

A Mini-History of  
Aviation Platoon, HHC,  
1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division  
July 1965 – January 1972  
South Vietnam

<http://www.vhpa.org/unit/HHC1BDE101ABN.pdf>

Store: <https://aviation-platoon-1st-brigade-101st-abn.my-online.store/>

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As of 1 January 2019



Eagle Patch, 1966-1967



Griffin Patch, 1968-1970



Deadbone Patch, 1970-1972



Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

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  - PCS Orders returning HHC, 1st Brigade to Fort Campbell; effective 20 January 1972
- (Many of the names on PCS Orders include individuals who served in the Headquarters Company, but not the Aviation Platoon. Their names are also included in the Name Index.)
- Captain Brock's Platoon Roster
- 101st Airborne Division Aviation Units in Vietnam, 1968-1972
- List of HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Helicopters used in Vietnam
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## **SUMMARY: this mini-history of the Aviation Section/Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam is from an aviation unit's viewpoint.**

The 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division landed in-country at Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam, aboard the *USNS General Leroy Eltinge*, on 29 July 1965. The 1st Brigade fought as a separate brigade until 1967, when the remainder of the division arrived in Vietnam. The combat elements of the division consisted of 10 battalions of airmobile infantry, six battalions of artillery, an aerial rocket artillery unit armed with rocket-firing helicopters, and an air reconnaissance unit. Another unique feature of the division was its aviation group, which consisted of three aviation battalions of assault helicopters and gunships. Additionally, each individual brigade had an organic aviation section/platoon attached to the headquarters of each brigade to provide direct support for the Brigade Commander and each Battalion Commander.

During September 1965, the *USNS General Leroy Eltinge*, [see page 151], returned to Cam Ranh Bay. Six (6) pilots arrived aboard the ship, with six (6) OH-13 helicopters (including Captain Ron Miller, 1Lt Edgar Schneider, 1Lt Leonard F Keys, CW2 Bob Steele, CW2 Bill Marchman, and WO1 Ken Wymer). They were attached to the Headquarters, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division for administrative purposes.

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After a brief period where the Soldiers acclimated themselves and received all their equipment, the 1st Brigade (Separate) went into action.

The remainder of the division moved in November 1967 from Fort Campbell to Bien Hoa in operation **Eagle Thrust**. The operation made military history as the largest and longest airlift directly into a combat zone. Established at Bien Hoa on 13 December 1967, the Screaming Eagles were ready for action. The entire Division (the Screaming Eagles) was united back in a combat zone in December 1967.

When the 1st Brigade (Separate) rejoined the Division (or the Division rejoined the Brigade), which was arriving from Fort Campbell in January 1968, it had moved 28 or 29 times.

On 1 July 1968, at Camp Eagle in the Republic of Vietnam, the 160th Aviation Group was constituted with elements of the 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment; the 101st Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter); the 158th Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter); and the 159th Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter). Less than a year later, on 25 June 1969, the 160th Aviation Group was redesignated as the 101st Aviation Group.

In the summer of 1968, it was decided by Command to form, first a Detachment, then an **Aviation Platoon** attached to each brigade. The platoon consisted of five (5) UH-1's (Huey) and eight (8) OH-6A's (Loach); one Huey for each Brigade Commander and each Battalion Commander, and one Loach for each Brigade Commander and each Battalion Commander. The fifth Huey was designated for Maintenance and backup. The remaining Loaches were designated with two (2) as scouts (one with mini-gun), and two as scout backup, and/or support missions, as needed.

The Officers and Enlisted crews who served in the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in Vietnam, from June 1968-January 1972, flew in support of a number of Operations including **Operation Apache Snow** May 10-June 7, 1969 (**Hamburger Hill**), **Operation Lamar Plain** May 16-August 13, 1969 (“ . . . one of the last extensive operations conducted by the 101st Airborne Division against the North Vietnamese Army”), **Operation Texas Star** April 1-September 5, 1970 (the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord), **Operation Jefferson Glenn** September 5-October 6, 1971 (The last major offensive operation involving US ground troops), and **Operation Dewey Canyon II** January 30-February 5, 1971 (in support of the ARVN **Operation Lam Son 719**).

The last Army division to leave Vietnam, the remaining elements of the 101st Airborne Division returned to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where today it is the Army's only air assault division. During the war, troopers from the 101st won 18 Medals of Honor for bravery in combat. The division suffered almost 20,000 soldiers killed or wounded in action in Vietnam, over twice as many as the 9,328 casualties it suffered in World War II.

The 101st Airborne Division spent almost 7 years in combat in South Vietnam. During that time, the Division became one of the most feared units of the American Army.

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The 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, originated as the 123rd Aviation Battalion in the Republic of Vietnam on 8 December 1967, as part of the 23rd Infantry Division (Americal), and served there until deactivation in November 1971.

The Battalion was reactivated as the 123rd Aviation Battalion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky on 16 December 1985. The Battalion was formed by combining the assets of several units, including 101st Divisional Infantry Brigade flight detachments,

- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam - Eagle, Griffin/Little Griffin, Deadbone)
- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 2nd Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam - Brandy)
- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 3rd Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam - Thunder)
- the 163rd Aviation Company (General Support) (Vietnam – Road Runner/Woodstock), and
- Battery A, 377th Field Artillery (Vietnam - Gunner)

On 15 March 1989, Forces Command directed a Command Aviation Battalion (CAB) be formed at Fort Campbell to expand the aviation capability of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The unit reflagged as 3rd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment in July 1989. In December 1989, the unit was fully integrated into the Division when it was redesignated and received the colors of the 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment.

On 9 October 1997, the Aviation Brigade (the largest aviation brigade in the Army at the time) split its nine battalions into two brigades, the 101st Aviation Brigade (Attack) and the 159th Aviation Brigade (Assault).

On 7 May 2015, the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade was inactivated at a ceremony at the Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Division Parade field, leaving only the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade in the division. Concurrently, the 101st CAB was redesignated as the Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, bringing it in line with other divisional aviation brigades, which are not numbered.

The *Shadow of the Eagle* Battalion initially flew the UH-1 helicopter. Beginning in April 1995, the Battalion began its transformation from a UH-1 to a UH-60 Blackhawk unit. On 31 August 1995, the last UH-1 "Huey" helicopter was decommissioned from active duty service.

And so, from a small beginning of six (6) Headquarters, 1st Brigade pilots and six (6) OH-13's, the lineage of the three (3) Aviation Section/Detachment/Platoons, of the three (3) Headquarters Infantry Brigades, has passed on to A Company (Warlords), 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment (Shadow of the Eagle)

The Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), 101st Airborne Division  
6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment (Shadow of the Eagle)  
HHC (Iron Eagles)  
A Company (Warlords)  
B Company (Pachyderms)

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C Company (Shadow Dust off)  
D Company (Witchdoctors)  
E Company (Trailblazers)  
F Company (Sky Masters)

## History/Narrative

I am my family's genealogist, so I have a love for and experience in researching a family's history. I am attempting to research the history of a particular "family;" the officers and enlisted crews of the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

In the early '60s, the Army predicted a large involvement in Southeast Asia and began building up the 101st Airborne Division in addition to several other units.

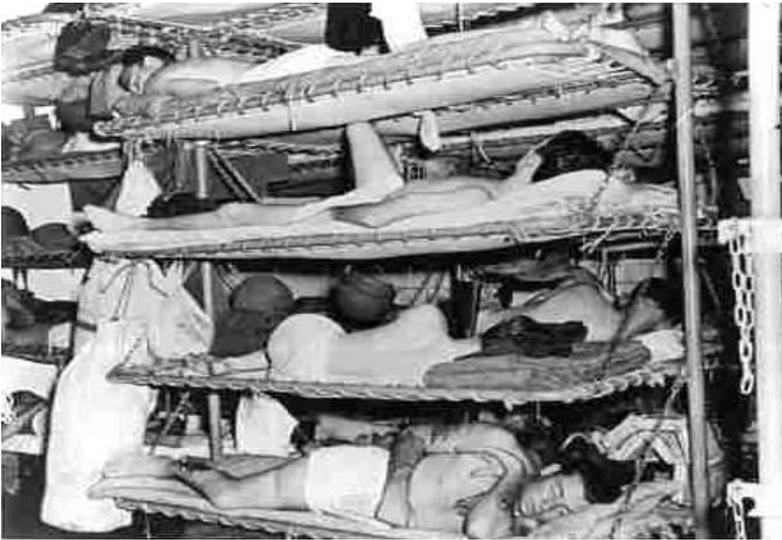
### 101st alerted to send a brigade to Vietnam

In the spring of 1965, the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Ky., was alerted to send a brigade of infantry plus support troops to Vietnam. In July of 1965, the 101st was ordered into combat. The men were flown from Fort Campbell on the evening of July 6, 1965, and arrived at San Francisco, where they took buses to Oakland Army Terminal. Here they were greeted by an Army band, Red Cross "Donut Dollies," and a gray ship.

The USNS General Leroy Eltinge: 510 feet long, every inch painted gray. It seemed too short to have such high smokestacks. "Gee," remarked a trooper from Arizona, "I wonder what battle General Eltinge lost to have it named after him?" A voice from the crowded deck informed him, "He was Custer's S-2."



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See *the Tale of the Eltinge* [see page 151 **Error! Bookmark not defined.**], by John Pagel II, under *Stories and Remembrances as Told By Members of the Unit*. 4,000 paratroopers of the 1st Brigade (Separate) of the 101st Airborne Division, also known as the "Bastogne Brigade," landed in-country at Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam on 29 July 1965. It was the third unit to be shipped to the new war zone and was comprised of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 327th Infantry and the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry. They made a demonstration jump immediately after arriving, observed by Gen. William Westmoreland and outgoing Ambassador (formerly General) Maxwell Taylor. Taylor and Westmoreland were both former commanders of the division, which was known as the "Screaming Eagles." The 101st Airborne Division has a long and storied history, including combat jumps during the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, and the subsequent Market-Garden airborne operation in the Netherlands. Later, the division distinguished itself by its defense of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

The 1st Brigade fought as a separate brigade until 1967, when the remainder of the division arrived in Vietnam. The combat elements<sup>1</sup> of the division consisted of 10 battalions of

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<sup>1</sup> In December 1965, the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, formed a LRRP platoon, and by April 1966, the 1st Infantry Division, 25th Infantry Division and each of the four Battalions of the 173rd Airborne Brigade formed LRRP units as well. On 8 July 1966, General Westmoreland authorized the formation of a (LRRP) unit in each infantry brigade or division in Vietnam. By 1967 formal LRRP companies were organized, most having three platoons, each with five six-man teams equipped with VHF/FM AN/PRC-25 radios. LRRP training was notoriously rigorous and team leaders were often graduates of the U.S. Army's 5th Special Forces Recondo School in Nha Trang, Vietnam. Tiger Force was the nickname of a long-range reconnaissance patrol unit of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division, which fought in the Vietnam War. Their high body counts were recognized and encouraged by military officials. Their commander Col. Morse ordered troops to rack up a body count of 327 casualties in order to match the battalion's infantry designation, 327th; however by the end of the campaign soldiers were congratulated for their 1000th kill. In February 1969, all US Army LRRP units were folded into the newly formed 75th Infantry Regiment (Ranger), a predecessor of the 75th Ranger Regiment, bringing back operational Ranger units for the first time since the Korean War. The Army had disbanded Ranger units after Korea, but kept Ranger School, on the premise that spreading Ranger School graduates throughout the Army would improve overall performance.

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airmobile infantry, six battalions of artillery, an aerial rocket artillery unit armed with rocket-firing helicopters, and an air reconnaissance unit. Another unique feature of the division was its aviation group, which consisted of three aviation battalions of assault helicopters and gunships.

The majority of the 101st Airborne Division's tactical operations were in the Central Highlands and in the A Shau Valley farther north. Among its major operations were 1) the brutal fight for Ap Bia Mountain, known as the "Hamburger Hill" battle; 2) the smaller in scale than the action in the A Shau Valley, but just as fierce and, for those who fell there, just as deadly "the big fight with the little helicopters;" and 3) the battle of Firebase Ripcord.

The last Army division to leave Vietnam, the remaining elements of the 101st Airborne Division returned to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where today it is the Army's only airmobile division. During the war, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division fought 45 operations, and troopers from the 101st won 18 Medals of Honor for bravery in combat. The division suffered almost 20,000 soldiers killed or wounded in action in Vietnam, over twice as many as the 9,328 casualties it suffered in World War II.

### **1st Brigade organic aviation assets arrive in Vietnam**

During September 1965, the *USNS General Leroy Eltinge* [see page151] returned to Cam Ranh Bay. Six (6) pilots arrived aboard the ship, with six (6) OH-13 helicopters (including Captain Ron Miller, 1Lt Edgar Schneider, 1Lt Leonard F Keys, CW2 Bob Steele, CW2 Bill Marchman, and WO1 Ken Wymer). They were attached to the Headquarters, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division for administrative purposes.

After a brief period where the Soldiers acclimated themselves and received all their equipment, the 1st Brigade (Separate) went into action.

### **The 1st Brigade (Separate) engages in several operations**

The Brigade was ordered into the Song Con Valley, about 20 miles' northeast of the town of An Khe. During one mission, the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry encountered heavy enemy fire at their landing zone. Three company commanders were killed and the contact was so close, air support and artillery could not be called in until they pulled back. That night, 100 sorties and 11,000 rounds of artillery hit the enemy. The next morning, the 2nd Battalion 502nd Infantry was pulled out. They later discovered that they had landed in the middle of a heavily entrenched enemy base.

For the rest of 1965, the 1st Brigade (Separate) continued to mount patrols and interdicted the enemy supplies lines.

At the beginning of 1966, the enemy greatly reduced his operations. In May, the enemy began massing in the Pleiku and Kontum provinces. The 1st Brigade was moved from An Khe to Dak To, a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) base camp in the northern area of South Vietnam. Here a South Vietnamese force was surrounded by the 24th North

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Vietnamese Regiment. The 1st Brigade (Separate) was ordered in to reinforce the South Vietnamese position.

After evacuating the South Vietnamese forces, the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry established their lines inside the abandoned camp and sent C Company forward in an exposed defensive position. On the night of June 6, 1966, the 24th NVA Regiment attacked C Company in a brutal assault. In a desperate attempt to stop the enemy advance, the commander of C Company called in air strikes on top of his own position, killing NVA and Americans alike. It was a hard decision to make, but it worked. The 24th NVA Regiment pulled back long enough for A Company 1/327 Infantry to be brought in by helicopter to reinforce the C Company positions. With the arrival of A 1/327 Infantry, the 24th NVA Regiment began to retreat.

The soldiers of 1st Brigade (Separate) pursued the enemy and several large-scale air attacks were called in. Hundreds of enemy soldiers were killed, but the 24th NVA Regiment managed to escape into Laos.

In October and November, 1966, the 4th Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry Divisions were heavily engaged with enemy forces in the Kontum province. When it became clear that the enemy was attempting to withdraw into Laos, a massive helicopter airlift of the 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division landed just as the enemy was crossing into Laos and safety. The 1st Brigade (Separate) was ordered into reserve at Phu Yen.

The 1st Brigade (Separate) was called the "Nomads of Vietnam" because they moved so often. They were known as a fire brigade; when a fire (big trouble) broke out, away they went toward the trouble. Around 50 enlisted men, NCOs, crew chiefs, mechanics and other soldiers, were assigned to the Air Section

In early 1967, the 1st Brigade (Separate) acted as a rapid reaction force, reinforcing American and South Vietnamese forces when necessary and responding to enemy attacks. They had become experts in rapid helicopter assaults.

In 1967, the decision was made to move the Marines in Southern I Corps to the DMZ. To replace the Marines, a Task Force (Task Force Oregon) was formed consisting of five (5) brigades of Army troops.

In April of 1967, the 1st Brigade (Separate) was attached to **Task Force Oregon** and placed under operational control of the III Marine Amphibious Force and moved to Chu Lai. At Chu Lai, the 1st Brigade (Separate) assisted in a large-scale pacification effort in the Quang Tri province. Later, the 1st Brigade (Separate) was called in to assist a Marine battalion finish off an enemy attack around Khe Shan, which would later become the scene of a long bloody siege in 1968. The 1st Brigade (Separate) remained with **Task Force Oregon** until December 1967, when it moved back south to II Corps. The Americal Division was formed from three (3) of the five (5) brigades from **Task Force Oregon**, and shortly thereafter the Task Force ceased to exist.

