Tigers Rubber Plantations Near Xuan Loc 1970*

*Photo by J. Maxwell*

# President's Roll Call

In the not too distant future you will receive a questionnaire from the VHPA. The members of the Executive Council want your input on a number of topics of importance to the Association. It will be sent to you in the most cost conscious manner, which as of this date has not been determined.

This will be the first attempt to get all members' views on issues that will directly affect the well being of the VHPA, not just those that attend the business meetings at the Annual Reunions.

I strongly encourage each of you to take the time to fill out this questionnaire when it arrives and return it to the VHPA. This is your organization and the Executive Council wants to act in accordance with the views of the VHPA membership.

By now you should all have a copy of the 1990 VHPA Directory and I think you will agree that once again our Directory Committee has gone above and beyond the call of duty. I sincerely doubt that any Vietnam Veterans organization has a complete listing of membership information, unit history, and pertinent data as the VHPA. The Committee deserves a note of thanks from all members.

As stated in the front of the Directory, no one has the right to use the membership information in the VHPA Directory for any business purpose. This organization is strictly a fraternal organization and has grown as big as it has as fast as it has because of a commitment made early on to keep it strictly social. If any member, particularly those new members whose names and addresses appear for the first time in this Directory, receives any unsolicited mailing that can be traced back to the unauthorized use of the VHPA Directory, the VHPA Executive Council wants to know about it. A VHPA member using the mailing list for personal gain or who gives our mailing list to anyone unauthorized to have it may, by the Constitution and Bylaws of the VHPA, have their membership in the VHPA revoked.

On behalf of the Executive Council, I hope this Holiday Season was the best ever and may the New Year bring prosperity to you and all your loved ones.

*Greg Ross, President*

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## From the Editor

As newsletter editor I get to read your letters before anyone else and to experience the same emotions that I know you will feel when you read them. In this newsletter you will find one of the finest examples of dedication and devotion I have ever had the privilege to publish. The VHPA exists to provide a means of locating and communicating with "ole" stick buddies and friends from "Nam" as well as flight school. How fitting that after all these years we, the VHPA, would help in locating, on short notice, many of the PHOENIX Class of 1971. In what has become almost an unending ritual, the remains of a flight crew was finally laid to rest at our Nation's Memorial to Its' war dead, Arlington National Cemetery. I trust you will find Mike Sloniker's recount of this gathering of friends a tribute to our fellow man for not forgetting these members of the BROTHERHOOD OF THE WHIRLING BLADE. This devotion that stretches across rank, age, and time, is what we have left from a war that many of us would just as soon forget, until we get that call. It is a call that cannot be denied. It's like the call for a MEDIVAC or a "hot" extraction that makes the adrenalin flow. To BE THERE becomes the driving force and we WILL BE THERE. We helicopter pilots play it pretty close to the chest and hide our emotions most of the time. This is not one of those times. The Phoenix are one of the units that has made the effort to locate as many of their members as possible for just such a cause. It has paid off in spades. Let this be a lesson to all of us to locate as many friends as possible, you never know when you may need them!!

Mike McDonald  
Blue Ghost 42

### THE VHPA NEWSLETTER (ISSN 0896-3037)

Mike McDonald, Editor

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Newsletter is published five times yearly - Winter, Spring, Summer, Directory and Fall. Annual dues are \$20.00 or Life Membership for \$300.00. Yearly subscription for non-members is \$12.00. Published by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association - 7 West 7th Street, Suite 1990, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45202. Second-class postage paid at Cincinnati, Ohio.

The VHPA is a non-profit war veterans organization filed under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

THE VHPA NEWSLETTER





## INCOMING MAIL

### 5000 BROTHERS FOUND

I just heard about VHPA at the Kokomo, Indiana vets' reunion. I couldn't believe such an organization existed! You can imagine my surprise when I found out that it not only existed but that I was member #5158. The newsletter arrived yesterday and was devoured immediately. Not only for the articles but also, of course, looking for names of guys I flew with and went through flight school with.

One name in particular I have been looking for is CWO Henry Eskins. "Soul Brother #2" and I roomed together in flight school and the last time I saw him was sitting on a bench in Sydney, Australia. We both happened to be on R&R at the same time and ran into each other at the "Cross". If anybody knows what happened to Henry I would appreciate it if they would contact me.

Also, while I was at the Kokomo reunion, I stopped at the Viet Now booth. I asked them to look up what information they had on the wingman I lost on a cloudy night in Nam. The printout that the woman handed me was the complete after action report on the mission.

The impact of seeing in writing that mission of twenty years ago was incredible. For those of you who want to make sure that the information about buddies that are MIA's is correct, Viet Now is a good place to start.

Enough for now except to thank those who are responsible for VHPA. It's like finding 5000 brothers you didn't know existed. See you in Reno.

Robert Drury  
Blue Ghost 10  
Class 69-1

*Bob, it's also good to hear from you. I flew many flights with you as recovery ship with the "GHOST". Hope you find Henry and help someone else find us.*

### DAUGHTER'S SEARCH

As I get older I realize how important it is for me to know as much as I can about my dad, and since I never really got to know him, the chance to maybe make contact with some of his friends is really important to me. I am going to try to attend the convention in Reno next July and it would be so much fun to actually meet one of his friends. My dad was:

Cpt. Arnold Wayne Luke, Class 68-2  
Died Aug 12, 1968  
191 st A.H.C., Bearcat, RVN

If you have anything to share about my dad, please write.

Robin Leding

*Share your memories with Robin, meeting her in Reno would be even better. Only we have those special stories that she longs to hear.*

### CASPERS AND INFERNOS

Yet another mission with a purpose.

We request some assistance locating many lost comrades of Casper Aviation. Casper Platoon was attached to the 173rd Airborne Brigade and contained both lift and scout sections.

We would like to organize a reunion and construct a unit history of aviators who flew with Casper. We wish to link a mini-reunion with our annual VHPA function. All aviators,

from early deployment to deactivation, are welcome. If VHPA members can supply any assistance with our undertaking we will be grateful.

While appreciating our membership over the years we have managed to locate several friends. More are desired/required.

Please send any information to:

Randall J. Plese, Casper 19. 69-25,  
Casper 69-70

Kenneth A. Thomas, Inferno 555, 68-19,  
Casper 69-70

*Many units have filled in the blanks at the VHPA reunion. It seems the perfect time to gather and filter the truth from the...well you know.*

### MEMBERS OF THE 212TH AVIATION BATTALION WHERE ARE YOU?

I am looking for any type of information about personnel who served with the 212th Aviation Battalion from 1967 through 1971 (during the Vietnam War period). I am presently the unit historian of the 1st Battalion, 212th Aviation located at Lowe Army Heliport, Fort Rucker, AL.