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The 1st Brigade (Separate) was detached and waited for the arrival of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the 101st Airborne Division. While the 1st Brigade participated in **Klamath Falls**, its last combat operation as a separate brigade, the remainder of the division moved in November 1967 from Fort Campbell to Bien Hoa in operation **Eagle Thrust**. The operation made military history as the largest and longest airlift directly into a combat zone. Established at Bien Hoa on 13 December, the Screaming Eagles were ready for action. The entire Division (the Screaming Eagles) was united back in a combat zone in December 1967.

When the 1st Brigade (Separate) rejoined the Division (or the Division rejoined the Brigade), which was arriving from Fort Campbell in January 1968, it had moved 28 or 29 times.

### **Tet Offensive**

On January 31, 1968, the North Vietnamese launched the **Tet Offensive**. Tet, the traditional Vietnamese New Year Celebration, was supposed to be a peaceful time. The 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, along with the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and the 5th Marine Regiment, began to fight for control of the Hue City. Hue was considered vital to the Communist effort because of its history of Buddhist activism and Communist sympathy. The North Vietnamese felt that Hue would be their first political foothold into South Vietnam and committed Regular forces to its capture.

When Tet began, Hue was defended by South Vietnamese Army units who were quickly driven from the city. The 101st Airborne and the 1st Cavalry were sent to recapture the city.

The battle for Hue raged for three weeks and was the only extended urban combat of the war. Later, the 5th Marine Regiment would be called in to reinforce the 101st Airborne and 1st Cavalry.

Fighting in Hue was intense and advances were measured by houses. Each building seemed to hold enemy soldiers. In some cases, the soldiers of the 101st Airborne fought hand to hand. Finally, after much destruction to the city, Hue was liberated from the North Vietnamese.

During the **Tet Offensive**, over 33,000 enemy soldiers were killed and many thousands more captured. Tet was a major American victory, despite the appearance of defeat back home in the political arena.

It is interesting to note, that one platoon from C Company, 1st Battalion 502nd Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was airlifted into Saigon and fought a pitched battle on the roof of the American Embassy after it had been infiltrated by enemy forces.

Following Tet, American forces began launching hundreds of small unit counter attacks designed to contain and destroy any remaining infiltrated enemy units operating in South Vietnam.

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### **1st Brigade continues to engage in operations**

In March and April 1968, the 101st Airborne attacked enemy supply bases in the A Shau valley during **Operation Somerset Plain**. During this operation, several hundred tons of enemy supplies were captured.

The 101st Airborne was next ordered into the coastal lowlands in the Thua Thien province in Operation **Nevada Eagle** which began May 1968. For 288 days, the 101st Airborne conducted sweeping patrols of the area and engaged the enemy almost daily. After it was over, the province was cleared of enemy forces and the 101st Airborne had captured enough rice, weapons and equipment for 10 enemy battalions.

Following **Nevada Eagle**, the 101st Airborne returned to the A Shau valley and began a series of operations to clear the valley of enemy forces – commencing May 10th 1969. During one operation (**Apache Snow**), the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry assaulted Dong Ap Bia Mountain, aka Hill 937 where the enemy had established a well-fortified base camp. For 10 days, the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry (3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade) launched attack after attack on the enemy position, but could only advance yards at a time. The enemy had established several lines of defense. Fighting on Hill 937 was some of the most brutal of the war and was often hand-to-hand. The 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry (2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade), 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry (3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade) and A & D Companies, 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry (3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade) of the 101st Airborne were called in to take Hill 937. In the end, Hill 937, now called "**Hamburger Hill**", was captured.

### **Aviation is constituted for support of the 101st Airborne**

On 1 July 1968, at Camp Eagle in the Republic of Vietnam, the 160th Aviation Group was constituted with elements of the 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment; the 101st Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter); the 158th Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter); and the 159th Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter). Less than a year later, on 25 June 1969, the 160th Aviation Group was redesignated as the 101st Aviation Group.

### **The Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, is formed**

Pilots and crew have been assigned/attached to the HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade since their arrival in September 1965; sometimes as a section, and sometimes as an attachment. Beginning June/July 1968, the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was formed, initially with one UH-1D Iroquois and several OH-23 Raven Helicopters (imagine scouting the A Shau Valley in OH-23's - I flew 63-12894). Major Stuart Miller was the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Aviation Officer and the Aviation Platoon Leader, HHC (we Warrant Officers were amused that we had a captain as our company commander and a major as our platoon leader – CW2 Pete Rzeminski). The four original pilots assigned to the Aviation Platoon were: WO1 Arthur Negrette, WO1 Richard Neil, WO1 Ernie Thibault, and WO1 Pete "ski" Rzeminski.

The Officers and Enlisted crews who served in the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in Vietnam, from June 1968-January 1972, flew in support of a number of

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Operations including **Apache Snow** May 10-June 7, 1969 (Hamburger Hill), **Lamar Plain** May 16-August 13, 1969 (“ . . . one of the last extensive operations conducted by the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division against the North Vietnamese Army”), **Operation Texas Star** April 1-September 5, 1970 (the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord), **Operation Jefferson Glenn** September 5-October 6, 1971 (The last major offensive operation involving US ground troops), and **Operation Dewey Canyon II** January 30-February 5, 1971 (in support of the ARVN Operation Lam Son 719). Many of us didn't even know the names of the Operations we supported until years after returning to the United States.

### **Operation Lamar Plain** (15 May – 14 August 1969)

**Location: Tien Phuoc District and Hau Duc District, Tam Ky, RVN.** This area of operation was located at the southernmost boundary of I corps; oblong in shape, starting just west of the coastal city of Chu Lai and continuing west to the Laotian border. Approximately 10 miles north-south by 20 miles east-west including the southern end of the terrain feature known as the A Shau Valley. It was about 100 miles south of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions 1st Brigade headquarters at Camp Eagle.

**Control Headquarters:** 1st Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. At this point things get confusing. While the headquarters element is from the 1st brigade [including its aviation platoon], the majority of the Task Organization are units from the 2nd Brigade, including two (1/501 Infantry Battalion and 1/502 Infantry Battalion) of the three 2nd Brigade combat battalions. The third battalion (2/501) [2nd Brigade] was still involved in **Operation Apache Snow** (May 10th-June 11th) and participated in the final assault of "Hamburger Hill" on 20 May 1969.

- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Airmobile):
- Operation Apache Snow: 10 May 1969 - 15 May 1969
  - Aviation Platoon was conducting scout activities in the A Shau Valley, while supporting the Command Operations.
  - Operation Apache Snow: 10 May 1969 - 7 June 1969 [Last assault on Hamburger Hill: 20 May 1969; commencing 15 May 1969, the Aviation Platoon was pulled from conducting scouting missions in the A Shau Valley, and was deployed south, participating in Operation Lamar Plain]
- Operation Lamar Plain: 16 May 1969 - 13 August 1969

This story about **Operation Lamar Plain**, followed by personal experiences of pilots and crew, was written by **WO1 John Hayes**(with some additions and comments added by CW2 Pete Rzeminski), gives one of the best compilations of operations that the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division participated in that I have been able to discover. It is primarily from the aviation point of view of the operation. The Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was a relatively small section, with never more than twenty pilots serving at any one time. Its allocated aircraft complement was eight (8) OH-6A Cayuse, Light Observation Helicopters (LOH or Loach), and five (5) UH-1D or 1H Iroquois Helicopters (Huey). It provided, to the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, Command & Control Helicopter

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coverage and Brigade Aero-scout White Teams, in addition to “ash & trash” (lift and resupply), and courier missions.

**AAR Reporting Officer: Colonel Frank L. “Gunslinger” Dietrich:** Commanding Officer of the 1st Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during **Operation Lamar Plain**.

**Task Organization:** 1/501 Infantry Battalion (2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division), 1/502 Infantry Battalion (2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division) and 1/46 Infantry battalion (198<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division-Americal Division). With the addition of the Americal units the task force was now considered to be at full Brigade strength.

For a complete factual account of operation "**Lamar Plain**", please refer to "After Action Report on Operation Lamar Plain" filed 15 Sept 1969, by Col. Frank L. Dietrich, the commanding officer of the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile); also designated for a time as the 101st Air Assault Division [I was the chief Command & Control pilot for the 1st Brigade Commander. As Aircraft Commander, I flew Colonel Richard A. Bresnahan down from Camp Eagle to Tam Ky on 15 May 1969. Richard L. Von Hatten was my Pilot. Colonel Frank L Dietrich assumed command of the 1st Brigade on 28 July 1969. CW2 Pete Rzeminski]

**Operation Apache Snow** got all the headlines back in the United States during the month of May 1969. The grunts called it something else: **Hamburger Hill** and the name stuck. But it was not the only major battle fought by the troopers of the 101st Airborne Division during that summer. **Operation Lamar Plain**, though smaller in scale than the action in the A Shau Valley, was just as fierce and, for those who fell there, just as deadly. It also earned a description from the enemy as "the big fight with the little helicopters."

The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, was initially involved in **Operation Apache Snow** as a blocking and screening force that was positioned near a couple of terrain features to the southeast of the A Shau Valley. The assets used included pink teams of the 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry (2/17 Air Cav), and white teams consisting of OH-6As from the 1st Brigade Scout Section (Aviation Platoon, HHC) and AH-1G Cobras from the 2nd Battalion, 77th Artillery (2/77 ARA - aerial rocket artillery). Rather than seeking targets to destroy, the scout teams were more interested in gathering intelligence for future development. And there was plenty of intelligence to gather. The closer the teams reconnoitered to the Laotian border and the A Shau, the larger the bunker complexes became; some even boasted two story hooches beneath the triple-canopy jungle.

Before the 1st Brigade could turn its attention to this area, however, there came a dramatic change in mission. At 0300, on 15 May 1969, the pilots and crew of the aviation units were awakened and told to report to Operations (Ops) for a briefing ASAP. Speculation among the young pilots and the real situation seemed almost as bad. The Americal Division, based 100 miles to the south at Chu Lai, had declared a TAC E - tactical emergency. The Marine air base there, home of MAG 13 - Marine Aircraft Group - was threatened, and the nearby district capital of Tam Ky was in imminent danger of being overrun. Several American firebases (FSB's), particularly at FSB Professional, were nearly under constant siege. U.S.

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company-sized elements were being engaged and defeated in broad daylight; this was unheard of.

The brigade's new mission was to discontinue its screening operations near the Laotian border and its security operations along Route 1 from Hue to Da Nang. It was to move south to the Chu Lai-Tam Ky area and, under the operational control of the Americal Division, find and defeat the enemy.

Assets attached to the 1st Brigade for the operation included two infantry battalions, an air cavalry (B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry Regiment) troop, an aerial rocket artillery battery, a 105mm artillery battery, a company of UH-1 Hueys and a section of CH-47 Chinooks. The brigade's aviation platoon (HHC) [its UH-1 Hueys, and] including the aero scout section - Hughes OH-6A Cayuse light observation helicopters (LOHs), better known as "Loach's"- armed with 7.65mm miniguns and M-60 Machineguns; also attached to brigade headquarters was a section of U.S. Air Force Forward Air Controllers (FACs).

By noon on 15 May 1969, elements of the 101st Airborne were in combat west of Tam Ky; B Troop 2/17 Cavalry was operating pink teams [AH-1G Cobra Gunships and OH-6A Scout Ships] to verify the briefing they had received from Americal personnel. First Brigade pilots were briefed by pilots of the 71st Assault Helicopter Company - the "Rattlers" (the lift crews) and the "Firebirds" (the gun crews).

At 1415, Colonel Richard A. Bresnahan, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Brigade, reported to the Commanding General of the Americal Division, and the 1st Brigade fell under OPCON (operational control) of the Americal Division. The Arrival Airfield (AAF) was Tam Ky South, and brigade elements began to arrive that afternoon with the TAC CP, 1-501 Infantry Battalion and C/2-320 Artillery closing by 9:30pm. At 11:45pm the 1st Brigade Task Force staging area received 5-7 rounds of 60mm mortar fire with negative results.

The Americal Division's area of operations (A/O) was the largest and, in some ways, the most difficult in South Vietnam. Although the Americal Division was numerically one of the largest U.S. divisions, it lacked the helicopter assets of the 101st Airborne Division. The terrain offered several advantages to the enemy. In extreme northern I Corps, the villages and friendly population hugged the thin coastal strip; anyone in the mountains was the enemy. In the area west of Tam Ky, the terrain was gently rolling with open areas and friendly villages interspersed with low jungle. This afforded the Northern Vietnamese Army (NVA) rapid movement, easy resupply, and some protection when in or near friendly villages.

The A/O for the 1st Brigade would be roughly an oblong shaped area from east of Tam Ky to the village of Tien Phuoc toward the west. Most of this landscape consisted of a valley formed by a lone mountain (Hill 376, Tien Loc Mountain) on the west (later called Recon Zone Alpha), a river meandering north and south near Tien Phuoc to the west, and low ridges forming the north and south boundaries. Helicopter crews said this place was called "Death Valley." FSB (Fire Support Base) Professional was located on a small rise on the valley floor, with higher ridges to the north and south. Enemy pressure on the landing zone was so great that resupply was in danger of being cut off. Several days earlier, a CH-47 Chinook had been

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destroyed by recoilless rifle fire while it hovered over the helipad - in daylight. The day before the alert was issued; a company-sized infantry team had left FSB Professional on foot to sweep the immediate area. Only a handful of the team members had returned; the opposition had been so fierce that the dead and wounded had been left behind. It was thought that the infantry company had run into the main body of the 2nd North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Regiment. The S-2 (military intelligence) officer believed that the NVA regiment was reinforced with an anti-aircraft battalion equipped with 12.7mm machine guns. Roughly equivalent to American .50-caliber M-2 machine guns, these weapons were sometimes referred to as “.51’s.”

The first mission of the brigade aeroscouts was to find the site where the infantry team had been lost, locate the enemy, and look for American survivors. Probing the foothills northwest of FSB Professional, the brigade scouts in their small LOHs began investigating trails and hooch’s made of bamboo and thatch, experiencing sporadic automatic-weapons fire at every turn. The mission was different from what they had experienced up north. There, the scouts had had to do a lot of snooping to get the bad guys to fire at them. They had to hover down trails, follow footprints to hideouts, and sometimes even use their aircraft’s rotor wash to blow camouflage away in order to find the bad guys. Up north it was rare for only one or two weapons to open up; troops were more likely to run into a heavy volume of disciplined fire.

Here, however, it seemed that the NVA gunners on the ground were trying to swat gnats away—a few bursts of fire and perhaps the pests would fly away. One NVA gunner would fire from a hut, another from some nearby trail, and yet two more from a tree line. It was obvious that enemy troops did not perceive any real threat from the little choppers buzzing overhead.

On the first day, the white team operated alone; the Cobras and the FACs were not yet available to the scouts. The scouts had to be content with returning fire, dropping a few fragmentation or white phosphorus grenades, marking their maps and waiting for tomorrow; although happy to have found enemy.

The Americal Division had only one air cavalry troop (F Troop, 8th Cavalry “Blueghost”) and very limited gunship support. The 2nd NVA Regiment was unaccustomed to the tactics and sheer numbers of helicopters it would face in the days to come. By the second day of the mission, the full weight of the 101st’s Air Cavalry, the aerial rocket artillery and close air support was being brought to bear on the NVA. On the third day the brigade aeroscouts found what they had been looking for. A scout pilot had noticed a series of dark spots on the ground in a low area dominated by several small hills.

When the pilot began working the area, he encountered a large volume of fire from the surrounding hills, and the accompanying ARA gunships made strike after strike. The enemy here was now more disciplined and much heavier than the scouts had experienced in the previous two days. When the birds ran low on fuel and munitions, a FAC arrived with F-4s (Phantom fighter-bombers) to continue the fight. The cycle was repeated several times, alternating Cobras and F-4s, until the enemy action had ceased.

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At that point, the scouts were able to examine the target area closely. Each dark spot marked a fallen American soldier, the dark spots around each body caused by blood that had soaked the ground and turned dark as it dried. And each body had several bamboo poles thrust into it at odd angles. The scouts had found the wounded that had been left behind, and there were no survivors.

While the 101<sup>st</sup> had come looking for an elusive, shy enemy, the NVA had come to fight, and they had brought their lunch. Their .51s were well-positioned, supporting each other and commanding the high ground. Every airstrike, every resupply, every medivac was contested by interlocking .51 caliber anti-aircraft fire. As many as seven guns would engage a single aerial target, and each of these positions was supported by dozens of 7.62mm automatic weapons.

Although their makeup was different, the size of the two opposing forces was similar enough that neither side could maneuver for a decisive advantage. For every company-sized flanking movement performed by one opponent, a successful countermove was devised by the other. For several days, this deadly fandango continued without letup. The helicopter crews as well as the infantry were beginning to feel the pressure of sustained combat. By the end of the first week of the battle, only one OH-6 and two Cobras were flyable. Of all the aircraft of an Air Cavalry Troop, an ARA battery and a scout section, all but three were shot down or were so badly damaged that they could not fly for a 24-hour period. It was rumored that the “ground pounders” had lost 75 killed in action, and it was easy for those who were there to believe it.

The main problem was the .51s. Their fire was devastating to unarmored troops and thin-skinned aircraft. Their heavy staccato hammering made all other battlefield noise seem like whispers. A team of .51s (two, three, four, even more) and supporting small arms would stop an infantry advance cold.

The initial helicopter losses were a result of poor tactics. Pink teams and unprotected white teams were simply outgunned by the anti-aircraft the enemy had deployed in and around Death Valley. Recon flights that normally required a team of two helicopters now were performed by a team of five or six aircraft. After the tactics were changed (by the middle of the second week), helicopter losses dropped significantly.

The Air Cavalry now operated in heavy teams of two or three Cobras covering the scouts, with a Huey high overhead to act as a recovery bird if someone was shot down. The brigade aeroscout teams were even heavier; each mission consisted of two LOHs low, two ARA Cobras, a FAC and two F-4s on station. There were no more hovering or following footprints for the scouts. From 3,000 feet, the LOHs would dive for the jungle as fast as possible. This would put them in the “dead man’s zone” for the least amount of time. (From a distance of 50 to 1,500 feet, automatic weapons were very effective against helicopters; when the LOHs were operating against .51s, the danger zone was increased to 3,000 feet).

The LOHs would keep their speed up as they made a run over a target area. Inevitably they would draw heavy fire from dozens of AK-47s and as many as six or seven .51s. The

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gunners and observers would drop as many white phosphorus grenades as possible to mark the targets, while trying to simultaneously suppress the enemy with M-16, M-60 and minigun fire. After a marking run by the scouts, the Cobras would roll in with rockets and 40mm grenades. Usually the Cobras would expend their ammunition, and the enemy positions would be pounded by artillery.

Although the U.S. and NVA forces were numerically somewhat similar, the fire support and logistical backup afforded the American forces made for a vast difference between the 1st Brigade and the 2nd NVA Regiment. By the third week of the battle, the 2nd Regiment began trying to break contact, in an effort to fade away into the jungle. The regiment had broken up into company and platoon-sized elements and dispersed. The primary goal of the U.S. Air Cavalry and aeroscout units at that point was to find these elements so the infantry could finish their destruction.

There were reports of a complete NVA hospital to the south of the A/O, and it was thought that the remnants of the 2nd Regiment would try to evade in that direction or to the west, toward Laos. For days, scout teams and patrols scoured the hills north, south and west of Death Valley. Although there was frequent contact with the enemy, the NVA troops encountered were generally isolated stragglers or small, disorganized units. Had the 2nd Regiment successfully evaded the 1st Brigade, either linking up with the hospital to the south or, more likely, reaching Laos in the west? To most of the brass, it seemed likely.

But a small group at brigade S-2 (Intelligence) was not convinced that such a large unit, though substantially reduced in number, could evade such a comprehensive net as the 101st had lain within the A/O. And the Americal Division, operating around the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, had not detected the 2nd Regiment outside the A/O, south or west.

Only one apparent alternative seemed to remain: the 2nd Regiment was still in the A/O. With pressure mounting from blocking forces to the north, south and west, they had to go east. But to the east lay the open coastal plain and Route 1. Any large-scale movement there would immediately be detected and easily destroyed.

Only one other possibility remained. There was a small mountain (Hill 376, Tien Loc Mountain) just west of Tam Ky that defined the easternmost boundary of the 101st A/O and Death Valley. It was possible that the enemy force had evaded unexpectedly to the east, toward the strength of the U.S. forces, and was hiding practically under the Americans' noses.

The theory did not get much support from the command. No ground forces would be available to search the area, but the aero scouts were authorized to begin systematically exploring Hill 376 (Tien Loc Mountain AKA Recon Zone Alpha.) Alpha had been left alone until now; none of the 101st units had looked very closely at it, even though every helicopter that had operated within the A/O had to fly by it on its way in or out. It was the dominant piece of terrain in the whole sector; in retrospect, that no U.S. units were located on it is surprising.

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Beginning in late May 1969, the aero scouts worked Recon Zone Alpha daily. The hill mass was covered with low jungle broken occasionally by cultivated fields and grass hooch's. It was obvious that the fields were being worked daily, even though all friendly personnel had evacuated when operations began in May.

With the 2nd Regiment surrounded and friendlies removed, U.S. forces began a scorched-earth policy to deny food and shelter to the enemy. All structures in Recon Zone Alpha were to be destroyed, the crops were to be burned, and all livestock was to be slaughtered. Cobras made gun runs on chickens and water buffalo (by the time the scout teams returned from rearming and refueling, the buffalo would be butchered and carted off).

The scouts burned dozens of hooch's and many revealed bunkers concealed within them. The top of Recon Zone Alpha seemed to be covered with concealed fighting positions, but no one would shoot at the little helicopters. And so far, no enemy had been seen. Until the scout teams could report significant enemy contact, the chain of command would not believe that the hill mass was worth more than the efforts of the aero scouts.

Almost a week went by, with the infantry patrolling Death Valley, the Air Cavalry screening west, north and south, and the brigade scouts patrolling Recon Zone Alpha. Little was accomplished except the discovery of enemy bunker complexes, caches of weapons and buried bodies. It seemed that **Operation Lamar Plain** was winding down of its own volition. The frustration of the brigade scouts and their S-2 observers was reaching critical mass when help arrived from an unexpected quarter.

A holiday cease-fire was called in the last week in May (30 May 1969 – Buddha's Birthday); it sometimes seemed as if Buddha had a birthday every other month. Instructions were for no one to engage a target except in self-defense. The aeroscouts once again lifted off for Recon Zone Alpha, expecting another frustrating outing.

The white team had not been in the area very long when the lead LOH reported very excitedly that he had "gooks in the open, NVA everywhere!" The team leader in the trail ship asked what they were doing and how they knew the soldiers were NVA. The lead pilot reported that they were just sitting around, lounging in the shade. He knew they were NVA because he could see the stars on their belt buckles! He had no idea how many were down there; they were everywhere. Some were waving at him, and one shot him the finger!

What followed is a bit hazy. One pilot said he asked if anyone had taken fire. The other pilot thought someone yelled "Taking fire!" At any rate, the door gunner opened fire, inflicting several casualties. The trail scout, hearing the M-60 fire, began suppressing fire with his minigun. Soon the sky was full of tracers, red and green. So much for a cease-fire. The white team, having no Cobra cover, decided to return to Chu Lai to coordinate support.

The aero scouts returned with a pair of ARA Cobras. They had kicked over a hornet's nest; the team began taking fire several kilometers out, while still at high altitude. As had happened just a month previously, they took fire no matter which way they turned. The scouts kept their speed up and threw grenades as fast as they could. As the Cobras expended their munitions,

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another team was scrambled from Chu Lai, and tube artillery was called in. There was no doubt in the scouts' minds that what was left of the 2nd Regiment had just showed their hand.

The higher-ups still were not convinced that this was the main body of the enemy regiment. They were sure that the aero scouts had found a few stragglers, or maybe a local VC platoon. S-2 wanted to insert an infantry company to develop the situation, and it was decided a platoon would do just as well.

On 2 June, B Troop, 2/17th Air Cavalry inserted its aero-rifle platoon ("Blues") onto Hill 376, Tien Loc Mountain, for a reconnaissance mission. The undermanned platoon consisted of 18 men, including a medic and two Kit Carson scouts. They soon came under small arms fire and were ordered to turn around and go down the other side of the mountain. The two men at the lead were wounded in an ambush and the rest of the unit was pinned down. The medic, Sp4 Joseph Guy "Doc" La Pointe [Joseph Guy La Pointe, Jr., was a Conscientious Objector and Combat Medic. He was the recipient of the Medal of Honor and Silver Star Medal. He was killed in action 2 June 1969 on Hill 376.], rushed forward to help the two wounded men. La Pointe was hit but continued to administer aid until enemy grenades landed on his position, killing all three men.

As the battle continued into the afternoon, two more cavalymen were killed and several others wounded. A Command & Control helicopter was shot down over the battlefield.

Next it was decided to commit the entire infantry company, right on top of the mauled platoon. The LZ was small, surrounded by jungle shrub and low trees. The company was inserted piecemeal and it, too, took heavy casualties. Brigade scouts covering the combat assault confirmed that the U.S. troops on the ground were surrounded, and reported .51 fire. Efforts by the infantry company to fight its way out of the LZ were fruitless. It was soon apparent that the unit had been inserted right in the middle of what was left of the 2nd Regiment. Although they had been routed after a month of heavy fighting, the regiment was still organized and well-disciplined, and perhaps at battalion strength. The Americans on that LZ spent a night they would never forget.

The Blues (aero-rifle infantry) were now OPCON [Operational Control] to the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade and the aero-rifles (lift helicopters), their ships empty, headed back home to Chu Lai. There was nothing for them to do; there was nothing they could do. Flying south along the coast, the call was heard on the radio: "Doc is dead."

The clubs of MAG13 did not have the usual clientele from B Troop that night. With their comrades pinned down, spending the night on LZ Alpha, going to the club was the last thing on their minds. The next morning, 3 June, the rest of the battalion began its insertion into the LZ, right on top of everyone else, a platoon at a time. The LZ was too small to accept more than three or four choppers simultaneously. As each platoon landed, it immediately entered the fight to enlarge the perimeter. The pressure on the perimeter was maintained all day by the aero scouts, ARA, and gunships; with a team on station almost constantly. Finally, after three days, three companies had formed around the perimeter of the LZ and began making progress toward breaking out. The fighting was so close most of the time that TAC Air (F-4's)

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could not be used. The LOHs were called on several times to act as point for an infantry column, blasting through ambushes with mini-guns and grenades. One LOH crew [WO1 John Hayes, 1LT Michael Noonan] was awarded Silver Stars for hovering over two wounded GIs, covering them from NVA only 15 meters away, until their comrades could use ropes to pull them out to safety; out of the line of fire.

While the action was going on atop the hill, an assortment of 101st, Americal and ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) units were being assembled to set up blocking positions around the base of Recon Zone Alpha.

The U.S. assaults began to gain momentum; ground was gained in all directions from the original LZ. The 2nd Regiment was fighting for its life and losing. As position after position was overrun by the GIs, equipment peculiar to a headquarters was being found: stacks of new uniforms, sewing machines, medical supplies (many from the United States). Finally, as the fighting began to taper off, the North Vietnamese regimental commander, and a few of his staff, was found dead in a fighting position. The 2nd Regiment had ceased to exist. – [author **WO1 John Hayes**]

[But the fighting wasn't finished in the Area of Operations. This was about mid-June; Reconnaissance-in-Force continued during July and August 1969].

From Colonel Frank L. Dietrich's After Action Report (AAR): 4 July 1969 [this is the day we (Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division) lost – KIA WO1+Timothy Shawn Michael, LOH Pilot, KIA, Sp5 +Darrell (Mac) Eugene McGee, Crew-Chief, and KIA 1LT +Michael Dennis Noonan, S-2, Brigade Intel Observer].

- Activity was light in the AO as the lull in the ground fighting continued.
- At 2:50pm a Brigade LOH reconnaissance team received heavy ground fire and crashed. The aircraft then exploded and burned resulting in 3 US KIA.
- At 4:50pm Recon/1-501 tripped a pressure type mine resulting in 4 US WIA.
- At 7:10pm D/1-46 found the remains of 1 NVA KIA by small arms fire.

“NVA prisoners later referred to this operation as “**the big fight with the little helicopters.**” They were surprised at the aggressiveness the scouts exhibited and the firepower at their command. It is not much of a name for a battle, and unlike **Tet, Hamburger Hill** and **Khe San**, it will never be found in history books. But every soldier who came out of Death Valley and Recon Zone Alpha knew he had been in one helluva fight.” [Written by **CW2 John Hayes**/with additions and comments by CW2 Pete Rzeminski]

## **The A Shau Valley**

One of the most important Viet Cong and North Vietnamese supply and staging areas was the A Shau Valley, which ran along the western edge of the Thua Thien Province. Upon the completion of **Operation Nevada Eagle**, the 101st Airborne Division again attacked the A Shau Valley. In a series of operations known individually as **Massachusetts Striker**, **Apache Snow** (Hamburger Hill), and **Montgomery Rendezvous**, the Screaming Eagles cut North

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Vietnamese supply lines, destroyed base camps, and seized tons of supplies. The Division cleared the way for the first friendly armored vehicles to enter the valley and reopened temporary airstrips abandoned years earlier. The A Shau valley was finally cleared and armored forces were brought in to reopen abandoned air strips.

WO1+Raymond Cooreman<sup>2</sup> (Pilot-Deadbone 19) was killed on 27 December 1970 during an NVA 122 mm rocket attack on Camp Eagle. The unit (Aviation Platoon) had been finishing up its Christmas party and most had gone to bed when a rocket attack occurred. The sirens alerted everyone to go to the trench in the company area. Although everyone was in the trench, a 122 mm (RPG) rocket hit, and WO1 Cooreman took shrapnel through the back and out the chest. This was the last KIA casualty of the unit in Vietnam.

After these operations, the 101st Airborne went through a series of reorganizations. Their name was changed to the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Assault Division, the 101st Air Cavalry Division and later the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile).

With the change in names came a change in mission. The 101st Airborne Division was ordered back into Thua Thien to participate in civil operations designed to bolster the South Vietnamese government forces. They established a series of fire and patrol bases and conducted several operations that prevented the enemy from re-entering Thua Thien.

In addition, the 101st Airborne provided valuable technical training to the South Vietnamese forces and supported several South Vietnamese operations into Laos to cut off enemy supply and infiltration lines. These operations were designed to allow the South Vietnamese Army to operate on their own and turn over the fight to them. This was called "Vietnamization."

## **Operation Lam Son 719**

Operation Lam Son 719 was a limited-objective offensive campaign conducted in the southeastern portion of the Kingdom of Laos by the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) between 8 February and 25 March 1971. The United States provided logistical, aerial, and artillery support to the operation, but its ground forces were prohibited by law from entering Laotian territory. The objective of the campaign was the disruption of a possible future offensive by the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), whose logistical system within Laos was known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail (the Truong Son Road to North Vietnam).

By launching such a spoiling attack against PAVN's long-established logistical system, the American and South Vietnamese high commands hoped to resolve several pressing issues. A quick victory in Laos would bolster the morale and confidence of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), which was already high in the wake of the successful Cambodian Campaign of 1970. It would also serve as proof positive that South Vietnamese forces could

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<sup>2</sup>At 2310 hours on December 27, 1970, Camp Eagle in Thua Thien Province, RVN, received five rounds of enemy 122mm rocket fire, landing approximately 1000 meters from the Battalion command post. Two men from the 101st Airborne Division, +PFC Thurston C. Roberts and +WO Raymond R. Cooreman, were killed and four others wounded.

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defend their nation in the face of the continuing withdrawal of U.S. ground combat forces from the theater. The operation would be, therefore, a test of that policy and ARVN's capability to operate effectively by itself.

Because of the South Vietnamese need for security which precluded thorough planning, an inability by the political and military leaders of the U.S. and South Vietnam to face military realities, and poor execution, Operation Lam Son 719 collapsed when faced by the determined resistance of a skillful foe. The campaign was a disaster for the ARVN, decimating some of its best units and destroying the confidence that had been built up over the previous three years.