I am particularly interested in any distinguished personnel who may have served with the unit in Vietnam as possible candidates for honorary selection as our Regimental Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major. If any personnel are still listed as MIA/POW, I would highly consider them as possible candidates. Also, I would appreciate any direct correspondence. I deeply appreciate, as well as the 1-212th Aviation, any action you can take to assist in this endeavor.

CW2 Shane G. Stonesifer

*We're always glad to help historians fill in the blanks. Bet the answers start rolling in.*

Continued on next page

## GHOST MEETS SAVIOR

I'd like to thank you for being a friend and remembering an incident in Vietnam that I was in. I don't know how you did it, but you finding the leader of the LRRP team that Wyatt and I inserted on Hill 1362 was something else.

In case you forgot all the details of the incident, I'll refresh your memory. One hot, humid May, 1969 afternoon we got a hurry-up call to insert a LRRP radio relay team on top of Hill 1362. We were supposed to hover on top of the hill and they were to climb down rope ladders. We had about 3/4 of a full fuel load, 4 crew members and I think 7 PAX's.

As we were hovering with 2 LRRP's on the rope ladders the compressor section blew. Wyatt, who was flying the H model 67-17158 kicked in right peddle and tried to simply crash it into the side of the mountain. Well, we found a huge tree to crash into. The tree caved in the front end of the aircraft. The instrument panel and console wrapped themselves around my left leg, breaking the knee cap and chewing up skin, muscle, ligament, etc. into a mess. On top of that the windshield shattered and a knife-like piece imbedded into my chest protector.

As my luck would have it my cockpit door would not open due to tree branches pinning it shut. I could not get out the other side due to the way the console had my leg pinned in. Wyatt of course simply opened his door walked away (he was always lucky).

Anyway, as I sat there pinned in and thought I might die (i.e., fire, starvation, VC bullet, etc.) the team leader of the LRRP's crawled over the tree branches and started to literally rip the door out of the aircraft with his bare hands. With him pulling and me pushing we finally had an opening wide enough at the top of the door for me to wriggle out of.

Once clear of the aircraft we made our way to the top of that damn hill. The LRRP's patched me up as best they could. We called in a Chinook to get us out. The CH-47 had to hover over us and lower his winch line and bring us up one by one as night was falling. They took us to the hospital at Chu-lai and I was later medevaced to Japan. The two LRRP's on the ropes were not hurt much, mainly cuts and bruises. The aircraft was not recoverable and blown in place.

Anyway that's pretty much the end of that story except that Mike McDonald found that

LRRP team leader in New Orleans and surprised the hell out of me when he introduced us. As we met and talked I was surprised at myself that all the emotions I felt were as strong and powerful as they were. I had spent a lot of years trying to downplay, minimize and forget all my experiences and the people I met. I even cried, which is something I rarely ever do. I guess what I'm trying to say is thank you to VHPA for the reunion that allowed me to release that emotion and specifically to Mike McDonald for remembering and being a friend. Anyway that's enough from me.

P.S. Mike, if you could only find that Chinook pilot then the story would be complete.

Richard Sebastian  
Blue Ghost  
F/8 Cav

*Who would believe that the cameraman from WWL TV New Orleans was once a LRRP and fate would take him to the VHPA reunion? Even more remarkable, he would be introduced to a Blue Ghost he helped rescue twenty-one years before. Being a part of that reunion was fantastic, now help me find that Chinook driver.*

## FIRSTS FOR THE 118TH

Just returned from a reunion in Atlanta of the "Thunderbirds" the 118th AVN Co. (AML)—at least that's how it was designated "in the old days". Among the "old timers" (1964/1965) were Sam McGlone, Gerry McKelvey, Mike Hurley, and Howard Bennett.

It was a real pleasure talking and swapping tales with 118'ers from later years. After seeing movies taken from those later years, it seems that at least one 118th tradition continued throughout the unit's time in Vietnam: the tightest formations, flown by the loosest pilots.

The 145th AVN BN, of which the 118th was a part, rightly claims to have been the first helicopter unit in Vietnam. As we old timers talked, we pieced together some of the "firsts" the 118th can claim:

**FIRST** to lead a night Combat Assault (December, 1964);

**FIRST** to lead a Combat Assault under gas masks (Operation Christmas Present, out of Tay Ninh, 1964);

Continued on the next page



### BLUE GHOST LIFT PLATOON MARCH 1969

(L-R, Back) Cpt. John Wyatt, 1Lt. Richard Sebastian, WO1 Mike "Duck" McDonald, WO1 Bryan "London" England, WO1 Archie Ott, WO1 Phil King, WO1 Chuck Madden, 1Lt. Eart Uptegraff-Enlisted Crew Members Names Not Available.

**FIRST** to lead a Combat Assault into an LZ after a B52 strike (SW of Phouc Vinh);

**FIRST** to fly an airborne troop drop;

**FIRST** to lead a Combat Assault with American ground troops (173rd BN out of Bien Hoa);

**FIRST** to lead a Combat Assault with Australian troops.

There may be some who dispute these claims, so I'm calling all 118'ers to come forward with more details. Speaking for myself, with old age memory is the second thing to go (I forgot the first).

Jack Clark  
[REDACTED]

*We all suffer the same loss with age...memory that is! These guys will set you straight though if your "firsts" are not.*

## A SURPRISE FOR LYLE

Members of the Dutchmasters, B Troop 7/1 Cav were in Longmont, Colorado July 27-29 for a very special reunion. Lois Borders worked months to stage the perfect surprise party for her husband, Lyle Borders.

When Lyle returned home from work Friday afternoon, he was speechless to find 15 of his fellow Vietnam aviators waiting in his living room.

Like many other Vietnam vets, Lyle had lost contact with all but a couple of his Dutchmaster stick buddies. Lois used the VHPA directory and Lyle's address book to locate as many as she could. Then came the hard part, convincing everyone to come for the weekend. In addition to hundreds of dollars in long distance calls, she mailed invitations with a neighbor's return address just to keep it a secret.

Lois even prepared the food in advance and stashed it in neighbors' refrigerators. Food and refreshments were fantastic for the entire weekend with meals separated by continuous snacks. It was every helicopter pilot's dream, eating followed by war stories and more eating. Lois knows how to throw a pilot's reunion party.