The number of helicopters destroyed or damaged during the operation shocked the proponents of U.S. Army aviation and prompted a reevaluation of basic airmobile doctrine. The 101st Airborne Division alone, for example, had 84 of its aircraft destroyed and another 430 damaged. Combined U.S./ARVN helicopter losses totaled 168 destroyed and 618 damaged. During *Lam Son 719* American helicopters had flown more than 160,000 sorties and 19 U.S. Army aviators had been killed, 59 were wounded, and 11 were missing at its conclusion. South Vietnamese helicopters had flown an additional 5,500 missions. U.S. Air Force tactical aircraft had flown more than 8,000 sorties during the incursion and had dropped 20,000 tons of bombs and napalm. B-52 bombers had flown another 1,358 sorties and dropped 32,000 tons of ordnance. Seven U.S. fixed-wing aircraft were shot down over southern Laos: six from the Air Force (two dead/two missing) and one from the Navy (one aviator killed).

Harry Reasoner wrote the following near the beginning of the operation in Laos named Lam Son 719. We lost many good men and aircraft there in a short period of time.

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**By Harry Reasoner (Lam Son 719) - February 16, 1971**

"You can't help but have the feeling that there will come a future generation of men, if there are any future generations of men, who will look at old pictures of helicopters and say, "You've got to be kidding."

Helicopters have that look that certain machines have in historical drawings. Machines or devices that came just before a major breakthrough. Record - changers just before the lightweight vinyl LP for instance.

Mark Twain once noted that he lost belief in conventional pictures of angels of his boyhood when a scientist calculated for a 150-pound man to fly like a bird, he would have to have a breast bone 15 feet wide supporting wings in proportion. Well, that's sort of the way a helicopter looks.

The thing is helicopters are different from airplanes. An airplane by its nature wants to fly, and if not interfered with too strongly by unusual events or incompetent piloting, it will fly. A helicopter does not want to fly. It is maintained in the air by a variety of forces and controls

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working in opposition to each other. And if there is any disturbance in this delicate balance the helicopter stops flying immediately and disastrously. There is no such thing as a gliding helicopter.

That's why being a helicopter pilot is so different from being an airplane pilot, and why in generality airplane pilots are open, clear-eyed, buoyant extroverts. And helicopter pilots are brooders, introspective anticipators of trouble. They know if something bad has not happened it is about to.

All of this, of course, is greatly complicated by being shot at. American helicopter pilots are being shot at more often and more accurately these days from Khe Sahn to Tchepone than at almost any other time in this whole war.

It's been a helicopter war all along. And the strange, ungainly, unlovable craft have reached the peak of being needed and the peak of being vulnerable at the same moment. Everyone who has flown over combat zones in Viet Nam in a helicopter knows the heart-stopping feeling you get when you have to go below 2,000 feet. Well, the men going in and out of Laos rarely get a chance to fly that high. They must be very brave men indeed.

This is a War we could not have considered without helicopters. The pilots are beginning to feel like Mark Twain's man who was tarred and feathered. If it weren't for the honor of the thing, they would just as soon have missed it."

Harry Reasoner was wrong about one thing. I don't know of a single Vietnam helicopter pilot..... or crewchief or doorgunner, for that matter..... who would have wanted to have done anything else there. It was hazardous to our health, but we loved it; most of the time.

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In late 1971, and early 1972 the 101st Airborne Division began returning home to Fort Campbell (homecoming ceremonies at Fort Campbell, KY on 6 April 1972). The Aviation Platoon, HHC, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division returned to Fort Campbell in January 1972, accompanied by three officers (two officers, Captain Richard G. Neil and 1LT Kermit Wade, and a warrant officer – CW2 Tom Gatz). It was the last Army Division to leave South Vietnam.

The majority of the 101st Airborne Division's tactical operations were in the Central Highlands and in the A Shau Valley farther north. Among its major operations was the brutal fight for Ap Bia Mountain, known as the "Hamburger Hill" battle.

The last Army division to leave Vietnam, the remaining elements of the 101st Airborne Division returned to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where today it is the Army's only air assault division. During the war, troopers from the 101st won 18 Medals of Honor for bravery in combat. The division suffered almost 20,000 soldiers killed or wounded in action in Vietnam, over twice as many as the 9,328 casualties it suffered in World War II.

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The 101st Airborne Division spent almost 7 years in combat in South Vietnam. During that time, the Division became one of the most feared units of the American Army.

During Vietnam, Army forces were ordered to create black and green subdued shoulder insignia that were designed to blend in with the green uniform. The 101st Airborne was one of only two units to retain their colored emblem.

The North Vietnamese called the 101st Airborne the "Chicken Men" because of their insignia (The Vietnamese had never seen an eagle before). Many enemy commanders warned their men to avoid the Chicken Men at all costs because in any engagement with them, they were sure to lose.

### **Requiem for our fallen comrades – +Noonan, +Michael, +McGee<sup>3</sup>**

+Michael Noonan, +Timothy Michael, +Darrell McGee

If there's one symbolic image of the Vietnam conflict it's probably the helicopter. During the war Americans saw helicopters in action end the nightly news programs and the covers of news magazines, transporting troops, firing on the enemy, and evacuating the wounded. The most recognizable image of the war's end is the photo of people being evacuated by helicopter from a Saigon rooftop on April 29, 1975. The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA), a non-profit veterans' group, estimates that about 40,000 helicopter pilots served in Vietnam. Of those, 2,202 died, along with 2,704 non-pilot crew members. The VHPA started with a reunion of 66 pilots held in Phoenix in 1984, and the organization now has more than 15,000 members.<sup>4</sup> The first military pilot to be killed in Vietnam, according to the Association, was Chief Warrant Officer Joseph A. Goldberg on July 15, 1962. The last was Second Lieutenant Richard Van De Geer on May 15, 1975 during the Mayaguez incident.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of helicopters in Vietnam can't be overstated.

A good summary of their role is found in this from Army Aviation Digest: "The use of the helicopter in the Vietnam conflict was to change forever the American doctrine of tactical warfare. Helicopters were found to be multidimensional. American combat units conducted tactical airmobile missions that included: insertions and extraction of ground forces; rescue of downed aviators; (close air support) with the UH-1 and AH-1 Cobra helicopter gunships; aerial reconnaissance; and MEDIVAC missions, known as 'dust-off' missions." The

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<sup>3</sup> Used with permission - "Died on the Fourth of July" by John F. Schlatter, available on Amazon.com

<sup>4</sup> [www.vhpa.org/VHPAHistory.pdf](http://www.vhpa.org/VHPAHistory.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The cargo ship USS Mayaguez was seized by the Khmer Rouge off the coast of Cambodia on May 12, 1975. President Gerald Ford ordered a military rescue effort. It was the last combat of the Vietnam era; 19 Americans were killed.

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MEDIVAC helicopter crews saved about 390,000 wounded American fighting men's lives during the Vietnam War.<sup>6</sup>

Flying a helicopter in Vietnam was extremely risky business. Pilots faced the normal hazards inherent in all aviation, plus they were being shot at and were often making tricky maneuvers in close proximity to other helicopters.

One of the workhorse aircraft in Vietnam was the OH-6A Light Observation Helicopter (LOH), often called the "Loach" or "LOCH" for its acronym, or the "Flying Egg" for its shape. Sturdy and maneuverable, it served a variety of purposes including command and control, observation, target acquisition, and reconnaissance.

On July 4, 1969 in Quang Tin Province a LOH from Headquarters Company, First Brigade, 101st Airborne Division was shot down by a Rocket Propelled Grenade. It crashed and burned, killing all three aboard:

- +WO1 Timothy Shawn Michael; pilot; 21; Cicero, New York
- +1LT Michael Dennis Noonan; observer; 22; Amarillo, Texas
- +SP5 Darrell Eugene McGee; crew chief; 25; Berlin, Wisconsin

From messages posted about these men on various online walls and unit web pages I (John F. Schlatter) was able to contact Craig Bixby, who was a member of the unit at the time. He put me in touch with Peter Rzeminski, who sent me an unofficial history<sup>7</sup> of the unit compiled from various members. Additional information came from Maj. C. Alan Hopewell, PhD, who knew Lieutenant Noonan in college at Texas A&M University.

### **+Warrant Officer Timothy Shawn Michael**

Timothy Shawn Michael graduated from North Syracuse (New York) High School in 1966 and enlisted in the Army in October 1967. After basic training, he went to flight school at Ft. Rucker, Alabama, where he became a Warrant Officer. He arrived in Vietnam in December 1968.

In the unofficial unit history, Robert Davies tells how his roommate, Tim, took Davies' place on a flight that turned out to be his last.

Davies wrote that he was scheduled for an early morning visual reconnaissance mission. When his alarm woke him up he couldn't focus his right eye.

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<sup>6</sup>LePore, Herbert. "The Role of the Helicopter in the Vietnam War." Army Aviation Digest, July/August 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Rzeminski, Peter J., Editor. A Mini-History of Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, South Vietnam. Work in progress, 2013.  
<http://www.vhpadata.org/unit/HHC1BDE101ABN.pdf>

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“As I rubbed it, it felt as though there was some matter around it. I tried to flick it away as you usually would but with no success. By this time, I had turned a light on and was looking for my mirror. Tim was my roommate, and was awoken by the commotion and decided to look at my eye. I think his exact words were ‘holy sh\*\*’ as he looked at my face. By this time, I focused with my left eye on some of the matter on my finger and I saw it was moving! It was ants and a lot of them! We looked at my pillow, and it was covered with those little sand ants.”

“Tim insisted I go on sick call and that he would take the mission. He grabbed his gear and said save some beer at the club for him as he left.”

When he learned of Tim’s fate later that day, “I was devastated. I could not believe it. I carry this memory with me all the time as I wonder if this was just bad luck or was there another meaning or purpose for this to happen. All I can do is remember what a great friend Tim was.” Warrant Officer Timothy Shawn Michael left a wife and son. He is buried at Assumption Cemetery in Syracuse, New York.

### **+Specialist Fifth Class Darrell Eugene McGee**

Craig Bixby served with Darrell Eugene (Mac) McGee in the 101st Airborne as a door gunner and crew chief. Bixby spent one tour in Vietnam 1968-69.

He first met McGee in November 1968. Bixby had just arrived at “Camp Eagle,” and recalls that McGee, “. . . was the first guy to step in to help a scared, lost, confused, FNG<sup>8</sup> get settled into such a strange and hostile place. I’ve never forgotten his kindness.”

McGee taught him the ropes for maintaining and inspecting the aircraft, and the ins and outs of a crew chief’s duties. “Most importantly he taught me how to relax, have fun, and not take myself or the war too seriously.” McGee was married, and Bixby said he often talked about plans for his family when he returned home.

Bixby recalls a birthday celebration the day before McGee died. One of three men whose birthdays were close together, Bixby had received a package from home with a homemade chocolate birthday cake, canned frosting, and candles.

They discovered that the cake was covered in mold. “Well, we were drooling for this cake and set on having a birthday party so we scraped off the mold, filled in the holes with the frosting, lit the candles and had one memorable birthday celebration on July 3rd, 1969.”

Bixby said McGee thought the Huey missions he was flying were too tame and boring so, occasionally for excitement, he would change places with one of the Loach crew chiefs and fly as door gunner. Bixby described the events of that Fourth of July in a posting on an online wall:

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<sup>8</sup> “FNG” is short for “F\*\*\*ing New Guy,” a term almost universally applied to men who had just arrived “in country.”

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“It was while flying Low Ship on one of these recon flights July 4, 1969 that he was shot down. I was flying within a few miles of where he went down. When we got to the area the High Ship, with Tom Marcotte flying as Door Gunner, had already landed and we flew covering fire while Tom did his best to try and free them from the crashed helicopter. But, there just wasn't anything anyone could do. What a helpless, frustrating feeling to have so much help so close at hand and to be completely helpless.

“To this day there isn't a birthday or Fourth of July that I don't remember the fun we had and the tragedy of that day in 1969 and offer a prayer for Mac and the family he never got to see again. “During a visit to the Memorial in Washington the eeriest thing happened. I wasn't able to look up his name in the book because he was known as Mac to just about everyone and I never knew or couldn't remember his first name. While walking quietly along the Wall, Mac's name just leaped out at me almost in 3-D. Mac was making sure I knew “Mac,” I hope you're carefree and happy, and I know that you'll be waiting to someday again help out a scared, lost, confused, FNG to get settled into a new and wonderful place, this time.”<sup>9</sup>

With the wry humor so typical of military men he described his experience after returning home:

“After Vietnam, I was at Ft. Rucker with no real work so the Army decided they needed truck drivers. So, they made a bunch of crew chiefs truck drivers, sent us to northern Alabama to Ft. McClellan so we could convoy 80 trucks to West Point in order to drive the cadets around for the summer.”

He got out of the Army, found that good jobs were hard to find, joined the Air Force, and worked on a variety of aircraft. He retired from the Air Force in 1988 and went to work for a regional airline in Indianapolis.

Darrell Eugene McGee is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Berlin, Wisconsin. His widow remarried in 1986 and passed away in 2012.

### **+First Lieutenant Michael Dennis Noonan**

Texas A&M University has a rich military tradition with its Corps of Cadets and the Fightin' Aggies Marching Band. First Lieutenant Michael Dennis Noonan was an Aggie. He is a graduate of Tascosa High School in Amarillo and graduated from A&M in 1968, where he was a member of the marching band.<sup>10</sup>

One of his fellow band members, C. Alan Hopewell, was a freshman (or “Fish”) when Michael was a senior. Hopewell posted a message to an online wall in 2004:

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<sup>9</sup> Craig L. Bixby, Remembering a Friend, June 19, 2013, used by permission.

<sup>10</sup> Used with permission - “Died on the Fourth of July” by John F. Schlatter, available on Amazon.com

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“Michael Noonan was a senior in the Fighting Texas Aggie Band when I entered Texas A&M University in the Fall of 1967. Two of his classmates included Henry Cisneros, HUD Cabinet Secretary, and General Stephen Korenek. As he was a senior, I did not know him well, but I remember him often in his senior boots, usually at the end of the hall, at times calling for "Fish Hopewell" to perform a detail. Like all seniors, he was impressive and self-assured, and he also appeared to me to be a genuine and likable person.<sup>11</sup>

When I contacted Hopewell by email, he wrote, “To me, these men are the REAL ‘greatest generation’ in that they went to do a job no one else would do and under the worst circumstances ever.”

First Lieutenant Michael Dennis Noonan is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

**Work-in-Progress - List of Officers and Enlisted who served with Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, (and some others) and contact information is correct as of date of publication.**

Pilots

Kenneth V. Arnold III, CW2 (Pilot, Brigade Aviation Officer)

2205 St. Vincent Court

Arlington, TX 76013-1379

C: 817-300-6550

Ken4969@att.net

Class: 66-15, 66-13

Vietnam Tour: (October 66-October 67)

Unit: Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, October 66-October 67

Carl J. Bass, CW2 (Pilot)

PO Box 3390

La Pine, Oregon 97739

Cell 503-267-0222

cbass28@gmail.com

Class: 70-13/70-11

Vietnam Tour: July 1970 – July 1971

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, July 1970 – July 1971

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<sup>11</sup> Used by permission of Major C. Alan Hopewell, PhD. A psychologist and Army Reserve officer, Major Hopewell is an expert in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He served on active duty in Afghanistan where he was awarded the Bronze Star. He was one of the primary targets of Ft. Hood shooter Major Nidal Hasan, who killed 13 people in 2009. Major Hopewell testified at Nidal's trial.