In June 1971, Borders was shot down and lost his right leg at the knee. With the help of an artificial leg, Lyle continued to fly helicopters for Mayo Aviation. Under contract with a

telephone company, Lyle makes super pinnacle landings at 12,000 feet in the Rocky Mountains.

In addition to Lyle Borders, the following answered the Dutchmaster roll call: Harold Bearden, M.D. (Doc) Beck, Fred Brisbois, John Butler, Terry Dorondo, George Downing, Robert Eaton, Mick Gutttau, Lynn Higgins, Eric Knauf, John Palmer, Bert Rhine, Jerry Shoemaker, and Ed Thorpe. A special surprise visit was made by George Shallcross (Blackhawk 6), the 7/1 Squadron commander in 1970/71. Also, checking in by video tape was Sam Wyman, and by phone Bill Finney, Tim Hines and a new One Star General Denny Kerr.

Most of the war stories centered on Lam Son 719, the Laotian incursion which began on February 8, 1971. The B Troop Dutchmasters were selected for the largest military operation in Vietnam. Moved from Vinh Long to Quang Tri, the Dutchmasters were known "from the Delta to the DMZ".

The Dutchmasters plan to meet again in force at the 1992 Atlanta VHPA convention. All Dutchmasters, especially 70/71 era, send addresses and phone numbers to Dutchmasters 4, (see address below). We'll keep you up to date on our reunion plans. If you were ever a Dutchmaster, we hope to see you in Reno in 1991, but please plan now to make Atlanta. See you there!

Harold Bearden , Dutchmaster 4  
[REDACTED]

Mick Gutttau, Dutchmaster 39  
[REDACTED]

*Again, the VHPA directory to the rescue. I'll bet it took two weeks to recover from all that food and "war stories".*

## THANK YOU

The saying goes better late than never. I hope this is true. When I was in high school my generation was talking about and going to a place called Vietnam. I didn't know where it was or what was going on. By the time I was beginning to understand, it was coming to an end. I had forgotten about it for years. Recently, I decided to let the Vietnam veterans know how much I appreciate what they did.

Thank You for being over there. I didn't know how to let all of you know, so I am sending a copy of this to all Vietnam organizations listed in the phone book. Please send copies to other Vietnam veteran organizations. Once again to all men and women that went to Vietnam a great big...

## THANK YOU !!

Best wishes to each and everyone of you. From someone who cares in Cincinnati.

*It always feels good to hear those words.*

Continued on the next page



*KNEELING L-R: Lyle Borders, Jerry Shoemaker, Lynn Higgins, George Downing, Bert Rhine, Doc Beck, Ed Thorpe .*

*STANDING L-R: Harold Bearden, Mick Gutttau, Fred Brisboise, John Butler, Eric Knauf, Terry Dorondo, John Palmer, Robert Eaton, George Shallcross*

## THE FINAL FLIGHT HOME OF THE PHOENIX

At 4:00 p.m. on October 2, 1990 I found out that there would be a funeral service at 10:00 a.m. on October 5th for a C/158 AHB "Phoenix" flight crew, shot down during LAMSON 719 east of LZ Sophia on March 5, 1971. "Auction Lead" and crew (CPT David Nelson AC, WO1 Ralph Moreira P, SP4 Joel Hatley CE, and SP4 Michael King G) were finally coming home.

I immediately called Phoenix members, Jack Glennon in Virginia Beach and Don Davis in Chicago. Their phone chain was so thorough that by 9:00 p.m. that night, I had been called by at least two Phoenix to tell me about the services. Never having been a Phoenix, I appreciated being included.

My first exposure to this tight knit group was at the 1989 Chicago VHPA reunion where, after registering in, I entered a darkened room that had a bunch of rowdy beer drinkers looking at Vietnam slides. I stayed a while and listened to the outbursts; "Who let him sit in the left side, the slide must be in backwards, we never let him be an AC!"

Then they got quiet and spoke reverently about pictures showing those who didn't return; I felt like I was imposing on something very personal and left. However, a strong impression had been made on me by a noisy lot who wore puke green T-shirts that had a squawking chicken, superimposed over a map of Vietnam.

I got another Phoenix lesson at 9:00 p.m. October 4th at the Sheraton Hotel in Arlington, VA. Within a 48 hour period after notification, Dean Grau and family from Minnesota, Ken Mayberry, from Nebraska with his high speed wheel chair, Bruce Updyke from Indiana, Chuck Doty from Maryland, Tom Marshall, from Florida, who was notified at 2 p.m. that day, Rick Scrugham, from Tennessee who was notified at 10:00 a.m. that day, Davis and Glennon were present, drinking light beer, eating chips and telling airline war stories. The next morning Tom Cullen from Connecticut arrived at the Chapel.

Their bond was so strong that nine pilots came at their own expense, from across the United States, to pay tribute to their returning comrades in arms.

The tone of the Chapel service was set immediately by Joel Hatley's mother who went to the altar, told us the exact hour and minute that Joel had been born, and paid tribute to the blessing of his short life by reading the attached poem, that she wrote. Although she stayed

steady throughout her reading of the poem, the emotion of the words gripped the filled chapel.

After the services, while others rode to the burial site, the Phoenix walked behind the horse drawn caisson, band, firing party and funeral detail soldiers from the 3rd Infantry "Old Guard", an Army ceremonial unit that is so visible at the Tombs of the Unknown Soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

At the end of the flag presentations to the families, Don Davis, who had once rescued Dave Nelson off of Ranger South in February 71, placed a pair of old shined jump boots next to the casket. Dave Nelson was fondly remembered as the only person who could walk around Camp Evans during the monsoons and not get mud on his highly shined boots.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Dave Nelson's younger sister came up to the group and tearfully asked, "Did you guys fly with my brother?" Don Davis responded that all these men flew with your brother, and there were no dry eyes in the group. She then showed us her cherished picture of her big brother and pictures of his boots. With that, the Phoenix left the cemetery to meet all the families at a local hotel after the funeral.

We learned and relearned that numerous agencies had been in touch with these families concerning the status of the remains of this crew. Some were official, some were not. Some sought the truth, some still do not. Some were sincere, some were out to serve their own interests. No one, officially or unofficially, had ever made an attempt to talk to the eyewitnesses.

In August 1971, when I was in the 174th AHC, the "Dolphins and the Sharks", I obtained a copy of a tape made by Don Peterson, Dolphin 16, in Laos on March 5, 1971, which had one of Dave Nelson's last radio transmissions on it. Dave was being asked by Red Dragon 09 the status of his approach into LZ Sophia. Dave calmly responds, on my tape, that he broke off his approach, his aircraft was hit and had been leaking fuel but wasn't now, there were wounded on board, the gunner was hit in the head he was going to try to make it back to Kilo Sierra (Khe Sahn).

Other Phoenix remember a similar call on the internal Phoenix frequency, but that Dave was going to try to get to, much closer, Aloui. UH-1H #67-17341 tried valiantly to get her crew home, but she couldn't and exploded at altitude east of LZ Liz. Now, for me, many unknowns I heard after listening to the tape for 19 years had been answered.

There is no answer to a family member's question, "How come the government did not tell me about you guys?" Words will not describe the expression of sadness and relief one sees in a family member's face when an eyewitness tearfully recounts the aircraft exploding like the "Challenger" and the family knows the possibility of their loved one being an unreturned POW is very remote.

Don Davis, in a letter to me, was very accurate when he wrote: "The warmth and gratitude extended by the families to the Phoenix pilots was phenomenal. What became very obvious was that all the relatives, without exception, wanted to know more about their loved one's last days and particularly last minutes.

I guess the Army notification system was never really able to satisfy the families' questions about how and why—after all these years. The families drew great comfort in being able to talk with the people that were there. The families treated all of us with the love they would have bestowed upon their lost sons and brothers, and as a result, I departed with a sense of shame for not having reached out to these people sooner.

We must mention this to all the VHPA membership for that specific reason. If there are members of their units who were killed or missing and no one has ever contacted the families, to the best of their knowledge, they ought to attempt to do so. If they are turned away, so be it. But if what happened at Arlington is indicative of other families, they will be warmly received. We owe it to the families, and ourselves to at least make the effort. The families need to share the experience, know what we know, and be made aware of the fact that they are not the only ones who remember."

Last year, I got access to some files in the National Archives and in the Pentagon, that allowed me to identify the units and aircraft tail numbers of some of the almost 2200 KIA/MIA listed in the VHPA directory. I sent my information, as recommended in the VHPA directory, to Gary Roush, who updated the data base. Gary thinks we updated 1,000 names.

We must update this information and remove the "Need to Verify" as the first step in this process, so that we can be accurate if we are going to reach out to a family. We owe it to them. It does no good for the families to get their only information from the media and special interest groups who have clearly demonstrated to me absolutely no sensitivity to the family's tremendous loss.

We must take care of our own.

Mike Sloniker, Phoenix 1H

### A PICTURE, A FLAG AND A GOLD STAR PIN

In Memory of  
SP4 Joel C. Hatley

That night I kissed my son Goodbye, and watched his plane soar to the sky. Little did I know as he held my hand, that soon he'd lie in some strange land. I still can see his smiling face, and feel his arms in last embrace. His quiet voice and tender touch, his loving ways all meant so much. He said, "Mother please don't cry tonight". I said, "I won't", I promised with throat so tight. I held him close; I loved him so, and it hurt so much to see him go. I'll be alright and I luv ya'll, were his last words going down the hall. He waved goodbye going to the plane, and suddenly I felt so strange. I though-he's going where he's never been, tho "Nam was his destination again. I didn't know why—couldn't understand—but "heaven" flashed through my mind then. I felt we had really said goodbye, and he truly was gone to the sky. I felt strange peace and calm within, and I felt I'd never see him again. I watched his plane go out of sight, as he was lost in the still, dark night. I love my son. Why must he go? My heart cried out, now it ached

so. He went to "Nam, but I soon learned, he really was lost, never to return.

**MISSING IN ACTION...the telegram read, but inside I knew our Joel was dead. He'd been shot down, the helicopter lost...Dear Lord! My son! Oh, what a cost! And then we wait and wait and pray, and hope we'll hear that he's OK. The time was short, tho it seemed long. The grief was great but love was strong. Each day seemed like a million years, as time was washed away with tears. At last word came, and what I knew within my heart, was finally true. KILLED IN ACTION...this telegram read, crashed in flames...no survivors it said. KILLED...NOT MISSING NOW, it read, My Joel! My Joel! Our Joel was dead! Oh Lord! Oh Lord! Oh no, no please! And then I fell on bended knee. Dear God! I cried in unbelief, my heart exploded then in grief. The tears then like a river did flow; our Joel! Oh Lord! What a way to go!**

**In crushed remembrance of his love, I bowed my head to God above; to thank Him for that Life so sweet, and prayed someday again we'd meet. I felt his hand and tender touch, his last goodbye all meant so much. Just then I saw his face, his smile, and my heart raced across the miles. To join his heart in that last breath, to share his fate, so share his death. To die with him in burning flames, to leave with me only his name. There's no remains, no grave to be, nothing except sweet memories. A picture of him is left instead, and a folded flag to show he's dead. Always I'll look at the smiling face, of the picture**

**I hold here in his place. Always I'll hold in grief and strife, this flag as if it were my life. Always a Gold Star Pin I'll wear, in memory of a life so sweet and fair. A Picture, A Flag, and a Gold Star Pin, I'll always hold in the place of him.**

Written by  
Ms. Evelyn Laton Hatley

**The crew of Huey 67-17341, "Auction Lead" are at rest in Arlington National Cemetery, area 34, plot 4439. Amen.**

## ANOTHER CREW COMES HOME

Greetings!

Thought this might be of interest. Keith Brandt was an AH-1 SIP with 101st AVN BN. He was shot down during Lan Son 719 over Laos. The unit was stationed at Hue Phu Bi. I know Keith in his first tour with "Soc Trang Tiger" (121st AHC) who he flew for the arrived platoon "Vikings")

I saw Keith on the ramp at Hue Plau Bai the day he was lost. He was a great pilot and a good guy to fight a war with!

Jerry Daly *Associated Press July 19, 1990*

Remains of Two U.S. Soldiers Killed in Laos Are Identified

The remains of two U.S. Army soldiers killed in an aircraft crash in southern Laos during the Vietnam War have been identified, the Defense Department has announced. The remains, found during a joint U.S. Laotian excavation effort last January, were to be sent for final interment from Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii this week with full military honors, the Pentagon said.

The Pentagon identified the remains as those of Keith A. Brandt, an Army captain from

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**CAISSON BEARING: THE REMAINS OF Captain Keith Brandt and 1st Lt. Alan Boffman in Single Casket. Arlington National Cemetery. Area 34, Plot 4441. Photo by Jerry Daly**

**Help the VHPA.  
Get a Friend  
to Join  
Today!**

Bellingham, Wash., and Alan B. Boffman, an Army first lieutenant, of Norfolk. Brandt was 30 at the time of the fatal crash on March 18, 1971; Boffman was 24.