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Retired from Chrysler  
Semi-retired as school bus driver, wood turner, dog walker

Francis M. Bastow, CW2 (Pilot)  
RD 1 Box 152  
Newark Valley, NY 13811  
donehere@msn.com  
Class: 69-27  
Vietnam Tour: August 1970-August 1971  
Unit: D2nd, 1<sup>st</sup> Cav, August 1970-December 1970; Aviation Platoon (deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, December 1970-August 1971

Beattie, Dennis L., WO1 (Pilot)  
1821 Maple Ln  
Saint Cloud, MN 56304-4619  
Work Phone: 484-885-0460  
Cell Phone: 817-583-0757  
dbeattie51@hotmail.com  
Class: 69-43  
Vietnam Tour: February 1970-March 1971  
Unit(s): A Company (Comanchero 22), 101st Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (February 1970-70); Aviation Platoon (Deadbone 10), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division(70-March 1971)

Gary V. Bechthold, CW2 (Pilot)  
1380 Sun Tree Dr  
Roseville, CA 95661-5396  
916 847-5212  
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Class: 69-5  
Vietnam Tour: May 1969-May 1970  
Unit(s): Company (Phoenix), 158th Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; May 1969-July 1969, Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; July 1969-May 1970

Bruce C. Bickerstaff, 1Lt (Pilot)  
3473 Evening Light Drive  
Bartlett, TN 38135  
H 901 604-0477  
C 901 377-6207  
bickerstaffbruce@bellsouth.net  
Class: 68-24/68-42  
Vietnam Tour: 1969; January 1971-December 1971  
Unit(s): 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (69); C Company (Black Widow), 101stAviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, January 1971-March 1971; HHT (Killer),101stAviation

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Battalion, 101 Airborne Division, March 1971-June 1971; Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, June 1971-December 1971

Edson G. Brock, Captain (Pilot; Aviation Platoon Leader, following Captain Chet Uszynski)  
9814 Regency Dr  
Baton Rouge, LA 70815-4943  
H: 225-231-2395  
tmcgeef18@aol.com  
Class: 65-10

Vietnam Tour(s): January 1966-January 1967; September 1969-September 1970  
Units: 162 Assault Helicopter Company, 1st Aviation Brigade (January 1966-January 1967); D Company, 101st Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, September 1969-February 1970, Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, February 1970-September 1970

Alvin D. Cantrell, 2Lt (Pilot)  
126 N Lakeside Dr NW  
Kennesaw, GA 30144  
Cell Phone: 678-641-8865  
Deadbone33@gmail.com  
Class: 71-12

Vietnam Tour: June 71 – June 72

Unit(s): Aviation Platoon (Deadbone33) HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (June 71, December 71); D/1/1 (Sabre) CAV 196 LIB (January 72-April 72); D/17 CAV (April 72-June 72)

+Jerry Ralph Brown, Captain (Pilot, Aviation Platoon Leader)

Vietnam Tour: (66-67)

Unit: HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division (66-67)

Born: March 11, 1949; Deceased, November 19, 1975 (age 28). Died after his tour in Vietnam while acting as a co-pilot in a Helicopter crash.

+Terry A. Carlson, 1LT (Pilot)

Class: 69-26

Vietnam Tour: 1969-1970

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, 1969-1970

Born: October 18, 1947; Deceased December 11 (age 68), 2015, Farmington, PA

Rex A. Chadwell, CW2 (Pilot)

PO Box 150

Deer Harbor, WA 98243

H 360376-2411

C 847354-1503

captainrex@mac.com

Class: 69-15

Vietnam Tour: July 1969-July 1970

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit(s): B Company (Kingsman), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, July 1969-May 1970; Aviation Platoon(Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, May 1970-July 1970

+Joseph W. Chitwood, Cpt (Pilot)

Class: 66-7

Units: 1st Tour: Medivac, 2nd Tour: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, 1969-1970 (Served as Maintenance Officer and OH-6A Instructor Pilot).

Born: April 22, 1941; Deceased: September 19 (age 61), 2002, Milton, FL

+Raymond Robert Cooreman, WO1

Home: Tracy, Minnesota; DOB: 7 November 1949

Class: 70-13

Vietnam Tour: July 4, 1970 – December 27, 1970

Place of death: Thua Thien Province I Corps, Viet Nam KIA; 27 December 1970 (age 21)

Honored on Panel 05W, Row 10 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone 19), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; July 1970 – 27 December 1970

Joseph M. Crha, WO1 (Pilot)

1973 Atlantic Ave

Kingman, AZ 86401

c: 928-897-1402

928-753-3352

mamayry@yahoo.com

Class: 69-23

Vietnam Tour: August 1969-August 1970; July 1972-February 1973

Unit(s): HHC 101st Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, August 1969-January 1970; C Company (Black Widows), 101st Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, January 1970-February 1970); Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, February 1970-August 1970; F Troop, 4th Cavalry Regiment, July 1972-February 1973

Daniel J. Cumbow, Cpt (Pilot, Awards Officer)

5329 Cherry Bottom Road

Columbus, OH 43230

Cell 614-395-8102

dcumbow@outlook.com

Class: 68-518/68-32

Vietnam Tour: July 1969 – July 1970

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, July 1969 – July 1970

Robert M. Davies, CW2 (Pilot)

1935 Randall Road

Texarkana Texas 75501

Cell 903-826-2174

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

bob@davies.us

Class: 68-519/68-35

Vietnam Tour: January 1969 – August 1970

Units: Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, January 1969 – September 1969; A Battery (Gunner), 377<sup>th</sup> Artillery, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, September 1969 – August 1970

+Fredrick Donald Daniloff, Cpt (Pilot)

Class:

Units: 1st Tour: Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (66-67), 2nd Tour: 92<sup>nd</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 10<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion (1969)

Born: March 12, 1938; Deceased: February 22 (age 36), 1974, from OV-1 Mohawk test flight.

+Prince A. Denson III, CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 65-3W

Vietnam Tour: May 1966 – May 1967

Unit: HHC (call sign Eagle 12), 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, May 1966 – May 1967

Born: October 29, 1943; Deceased: August 19 (age 74), 2018.

Jon F. Drake, WO1 (Pilot)

2408 Pickwick Drive

Henderson, NV 89014

Home: 702-435-6427

Cell: 702-469-4678

Jdrake4040@cox.net

Class: 70/15-7013

Vietnam Tour: July 1970-July 1971

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone 40), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, July 1970-July 1971

+George E. Dyal, CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 68-507/68-9

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (68-69)

Born: May 9, 1948; Deceased: February 21 (age 50), 1999, Lake Placid, FL

Peter R. Engelhardt, 1Lt (Infantry, PSYOPS Officer and acting Asst S-3)

28 Oakland Place

Summit, NJ 07901

Cell: (908) 347 - 0256

prepalaw@ix.netcom.com

Vietnam Tour: October '68 - August 69'

Unit: HHC, 2nd Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, October 1968 - August 1969

**Did not serve in the Aviation Platoon**, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. He adds some additional information/insight regarding Operation Lamar Plain, and on Captain Pape.

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Lloyd W. Enos, WO1 (Pilot)  
149 Exeter Pl  
Saint Paul, MN 55104-5708  
651-647-1130  
lenos@aol.com

Class: 69-25/69-23

Vietnam Tour: January 1970-January 1971

Unit(s): B Troop (Banshee) 2/17 Cavalry, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, January 1970-March 1970;  
Aviation Platoon (Deadbone 27), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, March 1970-  
January 1971

Michael V. Fitzgerald, WO1 (Pilot)

1759 Palo Verde Ave  
Las Cruces, NM 88001  
Home 575 524-9330  
Mvfitzgerald00@yahoo.com

Class: 70-9/70-5

Vietnam Tour: June 1970-June 1971

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, June 1970-  
June 1971

William J. Fitzgerald, WO1 (Pilot)

P.O. Box 6084 (2514 Loyola Street)  
Lubbock TX 79493-6084  
Home 806 744-1280  
Cell 806 239-6561  
kc5aae@juno.com

Class: 70-5/70-3

Vietnam Tour: March 1970-March 1971

Unit(s): C Company (Black Widow), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, March  
1970-June 1970; Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division,  
June 1970-March 1971

+Herbert Winston Francis, Jr. CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 69-3

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin/Griffin), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (69)  
Born: August 29, 1947; Deceased: December 16, 2009 (age 62), New Orleans, LA

Thomas P. Gatz, CW2 (Pilot)

409 W. Briarcliff Rd.  
Bolingbrook, IL 60440  
Home 630 759-1827  
Cell 630 750-5889  
Deadbone10@comcast.net  
Class: 68-9/68-11

Vietnam Tour: 1968, 71-72

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit(s): B/229 AHB 1 CAV (68); Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, June 1971-January 1972

Theodore J. Grabbe, Cpt (Pilot, Maintenance Officer)

1066 S Whippoorwill Ln

Palatine, IL 60067

Home: 847-358-8458

Email: tjgrabbe@comcast.net

Class: 68-516/68-28

Vietnam Tour: March 1969-April 1970

Unit: 5<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Aircraft Maintenance Support), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, March 1968-September 1968; Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, September 1968-April 1969

Gene P. Haltenhof, Cpt (Pilot)

117 East Monroe, Apt 117300

Kirkwood, MO 63122

Home: 314-315-1008

gph93048@aol.com

Class: 70-10

Vietnam Tour: July 1971 – June 1971

Unit(s): C Company Phoenix, 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, July 1970 – January 1971; Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, January 1971 – June 1971

John E. Hayes, WO1 (Pilot)

924 Oak Point Rd

Longview, WA 98632-9746

Home 360 636-6191

johnhayespilot@yahoo.com

Class: 68-511/68-19

Vietnam Tour: September 1968 – July 1969; Wounded 28 June 1969 (Operation Lamar Plain), Medivac'd out of country

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Little Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; September 1968 – July 1969

+Robert J. Herrin, CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 68-19/68-33

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

Born: September 18, 1942; Deceased: July 1, 1993 (age 50), Tampa, FL

Edward J. Holguin, CW2 (Pilot)

4440 Torrey Pines Dr

Chino Hills, CA 91709

H: 909-393-1352

C: 909-240-4448

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

deadbone52@aol.com

Class: 70-39/70-37

Vietnam Tour: January 1971-December 1971

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, January 1971-December 1971

Terry C. Hunt, CW2 (Pilot)

16921 Donnel Lake St.

Vandalia, MI 49095-8716

Cell 574 220-2872

3terryc@gmail.com

Class: 68-521/68-39

Vietnam Tour: February 1969 – February 1970

Units: C Company (Black Widow), 101st Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, February 1969 – May 1969; Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division; May 1969 – February 1970

+David Eugene Jackson, Cpt (Pilot)

Class: 71-12

Unit(s): Aviation Platoon (Deadbone) HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (June 71-December 71); D Troop (Sabra), 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry (Armored), 196 Light Infantry Brigade (January 72-April 72); D Troop, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 196 Light Infantry Brigade (April 72-June 72)

Vietnam Tour: June 71–June 72

Born: January 9, 1946; deceased: August 31, 1997 (age 51), Henry County Cemetery, Birmingham, AL 35210

Michael M. Jacobi, Cpt (Pilot)

11711 Leavenworth Rd.

Kansas City, KS 66109

Cell 913-721-3922

m.jacobi@yahoo.com

Class: 67-3/67-1

Vietnam Tour: May 1967-May 1968; 70-71

Unit(s): HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division; May 1967-May 1968; B Company (Lancers), 158th Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

Charles Kettles, Maj (Pilot; Brigade Aviation Officer, Medal of Honor recipient)

1306 W Cross

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

H 734 482-7990

ackettles@gmail.com

Class: 54CL

Vietnam Tour: February 1967-November 1967, October 1969-October 1970

Unit(s): 176<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, February 1967-June 1967; Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division June 1967-

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

November 1967; 121<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 13<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion, October 69-October 1970

+Leonard F. Keys, 1Lt (Pilot)

Class:

Vietnam Tour: September 1965-September 1966

Unit: HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division, September 1965-September 1966

Born: December 30, 1934; Deceased: July 25, 1998 (age 63), Dallas, TX

+Robert Kraft, Captain (Pilot; Aviation Platoon Leader, following Captain Edson Brock)

Class: 67-17

Vietnam Tour(s): 1967-1967; 1970-1971

Units: 174 Assault Helicopter Company (67-68); Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, (70-71)

Born: March 2, 1942; Deceased: December 10, 2008 (age 66), El Cajon, CA

+David T. Laporte, CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 71-15/71-13

Vietnam Tour: 1971-1972

Units: Americal Division (71); Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (71-72); F/8 CAV (72)

Born: November 8, 1949; Deceased: 1990 (age 40), Broward, Florida (Buried in Arlington National Cemetery)

+Randall "Randy" Luther Lasater, Captain (Pilot)

Class: 68-12/68-18

Vietnam Tour: 1968-1969

Units: Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; A Company (Comanchero 16), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Born: October 9, 1949; Deceased: December 14, 2011 (age 62), Salt Lake City, UT

Donald L. Ledbetter, 1Lt (Pilot; Flight Operations Officer)

29010 Bay Hill Ct

Georgetown, TX 78628

Cell 512 966-8882

donaldledbetter@outlook.com

Class: 69-4

Vietnam Tour: May 1969 – May 1970

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; May 1969 – May 1970

Fort Rucker, AL. May 1970 – September 1972 (Including 6 month TDY to Iran). Career helicopter pilot: Laos, Singapore, (off-shore oil companies), Iran (1 ½ yrs), Houston- 8 years and 11 years in Saudi Arabia. Semi-retired in Texas since 1997.

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Raymond Longhenry, WO1 (Pilot)

2017 Old 6 Road

Brooklyn, IA 52211

Email: wxangels@yahoo.com

Home Phone: 641 223-2729

Class: 70-31/70-29

Vietnam Tour: December 1970-December 1971

Unit(s): B Company (Lancers), 158th Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, December 1970-January 1971; Aviation Platoon (Deadbone 17), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, January 1971-December 1971

Russell A. Maxson, WO1 (Pilot)

107 South Galaxy Drive

Chandler, AZ 85226

H.480-961-0270

C. 480 209-6001

cactusmaxson@cox.net

cactusmaxson@hotmail.com

Class: 66-5W, 66-5

Vietnam Tours: May 1966-June 1967; January 1972-December 1972

Units: Unit: Aviation Section (Eagle 15), HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division, May 1966-June 1967; 57th Assault Helicopter Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade, January 1972-December 1972

Kevin M. Maynard, CW2 (Pilot)

1035 S. Uravan Ct.

Aurora, CO 80017

Cell 720-936-0702e

Home: 303-745-6185

Kevinmaynard@q.com

Class: 68-517, 68-31

Vietnam Tour: December 1968 – December 1969

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; December 1968 – December 1969.

Career Army Pilot, flying Fixed Wing; mostly VIP Transport in C-12's. Retired CW4.

William L McQuade, WO1 (Pilot)

Class: 66-5W/66-5

PO Box 489

Manassas, VA 20108-0489

H Phone: 410-747-3404

W Phone: 410-409-7349

william.mcquade@worldnet.att.net

Vietnam Tour: 66-67; 68-69

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit(s): Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (66); 121<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 13<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion (66-67); D Company, 229<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 1 Cavalry Division (68-69)

+Ray H. McCall, WO1 (Pilot) (DROS, December 31, 1970)

Class: 69-39/69-37

Vietnam Tour(s): (70); (73)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70); 1/8 ARVN CAV (73)

Born: March 13, 1939, Fort Dodge, IA; Deceased: April 10, 2009 (age 70), Milton, FL.

Samuel E. McGee III, WO1 (Pilot)

232 Henley Drive

Naples, FL 34104

H Phone:

Cell phone:

Email:sam.mcgee@verizon.net

Class: 66-5W

Vietnam Tour(s): June 1966-June 1967; (70-71)

Unit(s): Aviation Section, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, June 1966-June 1967; 134<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade (70-71)

Carlos J. Melendez, Captain (Pilot, Aviation Officer)

7034 Golf Pointe Cir

Tamarac, FL 33321

H: 954-726-2333.

C: 786-367-3275

Email: ranger6@bellsouth.net

Class: 66-16

Vietnam Tour: 1966 – 1967; 1969 - 1970

Unit: 129<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 10<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion, (66-67); HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, (67); B Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, (69-70)

Carl E. Midkiff, WO1 (Pilot)

1029 David Court

Redcliff, KY 40160

Home: 270-351-1950

Redhatt13@aol.com

Class: 66-18

Vietnam Tour: December 1966-December 1967; 69-70

Unit(s):1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; December 1966-December 1967, 20th Transportation Company, 520<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (69-70)

+Timothy Shawn Michael, WO1 (Pilot)

Home: Cicero, New York; DOB: 16 March 1948

Class: 68-517/68-27

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Vietnam Tour: January 1969 – July 4, 1969

Place of death: Quang Tin Province, Viet Nam KIA (Operation Lamar Plain); 4 July 1969 (age 21); OH-6A tail number # 66-07812

Honored on Panel 21W, Row 61 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; January 1969 – July 4, 1969

Mark S. Michael, CW2 (Pilot); (brother of Timothy Michael – Pilot)

506 Roxford Road South

Syracuse, NY 13208-3129

Cell 315 314-1137

Cw2michael7@verizon.net

Class: 83-47

+Ronald G. Miller, Cpt (Pilot)

H: 518 463-6865 (Carolyn Miller)

wellnzed243@gmail.com (Carolyn Miller)

Class: 64QC

Vietnam Tour: September 1965-August 1966

Unit: HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate) 101st Airborne Division; September 1965-August 1966

Born: April 27, 1938, Fort Dodge, IA; Deceased: June 5, 2010 (age 72), Memorial Sloan Kettering, New York City, New York; Buried in Saratoga National Cemetery, Saratoga, New York, with full military honors.

Stuart A Miller, Major (Pilot; Aviation Platoon Leader, 1st Brigade Aviation Officer)

502 Brentwood Ave

Severna Park, MD 21146

410 647-3496

smiller6@comcast.net

Class: 60-9 Fixed Wing; Unknown- Rotary Wing Qualification Course 1968

Vietnam tour: April 65 – June 66; June 68 – June 69;

Unit(s): 220th Aviation Company, Phu Bai, Vietnam, stationed in Quang Ngai; Vietnam, April 65 – August 65. 12th Aviation Group, – Saigon, Vietnam (Wrote Visual Survey Plan for Vietnam); September 65 to June 66. 1st Brigade, 101st Air Assault Division, Brigade Aviation Officer & HHC, Aviation Platoon Leader, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; June 68 to June 69

Walter J. Morris, CW2 (Pilot)

164 Birdie Drive

Stanley, NC 28164-8806

C 704-258-4728

morriswj@bellsouth.net

Class: 67-3

Vietnam Tour: April 1967-April 1968

Unit(s): HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, April 1967- April 1968

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Alex F. Nagy, CW2 (Pilot)

194 Locust Court

Muskegon, MI 49445

C: 231726-8998

alex\_joker141966@yahoo.com

Class: 66-2QC/64-1FW

Vietnam Tour: October 1966-October 1967

Unit(s):48th Assault Helicopter Company, October 1966-August 1967; HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, August 1967-October 1967

+Richard G. Neil, WO1, 1<sup>st</sup> tour; CPT, 2<sup>nd</sup> tour (Pilot; Aviation Platoon Leader, following Captain Robert Kraft)

Class: 67-15, Class Picture: 67-15b1

Vietnam Tour(s): September 1967-September 1968; June 1971-January 1971

Unit(s): HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division September 1967-September 1968; Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, June 1971-January 1972

Born: March 4, 1946; deceased: November 8, 2010 (age 64)

+John B. Nelson, WO1 (Pilot) (DROS, February 16, 1971)

Class: 69-43/69-39

Vietnam Tour: 1970-1971

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

Born: November 20, 1947; Deceased: January 31, 2009 (age 61), Flemington, NJ

+Michael Dennis Noonan, 1Lt (Intel)

Place of death: Quang Tin Province, Viet Nam KIA (Operation Lamar Plain); 4 July 1969; OH-6A tail number # 66-12078

Honored on Panel 21W, Row 62 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Vietnam Tour: 1968-1969

Unit: S2, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Born: January 9, 1947; Deceased: July 4, 1969 (age 22); buried at Arlington National Cemetery

+Stefan Nickoloff, WO1 (Pilot)

Class: 66-23/ 66-21

Vietnam Tour: 1967-1968

Unit: HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (67-68)

Born: December 6, 1938; deceased: November 1, 1978 (age 39)

Was an Air Force Avionics Technician who enlisted in the Army to fly helicopters

Jay A. Nichols, CW2, (Pilot) (CW4 Ret)

2 North Flamingo Street.

La Marque, TX 77568

Cell phone: 281-615-0685

Home phone: NA

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

janichol@ix.netcom.com

alternate email: Deadbone24@gmail.com

Class: 69-29/69-27

Vietnam Tour: April 1970-April 1971

Unit(s): C Company (Black Widows), 101st Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division; April 1970 to June 1970. Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; June 1970 to Apr 1971

Since then, 11 year's active duty as a scout pilot and instructor pilot, 12 years Texas National Guard scout pilot in the 197th Aviation Battalion. Fixed wing civilian instructor, commuter pilot, off-shore helicopter pilot. 1982 started a career as a contractor at the Johnson Space Center, Houston TX, retiring from Boeing in 2010. Now working for my wife, as office manager for her medical practice.

Charles F. Nowlin, 1Lt (Pilot)

410 Country Lane

San Antonio, TX 78209

H 210 828-7164

ckinsa02@aol.com

Class: 70-18

Vietnam Tour: July 1970-December 1970; Wounded December 1970

Unit(s): B Company (Lancers), 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, June 1970-July 1970; Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, July 1970-December 1970

Gregory D. Parrish, Captain (Pilot)

2174 Southpoint Drive

Hummelstown, PA 17036

Phone: 717-566-9074

Phone: 717-903-9953

parrishgdp@aol.com

Class: 68-520, 68-36

Vietnam Tour: May 1969 – April 1970

Unit: A Company (Comanchero), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, May 1969 – June 1969; Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, July 1969 – April 1970; Retired as Brigadier General (07) – US Army.

James R. Rafferty, Maj (Pilot; 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate) Aviation Officer, following Major Peterson)

22322 Hernando Ave

Port Charlotte, FL 33952

941 625-2072

Jnjraff981@aol.com

Class: 63-3QC

Vietnam Tour: July 1966-July 1967, 70-71

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit(s):180 Assault Support Helicopter Company, July 1966-September 1966; HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, September 1966-July 1967; A/3/17 CAV (70-71); HHT/3/17 CAV (71)

+Albert G. Rampone, CW2/1Lt (Pilot; Maintenance Officer)

Class: 66-23/66-21

Vietnam Tour: 1967-1968; March 1969-March 1970

Unit(s):281 AHC (67-68); 5<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion, March 1969-August 1969 (CW2); Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, September 1969-March 1970 (1LT)

Born: June 12, 1946; Deceased: July 23, 2017 (age 71), Warrensburg, MO

Jack Rees, CW2 (Pilot; Maintenance Officer; Test Pilot)

51 Gardner Lane

Tularosa, NM 88352

Cell: 575 430-0456

jrees@tularosa.net

Class: 67-19

Vietnam tour: April 1968 – April 1969. January 1972 – January 1973

Unit: C Company (Black Widow), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, April 1968 – December 1968; Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, December 1968 – April 1969; D Troop, 229<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, January 1972 – August 1972; 34<sup>th</sup> General Support Group (Saigon); August 1972 – January 1973

John M. Romer, CW2 (Pilot)

15344 Pottstown Avenue

Port Charlotte, FL 33981

Cell: 610 909-8025

mromer47@gmail.com

Class: 68-7

Vietnam tour: February 1969 – February 1970

Unit: B Company (Lancers), 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; February 1969 – July 1969, Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; July 1969 – February 1970

Peter M. Ross, CW2 (Pilot)

36 W Pointe Dr

Ephrata, PA 17522

H: 717-468-2208

petermross101@gmail.com

Class: 69-17/69-13

Vietnam Tour(s): August, 1969-July, 1970; October 1970-December 1970

Unit(s):A Company (Comanchero 15) (August 1969-March 1970),101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (69); [A Company became F Troop 2/17 CAV for a short period of time, then returned to being A Company] (March 1970); Aviation Platoon (Deadbone 23),

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (March 1970-July 1970); B Troop (Banshee 10), 2/17 Cavalry, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (October 1970-December 1970)

I spent over 13 years on flight status. I was a CW3 Senior Pilot UH1 flight instructor in the PA National Guard.

Peter J. Rzeminski, CW2 (Pilot)

13417 Medina Drive

Orland Park, IL 60462

Cell 708 421-5744

Home 708 361-1330

pjr@pjr.net

Class: 68-9/68-11 (Class Photo 68-7 B1)

Vietnam Tour: August 1968 – December 1969; Wounded June 1969

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin/Griffin), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division; August 1968 – December 1969

18th Aviation Battalion, V Corps, Germany. January 1970 – January 1972

Army Reserves: March 1972 – May 2000. Recalled to Active Duty, December 1997 – August 1998, Bosnia. Retired Colonel (06) Civil Affairs, May 2000 (33 years). Retired Hospital Executive, April 2013 (39 years).

+Garald J. Sauer, WO1 (Pilot)

Class: 66-16

Vietnam Tour: 1966-1967

Unit: (Eagle 16) HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (66-67)

Born: January 28, 1933; Deceased: April 5, 2007 (age 74), Boise, ID

John P. Sills, 1Lt (Pilot; Operations Officer)

12128 Lake Lora Ci

Baton Rouge, LA 70816

C 225 405-1561

jpsills@cox.net

Class: 71-6

Vietnam Tour: March 1971-March 1972

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, March 1971-January 1972; B Troop, 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, January 1972-March 1972

I ended up flying scouts in Cambodia.

David E. Simpson, WO1 (Pilot)

PO Box 183

Manor, TX 78653-0183

Cell Phone: 512-922-2211

ddimport@flash.net

Class: 68-517, 68-31

Vietnam tour: December 1968 –December 1969

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, December 1968 – July 1969; A Company (Comanchero11), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, July 1969 – December 1969

Bob D. Steele, CW2 (Pilot)  
2904 Scarborough Ln W  
Colleyville, TX 76034-4618  
817-283-4155  
Bullet33@att.net  
Class: 64-1

Vietnam Tour: September 1965-August 1966

Unit: HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate) 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; September 1965-August 1966

+Rev. Paul D. Steinke, CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 68-521/68-39/68-33

Vietnam Tour: 1969-1970

Unit(s): B/101 AVN 101 ABN (69); HHC/101 AHB 101 ABN (69-70); Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division(70)

Deceased: 4 September 2014, Florida

John Steponaitis, CW2 (Pilot)

61 Bunker Hill Road #A

Watertown, CT 06795-3304

Cell Phone: 203-733-3249

Home Phone: 860-945-9610

steponit@att.net

Class: 69-5

Vietnam Tour: May 1969-May 1970

Unit(s): A Company (Ghost Riders), 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, May 1969-October 1969; Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, October 1969-May 1970

James A. Stone, WO1 (Pilot)

Rt 1 Box 875

Webbers Falls, OK 74470

Home Phone: 918-464-2356

Cell Phone: 918-684-4153

jim.stone.ok@gmail.com

Class: 68-21

Vietnam Tour: August 1969-August 1970

Units(s): B Co (Kingsman 18), 101st Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; February 1969-August 1969; Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, August 1969-February 1970

Harry Bruce Sutton, CW2 (Pilot)

5835 Autumn Trail

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Brownsburg, IN 46123

Cell 317 892-4032

Home 317 501-4540

bhbsutton@gmail.com

Class: 68-13/68-21

Vietnam Tour: October 1968 – May 1970

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, October 1968 – May 1970

Ernest G. Thibault II, WO1/Cpt (Pilot); Wounded Oct 68, Medivac'd to Japan

709 Cambridge Dr.

Lafayette, LA 70503

Class: 67-501/67-23

ernie1egt@bellsouth.net

337-288-8553

Vietnam Tour: May 1968-October 1968; August 1971-August 1972

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, May 1968-October 1968; 478th Aviation Company (Heavy Lift), 1st Aviation Brigade, August 1971-August 1972

Kenneth C. Tripp, 1Lt (Pilot)

1393 Seamist Lane

College Station, TX 77845

kentripp@suddenlink.net

979-219-2774

Class: 68-23/68-41

Vietnam Tour: January 1969 – August 1969, Wounded (Operation Lamar Plain)

Unit: B Company (Kingsmen), 101<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, January 1969 - May 1969; Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, May 1969 - August 1969

Joseph P. Thomas, Jr. WO1 (Pilot)

One Country Club Lane

McAllen, TX 78503

joe.t.jr@gmail.com

Class: 69-49

Vietnam Tour: April 1970-April 1971

Unit(s): Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, April 1970-September 1970; C Company (Black Widow), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, September 1970-April 1971

Chet J. Uszynski, Captain (Pilot; Aviation Platoon Leader, following Major Stuart Miller)

6505 Simmons Rd

North Richland Hills, TX 76182-4244

Home 817-658-6203

Work 800-235-2452

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Cell 817-637-9581  
chetuski@aol.com  
Class: 66-22/66-24

Vietnam tour: 1967; April 1969 – March 1970; wounded 24 April 1969  
Units: B Company (Bamboo Viper), 227th Aviation Company, 1st Cavalry Division in 1967. C Battery (Griffin), 4/77 Arial Rocket Artillery, 101st Airborne Division (Shot down, April 24, 1969); April 1969 – June 1969; Aviation Platoon Leader, Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division; June 1969 – March 1970

Richard L. Von Hatten, CW2 (Pilot)  
41W086 Foal Lane  
Elburn, IL 60119  
Home 630-377-4086  
Cell 630-640-9553  
rvhatten@gmail.com  
Class: 68-13/68-21

Vietnam tour: September 68 – September 3, 1969 (Crashed and medivac'd out of country)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division; September 68-September 69  
Worked for the City of Chicago, Department of Environmental Control for 2 years as a smoke and noise pollution inspector; worked for Jewel Food Stores for 29 years; working for H&R Block for the past 11 years; married 38 years, girl and boy, grandkids boy and girl.

Kermit W. Wade, 1Lt, (Pilot) (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
4550 3rd Ave SE  
Lacey, WA 98503  
wadekw2000@yahoo.com  
Class: 71-6

Vietnam Tour(s): January 68-January 69; April 71- February 1972  
Unit(s): 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, January 1968-January 1969; Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (April 71- January 1972)

William M. Walsh, WO1 (Pilot)  
Box 242  
Nenana, AK 99760  
C 907 3223736  
H 907 832-5683  
billandmarie@yahoo.com  
Class: 70-29/70-27

Vietnam Tour: October 1970-October 1971  
Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, October 1970-October 1971

Ronny C. Webster, WO1 (Pilot)

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

3168 Wilshire Drive  
Redding, CA 96002  
ronwebster2@juno.com  
530-941-2130  
Class: 69-23

Vietnam Tour: September 1969-September 1970  
Unit(s): B Co (Kingsman), 101st Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; September 1969-December 1969; Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, December 1969-September 1970

#### Crew

Ronald Barfield, Sp5 – Crew Chief  
744 Ford Drive  
Madison, FL. 32340  
Cell 850 673-1450 (no home phone)  
Sbarfield54@yahoo.com  
Vietnam Tour: May 1969 – April 1970  
Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division; May 1969 – April 1970

David Lance Belville, Sp5 – Crew Chief  
676 Dallas Hwy SW  
Cartersville, GA 30120  
Cell; 770-546-4992  
Home: 770-386-4912  
Davidbelville.1@comcast.net  
Vietnam Tour: June 1966-June 1967  
Unit: Aviation Section, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division; June 1966 – June 1967

Craig Bixby, Sp5– Crew Chief  
435 Bruce Drive  
Spring Hill, TN. 37174  
Cell 317 523-3824  
n3165e@hotmail.com  
Vietnam Tour: November 1968 – November 1969  
Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin/Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; November 1968 – November 1969

+Eric Peter Busch, Sp6, Crew Chief/Aircraft Quality Control Supervisor (67W2P)  
Home: Chicago, IL; DOB: 5 February 1945  
Vietnam Tours: 1) unknown, 2) 1967 - 1968, 3) October 1969 – August 1970  
Place of death: Binh Dinh Province, South Vietnam; 7 August 1970 (age25)  
Honored on Panel W8, Row 90 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Units: 1) unknown, 2) Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, 1967 – 1968, 3) D Company, 173<sup>rd</sup> Support Battalion, 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, October 1969 – August 1970

Bruce W. Clark, Sp5 - Crew Chief  
9417 Century Oaks Lane  
Elk Grove, CA 95758  
H: 916 691-6893  
C: 916 712-0821

Brucewclark12001@gmail.com

Vietnam Tour: April 1969 - April 1970

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; April 1969 - April 1970

Terry L. Clay, Sp4 - Crew Chief  
1285 N. 9th street  
East Alton, IL 62024  
H: 618-258-0791  
C: 618-401-6056  
t-clay@sbcglobal.net

Vietnam Tour: September 1968 – May 1969

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division; September 19 68 – May 1969

ETS from Viet Nam thru Ft. Lewis, WA. Went back in the Army in 73 and retired in Oct 91, as a CW2 as a technical Warrant. MOS 353A.