*Thanks for the information about the return of this crew, I'm sure their friends are relieved to know they have finally come home.*

## BLOCK OF TIME

As I sat and enjoyed my morning coffee and newspaper on Sunday, October 21, 1990, I came across a photo of the burial of two KIA's from Laos. The title at the top of the photo read "Long-Awaited Farewell". Boy, was that an understatement! It really hit home as I read the caption below the photo. "The remains of the two soldiers—Capt. Keith Brandt, of Bellingham, WA and LT. Alan Boffman, of Norfolk, VA—were buried in a single coffin, Friday, at Arlington National Cemetery, in Virginia. The remains were returned recently from Laos".

Keith was a good friend of mine and fellow Gun Team Leader. We were Cobra pilots with "D" Co. 101st AVN. BN 101st ABN Div., out of Phu Bai, Call Sign "Hawk", SOI Call Sign for Operation Lom Son 719 was "Music".

On 18 March 71, we were involved in extracting ARVN's from LAOS. I want to remember being about 35-40 miles inside Laos from Khe Sahn, but 20 years is a long time, it may have been less. As always seemed to be the case, the ARVN's were in "deep --" and wanted out yesterday! It was a real mess out there and the slicks we were escorting couldn't find the marker panel for the LZ and smoke was out of the questions. After several minutes of searching, Keith finally spotted the panel and decided to overfly it to give the slicks a solid mark. He went in, and I covered him. Seems this time the ARVN's were telling the truth, because, as we approached the area, all hell broke loose.

Before I knew what happened, I was faced with a "Master Caution", coupled with 90 degree gear box chip light and Keith was on fire, hydraulics out. That's the last I ever saw or heard from him. My front seat saw him go in aflame and I knew it was the end for Keith and Alan.

We managed to get to an ARVN OP. I think it was LZ Brown, but I'm not sure. We were lifted out sometime later. Keith and Alan were listed KIA 03/18/71.

As a matter of interest, the AC that pulled me out contacted me 14 October 1989, Kingsmen 11, Gerry Morgan, a fellow member of VHPA.

I've been watching TV and reading newspapers for the last 20 years with the hope of someday seeing that Keith's remains would be put to rest in the "real world". Well, it seems that day has finally arrived. He and his front seat, Alan, were interned at Arlington National Cemetery, Friday October 19, 1990, nineteen years, seven months, and one day, after that Mission so suddenly took them, forever, from those who knew and loved them.

I respectfully request that the "Body Never Returned" designation be removed from their listing prior to the next publication of the Directory, as they are now home.

I've changed a lot since those days, long ago in Vietnam, as we all have, but I feel a closeness to the memories that will never be forgotten.

I'm still an active member of the U.S. Army Reserves, assigned to Co. "A" 2/123 AVN RGT. St. Paul, MN. We're an attack BN. Part of the 4th ID., Alaska.

I'm a Unit Trainer in the AH-1F Cobra, the latest evolution of the AH-1G we flew in Nam. The big difference being all the "G" whiz electronics we used to dream about all those years ago. Helmut Sub Sight System, Rocket Management System, Heads Up Display, Telescopic Sight Unit, Tow Missiles, etc. Anyone familiar with the aircraft knows the list seems endless!

This Wednesday, when I climb in my Cobra, the memories I have of Keith will be more completely knowing that he was now returned to the "real world" with the rest of us. And, that unlike him, we are so fortunate to have experienced, and ultimately survived, that incredible "block of time" in our lives.

P.S. My compliments to Lane Heath for his accomplishment in CW2. Truly, the finest book on the Vietnam War I've read to date. It's the same war I remember.

Jack Hauck  
Hawk 38  
Apr. '70-Apr. '71

*It is evident that these men are gone but not forgotten. Thanks for detailing the loss of Keith and Alan.*

## FRIENDS

This is to inform you and members of VHPA of the death of our loving Son and Brother Larry D. Dirks who was killed August 15, 1990 while crop dusting cotton near Lubbock, Texas. The spray plane he was piloting crashed and burned in a cotton field North of Lubbock Airport. No

ruling as to cause of the crash has been issued at this time by FAA. Larry had been crop dusting in the Amarillo, Pampa, Lubbock, Texas area since 1985. He also was engaged in farming and ranching in the Texas Panhandle for several years.

He served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam from February 1970 to February 1971 with Co. B. 227th Helicopter Assault BN, 1st Air Cavalry Div., Phouc Vihn, Vietnam. He was also a member of the US Army Active Reserve, 300th Aviation Co., Oak Grove Airport, Ft. Worth, Texas, in 1972-73 while attending college. In 1978-79 he served as a volunteer helicopter pilot for the Amarillo, Texas Rescue Helicopter in this area.

Our special thanks to some of his Vietnam Veteran Pilots who flew with him and who contacted us during this time of sorrow. And to each of you who knew and loved him but were not informed of his death. To Laylor Jordan for being here with us, to Randy Clark, Herman Leubker, Don Griffith and Richard Garnas for the words of comfort and your prayers and thoughts. May God Bless each one of you who knew and loved him.

Larry never forgot or stopped loving and caring for those of you he served with and kept in contact with over the years. He was a real true friend, a very loving and sharing person to people of all ages and walks of life, he often talked to us about his friends in flight training at Ft. Wolters, Texas and Ft. Rucker, Alabama about his experience in Nam and loved to keep in contact with all you dear friends over the years. To each of you may we again say thank you or everything you did for him and for us. May God bless you.

Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Dicks  
Jamie Dicks (Sister)  
P.O. Box 26  
Canyon, Texas 79015

P.S. Larry was laid to rest August 28, 1990 at Rose Hill Cemetary, Julia, Texas

*Thank you for informing us of the loss of your son and our friend.*

## PIGFEST

Please find enclosed a copy of an Army Times cartoon (based on a TRUE incident, only the ranks have been changed to protect the guilty.) We, the former members of the third platoon, 120th AHC, 1st AVN BDE - better known to the civilized world as the

Razorback Armed Helicopter Platoon-recently had our first ever reunion. Small, but great fun! Help us out by publishing these two addresses so we can make our next "Pigfest" even better. We have no dues in our association.

Steven Bookout  
Razorback '33

Lee Moody  
Razorback '30

P.S. We need to enforce Rule #7: No "Deans" allowed!

*Yes sir-they're Razorbacks!!! I hope you "Pigs" can reuuuun with us in Reno.*



"..... Listen, Lieutenant, I can call them pigs and they can call themselves pigs, but to you damn staff-types they're razorbacks, okay?"

## RVN MAP

The large map of South Vietnam at the reunion in New Orleans will appear again in 1991 at the Reno reunion. Many people asked how one could obtain such a map. The map in 1:5000,000 scale and can be purchased from most good map dealers. In specific you'll need 6 sections of the JOG, Tactical Pilot Charts (TPC). These include: ONC (TPC) K-10A, K-10B, K-10C, K-10D, J-11C and J-11D. When carefully assembled they will result in a map larger than four feet wide by eight feet long which will include parts of Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. Other than the time spent looking at the map, it can be assembled in a very short period of time. A large space is needed and at least one extra pair of hands are necessary. We used rubber cement to glue the sections together but before starting, all cuts should be made and the map pieced together to ensure the proper overlaps are what you want (the Nha Trang area can be tricky). We like it and hope you enjoy looking at it and making notes on the plastic cover of our map of Vietnam.

Maps of Vietnam in other scales are difficult to obtain as the government refused to allow distribution of any maps upon their claim to all of Vietnam. There are still some maps in 1:250,000 scale around but they are "impossible" to obtain. (If anyone would like the list of 38 maps you can write to me.) Some agencies may even have 1:50,000 maps, and there are scattered maps around down to 1:1,250!

Bill Greenhalgh  
Historical Committee

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# GATHERING AT HAI

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The HAI 1991 Convention will be held in Anaheim, CA January 27-29th. The Anaheim Marriott will be the HAI headquarter hotel with exhibition in the Anaheim Convention Center. VHPA will have booth #359 at the Convention Center.

While attending HAI the VHPA delegation will be staying at the Jolly Roger Inn near the Anaheim Hilton & Towers. The VHPA gathering will be held Monday, January 28th from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the Anaheim Marriott Hotel, Orange County Ballroom 1 & 2. This hospitality is an open invitation for all helicopter pilots who flew in Vietnam to attend. Our hospitality will consist of assorted finger foods with cash bar. Any company or individual that could help sponsor "The Gathering" would be greatly appreciated. Awards will be presented to show appreciation for all sponsors. Helping to find yet another pilot is most rewarding. Time is not on our side!

For the sake of some of our newer members I will explain what "The Gathering" consists of. A few years ago the VHPA Executive Council approved expenditures to provide a mid-year gathering point for those who could not attend the annual VHPA reunions. It also serves as an excellent opportunity to recruit new members to VHPA as well as good times with good people. VHPA has been rewarded many times over from the success of attending HAI and we will always be appreciated to HAI for allowing us to attend. VHPA is all about ole helicopter pilots reuniting and other than our own annual reunion the HAI convention has proven to be a very positive reuniting event. If at all possible please stop by the VHPA booth at HAI and attend "The Gathering". While your coming you might as well bring a friend and sign him up as a new member and share the excitement and rewards in VHPA camaraderie.

Gary Slaughter  
Vice President

## Upcoming Events

The 114th Air Mobile Company, later designated 114th Aviation Company (Air Mobile Light), and still later 114th AHC. Former members who served with this unit in Vietnam contact George J. Young, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. Planning is underway for a reunion in 1991.

February 27-March 3, Lawyer Pilots Bar Association Meeting. Treasure Cay Resort, Abaco, Bahamas. Contact David E. Prewitt, [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

### Attention all Vultures and Copperheads:

Any former member of the 162 AHC interested in having a mini-reunion during the 1991 Reno reunion please contact me ASAP - with ideas and suggestions or if planning to attend. During past VHPA reunions there have been small flights of us around, let's get the flock together in Reno.

Bill Greenhalgh  
Vulture 28 ('68-early '69)  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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# RENO UPDATE

OK boys and girls, it's time to tighten up those spurs, pull in the cinches and get ready for the WILD, WILD WEST in Reno, Nevada.

The plans for the eighth annual Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association reunion are well underway and there are many activities planned for you. You may arrive in the Biggest Little City by automobile, train, bus, RV, helicopter or fixed wing aircraft, or for the most hearty, on foot like the Donner Party. If you decide that your mode of transportation is the starched wing, you may want to use American Airlines' reunion special flight number...S0171LX. I would also recommend that you check with your travel agent for the possibility of an excursion fare at an even cheaper rate. For those who may want to bring their RV, there is parking, but no hook-ups on the property. If you need a hook-up, there are some available in the city at a modest rate. Upon arrival in our fair city, (watch out for the slot machines as you de-plane) you will be instantly overcome with the urge to shell out silver coins...please wait for the hotel; as they will be more than eager to receive your tokens to the Gambling God.

The official conventional hotel is John Ascuaga's Nugget, the nicest and most friendly convention hotel in the city. The address is: **John Ascuaga's Nugget, 1100 Nugget Avenue, Sparks, Nevada 89432-0797** and the phone number is: **(702) 356-3300 or 1-800-648-1177.**