Edwin Davis, Sp4 - crew chief  
12101 Fairfax Hunt Road  
Fairfax Va. 22030  
Cell 703-928-4746  
Edavis7577@aol.com

Vietnam Tour: November 1966-November 1967

Unit: Aviation Section, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, November 1966-November 1967

+George Dousis, Sp4, Crew Chief  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division  
Deceased: March 9, 2012, Hillsborough, NJ (Age 63)

Roland Gerhart, Sp5 (Telephone and Teletype Lineman)  
5943 W. Third St.  
Ludington, MI 49431  
Cell 231 233 1180  
pattigerhart@gmail.com

Vietnam Tour: October 1970-October 1971

Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

+Gary Griffin, Sp5, Crew Chief

Vietnam Tour: September 1968 – March 1970

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin/Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; September 1968 – March 1970

Retired as a MSG (E8) out of the Guard.

Date of Birth: May 5, 1948. Deceased: November 30 (age 67), 2015, Brandon, Vermont

Bruce Harvey, Sp4, Crew Chief

5 Phillips Avenue

Newark, DE 19711

H: 302-368-9374

C: 302-750-5801

bruceharvey@del.net

Vietnam Tour: December 1968 – December 1969

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; December 1968 – December 1969

Clifford C. Holley, Sp4, Crew Chief

10450 South Drew Bryant Circle

Floral City, FL 34436

954-801-5671

nurse-bonnie@centurylink.net

Vietnam Tour: December 1970 - December 1971

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; December 1970 – December 1971

John A Hotz, Sp6, Crew Chief

820 Carbon St

Fremont, Ohio 43420

419-334-2046

shjhhotz@yahoo.com

Vietnam Tour: May 1967 – May 1968

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; May 1967 – May 1968

Robert M. Huberdault, Sp5 (Operations Specialist)

7491 NE 104th Ct

Bronson, FL 32621

352-949-4041

griffin533@yahoo.com

Vietnam Tour: June 1968 – November 1969

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; June 1968 – November 1969

+Michael Scott Hyatt, Sp4 – Crew Chief (DROS, July 12, 1970)

Vietnam Tour: July 1969 - July 1970

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; November 1970 - November 1971

Date of Birth: March 11, 1951. Deceased: December 3 (age 51), 2007, Phoenix, AZ

Daniel Knox, Sp5, Door Gunner

1521 Holiday Lane

Mount Shasta, CA 96067

Home phone 530 239-4280

d\_knox1@yahoo.com

Vietnam Tour: September 1967-April 1969

Unit(s): C Company, 2 Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, September 1967-March 1968; HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, March 1968-June 1968; Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, June 1968-April 1969

Thomas M. Marcotte, Sp5, Crew Chief

25 E Ranchwood Circle

Oklahoma City, OK 73160

Home: 405-895-7445

Cell: 405-684-7248

DOB: 7/4/1945

tmarcotte25@cox.net

Viet Nam tour: September 1968 – September 1969, Wounded 4 July 1969

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin/Griffin), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, September 1968 – September 1969

+Darrell (Mac) Eugene McGee, Sp5 (Crew Chief for WO +Timothy Shawn Michael)

Home: Berlin, WI; DOB: 16 July 1943

Vietnam Tour: September 1968 - 4 July 1969

Place of death: Quang Tin Province, Viet Nam, KIA (Operation Lamar Plain); 4 July 1969 (age 25); OH-6A tail number # 66-07812

Honored on Panel 21W, Row 62 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, September 1968 - 4 July 1969

Raymond Ornatowski, Sgt – Door Gunner, Wounded

69286 Garver Lake Road

Edwardsburg, MI 49112

Home Phone: 269-663-6605

Cell Phone: 574-215-7729

rockinraymond@aol.com

Vietnam Tour: April 1968-June 1969; Wounded 20 July 1968

Unit(s): 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, April 1968-December 1968; Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, January 1969-June 1969

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

John Pagel II, PFC - 11B Infantry Soldier with B Company, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division  
**(Not a member of the Aviation Platoon)**. Did sail over on the USNS Elroy Eltinge. See Tale of the Eltinge [see page 151] under Stories and Remembrances, below - John Pagel)  
803 Millburgh Ave. Glendora, CA 91740  
626-331-4010  
tfosoca@msn.com

Vietnam Tour: July 1965-January 1966, rotated to states for ETS  
Joined the Division 22 July 1963, after Jump School assigned 1st. Airborne Battle Group, Infantry. February 1964 transferred to HHC 3rd Brigade during change over from Battle Groups to Brigades. May 1965 transferred to B 1/327th Infantry, 1st Brigade for deployment to Vietnam.

+Thurston Craig Roberts, PFC, Door Gunner  
Home: Baytown, Texas; DOB: 4 April 1950  
Vietnam Tour: 31 September 1970 – 31 December 1970  
Place of death: Thua Thien Province, I Corps, Viet Nam KIA; 31 December 1970 (age 20)  
Honored on Panel 05W, Row 18 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He is buried in Anahuac Cemetery, Anahuac, Texas.  
Unit: Aviation Platoon (Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; September 1970 – December 1970

Michael J. Roesner, Sp5 - Crew Chief  
1138 Lumsden Trace Circle  
Valrico, FL 33594  
Home phone: 813-651-1206  
Work phone: 813-529-5498  
mike63191@aol.com  
Vietnam Tour: June 1970 - January 1972  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, June 1970 - January 1972

Daniel Shideler, Sp4– Crew Chief  
6932 Pelham Place  
Bradenton, FL 34202-9210  
Cell: 239-699-6399  
Home: 941-388-8401  
dwshideler@aol.com  
Vietnam Tour: May 1969 – April 1970  
Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin/Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, May 1969 – April 1970

Roy Slay, Sp5 – Crew Chief  
73 Sundown Ridge Pace  
The Woodlands, TX 77375  
Cell: 713-569-6521  
the100htexan@att.net

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Vietnam Tour: March 1969 – May 70

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, March 1969 – May 70

+Worney “Bobby” Smith, Sp5 – door gunner

Unit: Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Deceased: February 19, 2015, Savannah, GA (Age 70)

John W. Sutton, Sp5 – Crew Chief

8195 Sutton Road

Worthington, IN 47471

Cell 812 875-3600

skjwsutton@node1internet.com

Vietnam Tour: May 1969 – April 1970; (Crashed 3 September 1969)

Units: 106th Assault Helicopter Company, 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta; May 1969 – July 1969. Aviation Platoon (Griffin/Deadbone), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; July 1969 – April 1970

+Lawrence Tilton, Sp4, Commo Lineman

Vietnam Tour: 1970-1971

Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; 1970-1971

Date of Birth: May 19, 1950. Deceased: December 16 (age 64), 2014, North Attleboro, Massachusetts

David Tampio, Sp4 – Crew Chief, Wounded

N 5244 Cedar Valley Road (March-November)

Kewaunee, WI 54216

7320 Fountain Village Avenue (November-March)

Las Vegas, NV 89113

Cell 920-255-7761

datnkat@aol.com

Vietnam Tour: July 1970-December 1970, Wounded – medivac’d out of country

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, July 1970-December 1970

Ernie Walker, Sp4 – Crew Chief, Wounded

655 Wood Avenue

Frostproof, FL 33843

C: 863-632-1007

Pooch1007@live.com

Vietnam Tour: November 1968-August 1969, Wounded – medivac’d out of country

Unit: Aviation Platoon (Little Griffin), HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; November 1968-August 1969

+Edward Wenglarz, Sgt – HHC Company Clerk

Vietnam Tour: 1967 – 1968

Unit(s): LRRPS, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, 1967; Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; 1967 – 1968

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Date of Birth: September 24, 1946. Deceased: February 21 (age 64), 2011, Okeene, Oklahoma,

He was a Vietnam veteran (1967-1968) and was awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart w/Oak Leaf Cluster, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Vietnam Service Medal, and the Expert Marksmanship Medal. He was a lifetime member of the 101st Airborne Association, the Ranger Association and the LRRP (Lurp) Ranger Association.

**Individuals who served in the Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, but no current contact (last contact information apparently incorrect).**

Pilots

Charles L. Alge, CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 68-19/68-33

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Armstrong (Pilot)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Charles W. Barnes, III, 1Lt (Pilot, Platoon Maintenance Officer)

PO Box 160

Valdosta, GA 31603

Class: 70-26

Vietnam Tour: (71-72)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (71-72)

Rudolph J. Bystrak, 1Lt (Pilot)

Class: 69-8

Unit(s):A/101 AVN 101 ABN (69-70); Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70)

William J. Clark, CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 70-39

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (71)

Thomas Churchwell, Captain (Pilot, Aviation Officer)

Class:

3235 Manor Ridge

Gainesville, GA 30506

“Buck” Frazier, Captain (Pilot)

Vietnam Tour: (66-67)

Unit: HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (66-67)

Antonio Garanzuay, CW2 (Pilot)

Class: 67-9

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Vietnam tour: Crashed September 3, 1969  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

William Marchman, CW2 (Pilot)  
161 Bridgewater Drive  
Helena, AL 35080  
Class: 64-7W  
Unit: HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division(65-66)

Michael L. Martin, CW2 (Pilot)  
Class: 68-521/68-39  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Richard Martin, WO1 (Pilot)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

William McCauley, CW2 (Pilot)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Harold E. McClelland, WO1 (Pilot)  
Class: 67-13  
Unit(s): HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division(67-68); 120 AHC (71)

Joel C. Murphy, CW2 (Pilot)  
Class: 68-509/68-13  
Vietnam Tour: December 1968 – December 1969  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; December 1968 – December 1969

Arthur J. Negrette, WO1 (Pilot)  
Class: 67-15  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Peterson, Maj (Pilot; 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate) Aviation Officer) 65-66  
Unit: HHC 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

David T. Rizzutto, CW2 (Pilot)  
Class: 69-5  
cw4dtr@netzero.net  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, 1969

Richard J. Ruby, CW2 (Pilot)  
Class: 68-515/68-27  
Vietnam tour: Wounded June 1969  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Guy G. Sappah, CW2 (Pilot) (DROS, April 1971)

Class: 69-49

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, (71)

Leonard W. Smith, WO1 (Pilot)

Class: 69-25

Unit(s):C/7/17 CAV (70); Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (71)

Edgar Schneider, 1Lt (Pilot)

Class:

Unit: HHC 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (65-66)

Thomas J. Stewart, Jr. Captain (Pilot, Aviation Platoon Leader)

410 Cherokee Drive

Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Class: 70-8

Vietnam Tour:

Units: C Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, 70-70; Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, (October 1971 – December 1970)

Raymond G. Willis, WO1 (Pilot)

464 Valley View Dr

Tooele, UT 84074

Class: 69-29/69-27

Wounded 27 December 1970; same rocket attack that KIA WO +Raymond Cooreman  
Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70)

Donald L. Wilson, CW2 (Pilot)

POB 25105

Nashville, TN 37202

H 423-371-6249

Class: 67-3

Unit: HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101 Airborne Division; May 1967-May 1968

Ken Wymer, WO1 (Pilot)

HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (65-66)

Ronald Zappardino, Cpt (Pilot)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

Crew

Fausto A. Agredano, Sp5 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

John Aldous, Sp4 -Crew Chief

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Darrell P. Amack, Sp4 – Crew Chief

Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Applegate, SSG - Assistant Platoon Leader, Commo

Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

Thomas Arnold, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Jack Ashwood, Sp4 -Maintenance (wounded)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

W. Audibert, Sp5 (DROS, August 11, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

P. Austin, Sp5 (DROS, May 21, 1971)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

James Bass, Sp4 – Maintenance (DROS, September 16, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Ted Basslor, Sp6 – Maintenance, Technical Inspector

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Robert L. Bates, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Richard Berghorn, Sp4 - OH-6 Crew Chief (DROS, January 22, 1971)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Richard Black, Sp4 – Door Gunner (for Sp5 Bruce Clark)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Terry Boman, PFC

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

H. Boisso, Sp5 (DROS, July 18, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

T. Bower, Sp5 (DROS, October 15, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Allen Branning, Sp4 -OH-6 Crew Chief (DROS, January 18, 1971)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Brewer, Sp4 – Crew Chief

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Bruton, PFC – Maintenance

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

P. Carfley, Sp4 (DROS, December 17, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Larry Carlson, Sp5 - Crew Chief

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Michael Casaretto, Sp5 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Thomas Cogburn, Sp4 - Maintenance

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Troy K. Cook, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Larry N. Cooke, Sp5 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Corwell Craft, PFC - Maintenance

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Juan C. Diaz, Sgt (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Allen Decker, PFC -Crew Member

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

David Dean, Sp4 – Crew Chief

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Thomas H. Dickel, Sp4 – Crew Chief

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

W. Dinning, Sp4 (DROS, August 31, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

A. Edenfield, Sp5 (DROS, September 30, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

K. Estep, Sp4 (DROS, October 6, 1970)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

T. Florence, PFC (DROS, May 6, 1971)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

G. Fogel, Sp4 (DROS, May 14, 1971)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Dale Foster, Sp4 – Crew Chief  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

D. Gaither, Sp5 (DROS, September 21, 1970)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Terry L. Glass, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Frank Green, Sp4 – Door Gunner  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Thomas A. Green, Sgt (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Paul M. Gring, Sgt (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Nathaniel Hamilton, Sp4 – Maintenance  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Samuel Harris, Sp4 - Door Gunner (For Sp5 Bruce Clark)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Klaus Heintz, SSG, E6 – Technical Inspector, Maintenance  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Edward Heines, Sp4 – Crew Chief  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

David Hickey, PFC – Lineman  
Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

Peter C. Holms, SSG – Maintenance (1967-1968)  
Unit: Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Dennis F. Howard, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

William Hudson, PFC - Lineman

Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

Robert Jack, Sp4 – Crew Chief

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Jameson, Sgt – “Kickapoo” Switchboard Operator

Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

Franklin G. Johnson, SSG – Maintenance

Unit: Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

C. Jones, Sp5 (DROS, September 8, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

William Jones, Sp5 (DROS, September 27, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

James Jergens, Sp5 – Maintenance Chief (DROS, July 25, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Samuel Juliao-Rivas, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Darald E. Keeley, Sp5 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

George F. Kincer, Sp4 – Crew Chief

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Dannie R. Lambert, Sp5 – Radios

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Malcolm E. Leighton, SSG – 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant Maintenance

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Paul Lindsey, Sp5 (DROS, November 17, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

R. Loeffler, Sp4 (DROS, February 22, 1971)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Charles Lucas, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Lydic, Sp4 (DROS, March 12, 1971)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Frank E. Mackey, Sp5 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

J. Markrum, PFC (DROS, March 12, 1971)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

A. K. Marshing, Sp4 - Crew Chief (DROS, May 3, 1971)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Charles Martin, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Larry Mckenzie, Sp5, Fixed-wing U-6 mechanic, 1967-1968

Unit: Aviation Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Theodore D. Merchant, Sgt (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Meredith Moore, SFC (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

W. Morgan, Sp5 – Crew Chief (DROS, November 25, 1970)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Morris, Sgt – Section Sergeant, Commo

Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

Morris, Sp4 – Crew Chief

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

J. Nelson, PFC (DROS, January 31, 1971)

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Robert Pualk, SSG

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Pearce, SSG

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Raphael "Ralph" "Poop" Purpura, Sp4 – Crew Chief

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Hector Ramos-Gonzales, Sp5 – Maintenance (DROS, October 13, 1970)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Daniel J. Reardon, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Carl Reid, SSG – Maintenance Chief  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Alberto Rendon, Sgt (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

John Rock, Sp6 – Chief Maintenance Technician (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Rolland "Buck" Scheppe, Sp4 – Crew Chief (DROS, June 14, 1971)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

H. Simmons, Sp4 (DROS, August 14, 1970)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Richard Simon, Sp4 (DROS, March 24, 1971)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

George Smith, Sp4 – Crew Chief  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Robert Snead, Sgt (11B40) - Colonel's RTO (August 24, 1970)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Victor Soler, Sp4 – Crew Chief  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Michael L. Stark, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Virgil H. Streck, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Sutton, Sp4 – “Kickapoo” Switchboard Operator  
Unit: Commo Section, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (70-71)

J. Thomas, Sp4 (DROS, September 12, 1970)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

James A. Turner, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

James A. Vanderwoude, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Clarence Weeks, Sp6 – Maintenance Chief (DROS, July 12, 1970)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Steve Weiss, Sp4 – Crew Chief  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

H. Whitehead, Sp4 (DROS, November 25, 1970)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Steve W. Winn, Sp4 (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Gordon Witt, Sp4 – Crew Chief (DROS, January 15, 1971)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Thomas Weinman, Sp4 – Crew Chief  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

Denton B. Yeida, Sgt (DROS, January 19, 1972)  
Unit: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

List of Individual Pilots and Crew who initiated the idea of a mini-reunion, and served as the steering committee beginning January 11, 2013, while at lunch in Naples, Florida.