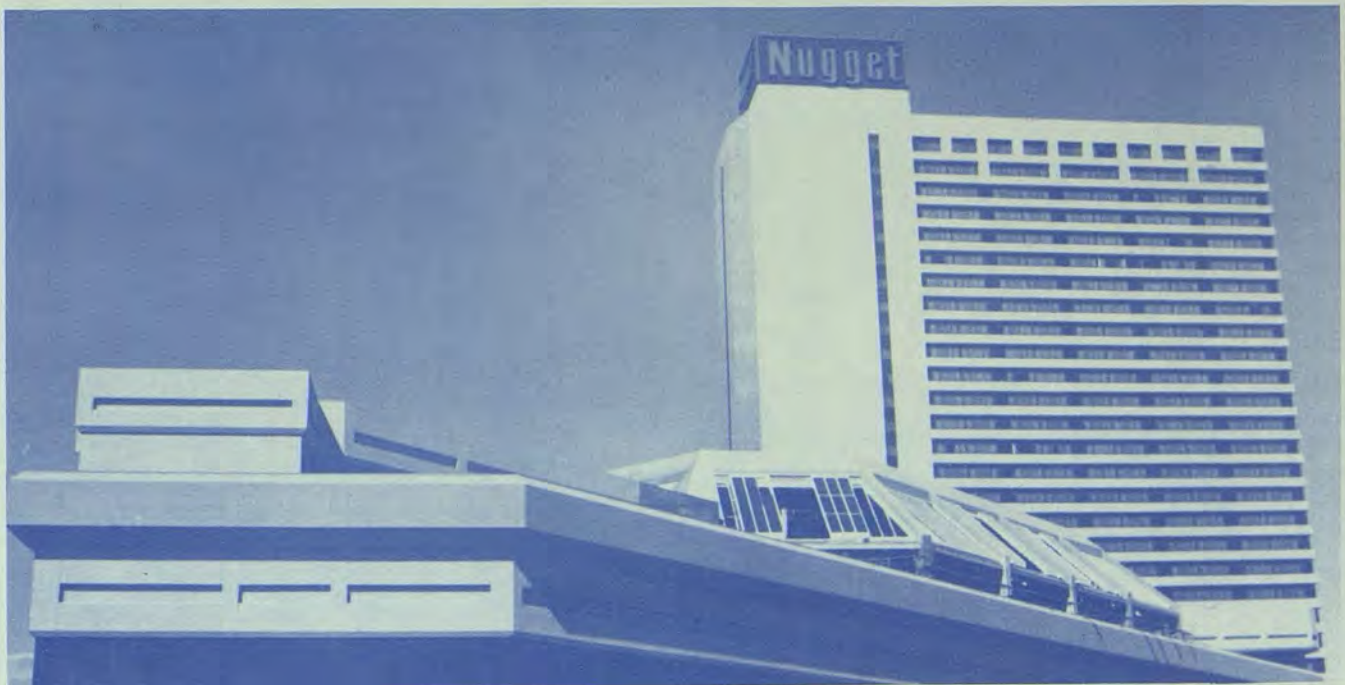
For this year's bash, we are going to try to save you as much money as we can (so that you spend it at the tables). We have been able to obtain three different sizes/price ranges of sleeping accommodations that are sure to fit everyone's pocketbook. We will also try and arrange for our weary-bleary-eyed travel and gambler to marry up (so to speak) with another pilot and share the sleeping costs. **The TOWER** rooms are large and beautiful and will cost \$75.00 per night; **The COURTYARD** rooms are in an adjacent building and will run \$50.00 per night; and **The ROOF GARDEN** rooms (sleeperette) will go for \$30.00. In the next article we will let you know how to go about paring up and sharing expenses. I highly recommend you get your reservations in early for whichever rooms you are interested in.

Now for your reading enjoyment and interest, sit back and let your eyes saunter over the activities that are in store for you during July of 1991.

The "Official" date for the reunion is July 4-7th, 1991. What has been happening in the past is that many of you are arriving at the reunionsite early, seeing the sites, helping with the set-up and generally taking it easy. This is great...there are so many things to see and do in Reno, it would be a shame to come all this way and miss out...Now for the general (or major) agenda:

On Wednesday, 3 July...early bird registration and the yearly "Gathering" at the most convenient watering hole. Those stout-hearted souls who venture to the Silver State early may want to plan on seeing a show or two while here. (Those headliner acts will be un-announced until the first of the year and I will keep you informed on who will be here and how to go about ordering tickets.)

Registration will open in earnest on the 4th of July, as will the vendors. At an optional luncheon, Hank Johnson, author of Winged Sabers will entertain you with the story of the Air Cavalry Pilot as only he can do, and the ladies will be treated to FREE helicopter rides (if FAA will approve) and the kids will have a pool-side get-together. The fireworks display is on your own and the top of the evening will be crowned with a pool-side Unisex Bikini Beauty and Talent Show. (Must wear two pieces folks.)



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## RENO UPDATE, (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

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Friday finds us on an optional bus tour to beautiful Lake Tahoe and Virginia City (an old silver mining town) with a special treat. Some adventurous souls will be able to volunteer to participate in a Wild West Rodeo-with a twist...Goat Roping, Calf Undressing and Greased Piggy Catch, fun, fun, fun...

Friday night finds us back from our tours and dancing at the Nugget until whenever...

Saturday is your day except for the following: Golf Tourney, Military/Aviation Display, Mini-Reunions (as requested), Ladies Activities, Kids Ice-Cream Social, Business Meeting, Carrier Qualification, No-Host Cocktail hour and Banquet featuring a thick Prime Rib. All of this freedom is followed by a dance: Theme: The Wild West! Of course, if doing your own thing is your thing, there are many things to see and do in Reno-Sparks: The Capitol in Carson City, Ponderosa Ranch at Lake Tahoe, Ms. Dixie on Lake Tahoe, National Car Museum, Downtown Reno, Mustang Ranch (oops...it's gone), Wild Waters Amusement Center, Squaw Valley, Circus Circus, WD May Museum and the Planetarium.

On Sunday we untie you all, hope that you had a great time, won lots and lots of money and will start looking forward to what's in store for 1992.

To obtain more information about our great and beautiful area, you may write to: **Virginia City Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 804, Virginia City, Nevada 89440; Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority, P.O. Box 837, Reno, Nevada 89504; Greater Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 3499, Reno, Nevada 89505.**

For additional information please call me at [REDACTED]. If I don't answer, you'll understand why...

I'll need some help with all the arrangements, so if you want to have some fun and haven't signed up with me yet, you certainly may.

See you here in '91,

Tom!

**T.L. Percy, Sr.**  
**(Blueghost 18)**

[REDACTED]



## Dear VHPA Members,

With each passing year the VHPA membership grows larger, along with the reunion, the directory and the newsletter circulation. That's the good news.

Our current directory accounts for some 8800 VietNam era helicopter pilots, representing all branches of the Armed Services, however, that is a relatively small percentage of those eligible for membership. That's the "not so good" news.

The growth of the VHPA from it's inception to the present has been phenomenal when you consider the small group who met in Phoenix in 1984 versus the size of the crowd we unleashed on Bourbon Street in New Orleans this past July. (The CAV had more guys on the balcony of Ryan's Irish Pub than were in Phoenix.)

We experienced a few periods of relatively rapid growth as word of the VHPA's existence spread to the R/W aviation community, which naturally proved to be a mother lode of potential members. Growth from other sectors, while steady, has been slower, as it takes time for word of mouth to spread throughout the land; and essentially that is how the news has been spread.

Billboards so generously donated prior to the reunions and local media coverage during the reunions are about the only "mass" media exposure that we receive. Budgetary constraints do not allow us the luxury of any type of national membership campaign at this time.

Where does this leave us? Well, the Membership Committee has a few irons in the fire to take advantage of some inexpensive exposure, but our primary asset in identifying and informing potential members is still you—the VHPA members.

Each of us knows of a person or two who is eligible for VHPA membership. Some have already expressed an interest in joining without even knowing all the intangibles that accompany membership in the association. They have not done so yet simply because the thought and the application have never been in the same room at the same time. We can fix that. Send them the application in this newsletter with a short note, and see what happens.

Each of us probably knows a potential member who has explained his reluctance to join the VHPA by saying, "that part of my life is over." True enough. It is. However, the pride and respect that rightfully belongs to him should never dissipate.

The VietNam helicopter pilot has been characterized by the CBS News Special on VietNam as a "special breed". We were. We all performed a mission that was vital to the guys on the ground, personal politics and safety aside. Twenty years after the War, whether you view it as right or wrong, won or lost, the fact is that you brought some guys home that might not have made it otherwise. I see nothing but pride in that. You may never have thought of yourself as a religious symbol, but I guarantee you that to some grunts, you walked on water.

The final category of potential members are the guys who do not know we exist yet. Once again, you the membership are our primary asset. You are the only ones who know who they are. Flight class rosters, old directories and orders will identify them. It may take a little detective work after that.

At this point our continued growth is tied to you. I will use the resources available to inform as many potential members as possible as to the existence of an association for VietNam helicopter pilots. The folks that already know that we exist just need an application and some encouraging words, and you can provide that. If each of you would take the enclosed application and see that it gets into the hands of a prospective member, I'm sure the next reunion will have more old friends, more good friends, more familiar faces than ever before. After all, ain't that what it's all about?

Sincerely,

Jack Glennon  
Membership Chairman

# New Life Members

Donald M. Dawkins

[REDACTED]  
62-5  
63-64 114 Aviation Co.  
67-68 10th Comb AVN BN  
Attorney, Pastor, State Rep

Larry J. Talley

[REDACTED]  
66-7  
66-67 128th AHC  
69-70 138 RR  
Pilot

Michael Machulsky

[REDACTED]  
69-49  
70 4 ARTY 4 INF DIV  
70-71 B/1/9 CAV 1 CAV  
Helicopter Pilot

Edward E. Thorp

[REDACTED]  
71  
70-71 B/7/1 CAV  
Delta Airlines Pilot

Ross W. McCoy

[REDACTED]  
70-29  
70-71 C/7/1 ACS  
Certified Public Accountant

Thomas L. Pearcy

[REDACTED]  
66-23, 67-1  
67 C/7/17  
68 F/8 CAV  
70-71 198 INF BDE  
High School Instructor

George Kitchens

[REDACTED]  
68-507  
69-70 A/3/17 HHT  
U.S. Army

Richard Sebastian

[REDACTED]  
68-22  
69 F/8 CAV  
Carpet Sales

Elliot M. Ser

[REDACTED]  
69-23  
70-71 A/158 101 ABN  
College Professor

Terry D. Forbis

[REDACTED]  
69-05  
69-70 114 AVN AHC  
Self Employed

David Adams

[REDACTED]  
70-5  
70-71 D/1/1 CAV  
CW4 US Army

Robert Morris

[REDACTED]  
68-7  
69 A/158 AVN 101 ABN  
69-70 134 AHC  
Industrial Hygienist

## CHANGE OF ADDRESSES

Evans, Raymond

P.O. Box 792  
Barrow, AK 99723-0069  
69-4, 69-8  
69-70 129 AVN AHC

Hope, Ronald F.

[REDACTED]  
68-21  
69 B/227 AVN 1 CAV

Johnson, Robert "Bob" F.

[REDACTED]  
69-23  
69-70 135 AHC

Olson, Thomas R.

[REDACTED]  
67-15, 67-17  
67-68 136 AHC

Willingham, John

[REDACTED]  
7-17  
72 A/7/17 CAV  
72 C/7/17 CAV  
72-73 H/10 CAV  
AH-1 MTP/1P

*Become a Life Member Today!*  
*Call VHPA for details.*  
**(513)721-VHPA**

# HISTORICAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

In January of 1967 there were 1,151 U.S. Army helicopters in Vietnam.  
 In January of 1968 there were 2,636 U.S. Army helicopters in Vietnam.  
 In January of 1969 there were 3,359 U.S. Army helicopters in Vietnam.  
 In January of 1970 there were 3,720 U.S. Army helicopters in Vietnam.

The peak number of U.S. Army helicopters serving in Vietnam during one year was 3,926.

Estimates of the number of Army helicopters used in Vietnam run as high as 13,000.

The Army can account for over 4,320 helicopters lost in Vietnam.

Bill Greenhalgh  
 Historical Committee



## VHPA Product Order Form

Back VHPA newsletters \$20.00/set \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Complete sets only)

Current VHPA Directory \$15.00/each \_\_\_\_\_  
 (VHPA Members only,  
 while supplies last)

VHPA Decals \$1.00/each \_\_\_\_\_

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Send check/money order or charge to your MasterCard or Visa

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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 Suite 1990  
 Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

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52 Golf Shirt (wht., lt. blue) M, L, XL(XXL add 3.00).....16.00	59 VHPA Patch.....3.00
52A "LIFE MEMBER".....(XXL add 3.00).....16.00	59A VHPA Patch "LIFE MEMBER".....3.00
54 VHPA Logo T-Shirt / M, L, XL...10.50...XXL 11.50	43A VHPA Pin.....3.00
54A Sweatshirt.....16.50	62 Window Sticker.....1.50
55 "I ♥ MY HELICOPTER PILOT" - T-Shirt.....10.50	EJ-8 VHPA Logo Jacket.....79.95
M, L, XL *Add 2.00 2X T-Shirts	VHPA Back Pack.....35.00
57 VHPA Cap/patch, w/eggs (wht., navy, blk., royal)9.50	Breast Printing.....4 Lines 12.00.....3 Lines 9.50
57A "LIFE MEMBER".....9.50	Bullion.....15.00

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

7 West Seventh Street, Suite 1990      Cincinnati, Ohio 45202      (513) 721-VHPA

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

### OR CHANGE OF ADDRESS

APPLICATION: <input type="checkbox"/>	ANNUAL DUES:            \$20
ADDRESS CHANGE: <input type="checkbox"/>	LIFE MEMBERSHIP:    \$300
	SUBSCRIPTION ONLY: \$12*
	(*Included in annual dues)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please charge my MasterCard/VISA      \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is a check/money order payable to VHPA

Account. No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

FLIGHT SCHOOL CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_ SERVICE BRANCH: \_\_\_\_\_

COMBAT FLIGHT HOURS: \_\_\_\_\_ SOCIAL SECURITY NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Information about EACH Vietnam Tour:

DATE		UNIT	LOCATION	CALL SIGN
From	To			

Information about YOU: Helicopters flown, medals/awards, talents, hobbies and anything else.

*Note: This form may be used for Directory corrections.*