Terry Hunt	John Sutton
Peter Rzeminski	Bruce Sutton

List of Pilots and Crew who attended the first mini-reunion on January 25, 2014 at the home of Dan & Debbie Shideler in Cape Coral, Florida.

Craig Bixby	Ronald Barfield
Thomas Marcotte	Daniel Shideler
John Sutton	Peter Rzeminski
Bruce Sutton	Stuart Miller
Robert Davies	John Hayes
Terry Hunt	Mark Michael
Gregory Parrish	John Romer

**List of Division Commanders of the US 101st Airborne Division while the division was in Vietnam**

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

MG Beverly E. Powell March-64 – March-66  
MG Ben Sternberg March-66 – July-67  
MG Olinto M. Barsanti July-67 – July-68  
MG Melvin Zais July-68 – May-69  
MG John M. Wright May-69 – May-70  
MG John J. Hennessey May-70 – February-71  
MG Thomas M. Tarpley February-71 – April-72

### **List of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Commanders of the US 101st Airborne Division while the division was in Vietnam**

COL James S. Timothy Jul 64 - Jan 66  
BG Willard Pearson Jan 66 - Jan 67  
BG Salve H. "Matt" Matheson 1 Jan 68 - 24 Jan 68  
COL John W. Collins III 25 Jan 68 - 24 Jun 68  
COL Harold I. Hayward 25 Jun 68 - Feb 69  
COL Richard A. Bresnahan Feb 69 - 28 Jul 69  
COL Frank L. Dietrich 28 Jul 69 - Jan 70  
COL John D. White Jan 70 - Aug 70  
COL Paul F. Gorman Aug 70 - 28 Jul 71  
COL Robert Arther 28 Jul 71 - Jan 72  
LTC Robert R. Snow Jan 72 - 7 Apr 72

### **Partial List of HQS, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate) Brigade Flight Officers/Senior Flight Captains, and HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Aviation Platoon Leaders of the US 101st Airborne Division while the division was in Vietnam**

#### **HQ, 1st Brigade (Separate) Brigade Aviation Officers (Some dates are approximate)**

Captain Ron Miller, Senior Flying Captain (September 1965 – August 1966)  
Captain Jerry Brown, senior flying captain (? - December 1966 - ?)  
Captain Carlos J. Melendez, senior flying captain (66 - 67)  
Major Peterson (at Brigade in/about February/March 1967)  
Major James R. Rafferty (at Brigade at least to September 1967)  
Major Charles Kettles (at Brigade June 67 – November 67)  
Captain Thomas E. Churchwell, senior flying captain (67 – 68)

#### **HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Aviation Platoon Leaders (Some dates are approximate)**

Major Stuart Miller (June 1968 - June 1969)  
Captain Chet J. Uszynski (June 1969 - March 1970)  
Captain Edson G. Brock (March 1970 – October 1970)  
Captain Thomas Stewart (October 1970 – December 1970)  
Captain Robert Kraft (December 1970 - June 1971)  
Captain Richard Neil (June 1971 - January 1972)

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

**U.S. ARMY CAMPAIGNS: Vietnam (Streamers: Yellow with green borders and three red stripes centered)**

- Defense - 8 March 1965 - 24 December 1965
- Counteroffensive - 25 December 1965 - 30 June 1966
- Counteroffensive, Phase II - 1 July 1966 - 31 May 1967
- Counteroffensive, Phase III - 1 June 1967 - 29 January 1968
- Tet Counteroffensive - 30 January 1968- 1 April 1968
- Counteroffensive, Phase IV - 2 April 1968 - 30 June 1968
- Counteroffensive, Phase V - 1 July 1968- 1 November 1968
- Counteroffensive, Phase VI - 2 November 1968 - 22 February 1969
- Tet/Counteroffensive - 23 February 1969 - 8 June 1969
- Summer-Fall 1969 - 9 June 1969 - 31 October 1969
- Winter-Spring 1970 - 1 November 1969 - 30 April 1970
- Sanctuary Counteroffensive - 1 May 1970 - 30 June 1970
- Counteroffensive VII - 1 July 1970 - 30 June 1971
- Consolidation I - 1 July 1971 - 30 November 1971
- Consolidation II - 1 December 1971 - 29 March 1972
- Cease-Fire - 30 March 1972 - 28 January 1973

**1<sup>ST</sup> BRIGADE, 101<sup>ST</sup> AIRBORNE DIVISION MILITARY OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM 1965-1972**

**1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division military operations of the Vietnam War (1965)**

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Aug 10–21	Unnamed	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation	southwest of Nha Trang
Aug 11 – Sep 8	Operation Barracuda	<b>The newly arrived 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation</b>	19 km west of Nha Trang, Khánh Hòa Province
Aug 19–22	Operation Cutlass	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	south of Nha Trang
Aug 25 – Oct 1	Operation Highland	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division route security operation to open Route 19 between Qui Nhơn and An Khe for debarkation and deployment of the 1st Cavalry Division	Bình Định Province
Sep 1	Operation Talon	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne operation	An Khe Pass, Bình Định Province
Sep 4	Operation Venture	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne operation	An Khe area, Bình Định Province

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Sep 7	Operation Bayonet	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne operation as part of Operation Highland	An Khe area, Bình Định Province
Sep 9	Operation Cacti	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne operation as part of Operation Highland	An Khe area, Bình Định Province
Sep 18–22	Operation Gibraltar	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division	Qui Nhơn
Oct 1 – Nov 13	Operation Good Friend II	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, operation in the vicinity of Qui Nhơn to secure the area for the arrival of the ROK Capital Division	Qui Nhơn
Nov 28 – Dec 16	Operation Checkerboard II	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	
Dec 9–16	Operation Bushmaster III	1st Brigade 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Bình Dương Province

### **1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division military operations of the Vietnam War (1966)**

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Jan 19 – Feb 21	Operation Van Buren	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, rice security operation	Phú Yên Province
Feb	Operation Reconstruction	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, search and destroy operation	south of Tuy Hòa Phú Yên Province
Feb 26 – Mar 24	Operation Harrison	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and clear operation	Tuy Hòa area, Phú Yên Province
Mar 24 – Jul 21	Operation Fillmore	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operations	vicinity of Tuy Hòa, Phú Yên Province
Apr 12 – May 18	Operation Austin	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operations	Bình Thuận, Bình Tuy, Lâm Đồng, Phước Long and Quang Duc Provinces
Apr 12 – 26	Operation Austin I	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	upper Dak Som Rivervalley, III Corps
Apr 12 – 26	Operation Austin II	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	northwest of Phan Thiết
May 1–18	Operation Austin IV	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne	Quang Duc

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
		Division operation	Province and Phước Long Province
Jun 19 – Jul 1	Operation Nathan Hale	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation	vicinity of Dong Tre and Tuy Hòa, Phú Yên Province
Jun 24 – Jul 15	Operation Beauregard	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division security operation of the Cambodian and Laotian borders	Kon Tum and Pleiku Provinces
Sep 4 – Oct 25	Operation Seward	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy and security operation	Phú Yên Province
Oct 25 – Dec 4	Operation Geronimo	Company C, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search operation	Phú Hiệp
Oct 25 – Apr 2 1967	Operation Adams	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation to protect rice harvest	Phú Yên Province
Dec 6 – Jan 19 1967	Operation Pickett	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Kon Tum Province

### 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division military operations of the Vietnam War (1967)

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Jan 26 – Mar 23	Operation Farragut	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Bình Thuận, Ninh Thuận and Lâm Đồng Provinces
Feb 1 – 15	Operation Gatling	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Lâm Đồng, Bình Tuy and Bình Thuận Provinces
Mar 29 – Apr 29	Operation Summerall	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Darlac, Khánh Hòa and Phú Yên Provinces
May 11 – Jun 8	Operation Malheur I	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Đức Phổ District, Quảng Ngãi Province

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Jun 8 – Aug 2	Operation Malheur II	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation in the vicinity of the Song Ne Valley and VC Base Area 122	northwest of Đức Phổ District, Quảng Ngãi Province
Jun 19	Operation Cook	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division cordon and search and search and destroy operation	Quảng Ngãi Province
Jul 6 - 12	Operation Lake	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation	Quảng Ngãi Province
Aug 2 – 13	Operation Hood River	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Quảng Ngãi Province
Aug 12 – Sep 1	Operation Benton	101st Airborne Division and 196th Infantry Brigade operation	Quảng Tín Province
Sep 11 – Nov 25	Operation Wheeler	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation. Consolidated with Operation Wallowa on 11 Nov 67	Quảng Tín Province
Nov	Operation Eagle Thrust	Movement of the 101st Airborne Division to South Vietnam	
Dec 1 – Jan 8 68	Operation Klamath Falls	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Bình Thuận, Bình Tuy and Lâm Đồng Provinces

### 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division military operations of the Vietnam War (1968)

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Jan 15 – Feb 9	Operation San Angelo	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Quang Duc and Phước Long Provinces
Mar 8 – 31	Operation Carentan	1st and 3rd Brigades, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy, cordon and search, reconnaissance in force operation	lowlands of Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên Provinces
Apr 1 – May 17	Operation Carentan II	101st Airborne Division operation	lowlands of Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên Provinces
May 17 – Feb 28 1969	Operation Nevada Eagle	101st Airborne Division clear and search operation as follow-up to	central Thừa Thiên Province

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
		Operation Delaware	
Jun 7 – 18	Operation Banjo Royce/Quang Trung	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division reconnaissance in force operation	Lâm Đồng and Tuyen Duc Provinces
Aug 4 – 20	Operation Somerset Plain/Operation Lam Son 246	101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	A Shau Valley, Thừa Thiên Province
Sep 27 – 29	Operation Phu Vang I	1st and 2nd Brigades, 101st Airborne Division search and destroy operation	Thừa Thiên Province

### 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division military operations of the Vietnam War (1969)

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Feb 20 – Mar 3	Operation Spokane Rapids	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation	
Apr 24 – May 15	Operation Bristol Boots	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation	Ruong Rung Valley, Thừa Thiên and Quảng Nam Provinces
May 10 – Jun 7	<b>Operation Apache Snow</b>	<b>9th Marines and 101st Airborne Division operation</b>	<b>A Shau Valley, Thừa Thiên Province</b>
May 16 – Aug 13	<b>Operation Lamar Plain</b>	<b>23rd Infantry Division, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and ARVN 1st Division operation</b>	<b>southwest of Tam Ky, Quảng Tín Province</b>
Jun 23 – Jul 1	Operation Tennessee Pride	101st Airborne Division clear and search operation	Thừa Thiên Province
Jul 21 – Sep 25	Operation Idaho Canyon	101st Airborne Division operation	west of Tam Ky, Quảng Tín Province
Aug 8 – Sep 28	Operation Cumberland Thunder	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation	Thừa Thiên Province
Sep 28 – Dec 6	Operation Republic Square	101st Airborne Division clear and search operation	Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên Provinces
Oct 5 – Dec 4	Operation Saturate	101st Airborne Division clear and search operation	Thừa Thiên Province
Dec 7 – Mar 31 1970	Operation Randolph Glen	101st Airborne Division clear and search operation on edge of	eastern Thừa Thiên Province

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

Date Duration	Operation Name	Unit(s) – Description	Location
		populated lowlands	

### 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division military operations of the Vietnam War (1970)

Date Duration	OperationName	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Apr 1 – Sep 5	<b>Operation Texas Star</b>	<b>101st Airborne Division and ARVN 1st Division operation in the A Shau Valley culminating in the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord. Later phases renamed Operation Jefferson Glenn</b>	<b>A Shau Valley</b>
Apr 30 – May 4	Operation Platte Canyon	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division reconnaissance in force	Ruong Ruong Valley south of Phu Bai
Jul 24 – Aug 11	Operation Chicago Peak	1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation	A Shau Valley
Sep 5 – Oct 6 71	<b>Operation Jefferson Glenn</b>	<b>101st Airborne Division, 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division and ARVN 1st Division operation. This was the last major offensive operation involving US ground troops</b>	<b>Thừa Thiên and Quảng Trị Provinces.</b>

### 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division military operations of the Vietnam War (1971)

Date Duration	OperationName	Unit(s) – Description	Location
Jan 30 – Feb 5	Operation Dewey Canyon II	1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division, 101st Airborne Division and 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment operation <b>to support the ARVN Operation Lam Son 719</b> effort to open Route 9 through Khe Sanh to the Laotian border and to reestablish Khe Sanh as a major combat support base	Route 9
Dec 1 – Jan 31 72	Operation Keystone Mallard	<b>101st Airborne Division redeployment from South Vietnam to the United States</b>	

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Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division – Vietnam

## **Stories and Remembrances as Told by Members of the Unit; and Others.**

### **A Prayer for Veterans and their Families**

“Dear Lord, you said, ‘There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’ Today we pray for those men and women who have, in their military service, sacrificed their time, strength, ambition, health and even their lives on this earth to benefit ‘friends,’ known and unknown.

Many of our warriors carry scars in their hearts as well as on their bodies. Dark memories haunt their dreams at night. Fears cloud their waking hours. Dear Lord, you came to give us abundant life by providing a way for us to release our pain to you. On the cross you bore our sorrows and brokenness and when we trust you, we can exchange our wounds for your joy in a future unhindered by fate. Bring this gift now to the veterans of our nation who bear tangible and intangible wounds. Heal them, Dear Lord

Bless the families of soldiers who bear these pains vicariously. Give them patience and wisdom and strength to endure, and more than endure to hope in faith for a blessed life. God, not everything that happens in life is good. But you promise to work all things together for good to those who love you and align their lives with your purpose. Create good in the families of veterans who have experienced pain and loss. Do this miracle, we pray.

We honor our veterans in your name. We thank you – as we thank them – for their sacrifice. We ask you to return to them the favor of your blessing, a gift we on our own could never offer. We ask that you would give our veterans a peace beyond the peace they fought to secure, a peace in their own hearts, wrapped in the joy of a life touched by your strong hand.

Amen

### **Because we flew**

Once the wings go on, they never come off whether they can be seen or not. It fuses to the soul through adversity, fear and adrenaline, and no one who has ever worn them with pride, integrity and guts can ever sleep through the 'call of the wild' that wafts through bedroom windows in the deep of the night.

When a good flyer leaves the 'job' and retires, many are jealous, some are pleased and yet others, who may have already retired, wonder. We wonder if he knows what he is leaving behind, because we already know. We know, for example, that after a lifetime of camaraderie that few experience, it will remain as a longing for those past times.

We know in the world of flying, there is a fellowship which lasts long after the flight suits are hung up in the back of the closet. We know even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life. We also know how the very bearing of the man speaks of what he was and in his heart still is.

Because we flew, we envy no man on earth. -Author Unknown

**John Steinbeck**, [not a member of the unit] the gifted writer of *Grapes of Wrath* & *Cannery Row* fame was a Vietnam war correspondent in 1966-67. He sent reports home in the form of

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letters to his dear friend Alicia Patterson. Here is part of a letter about the helo pilots of Shamrocks, Troop D, 10th CAV, Pleiku, 7 Jan 67:

“...We are to move to the Huey of Major James Patrick Thomas of whom it is said that he has changed the classic sophist's question to how many choppers could Thomas sit on the point of a pin. Alicia, I wish I could tell you about these pilots. They make me sick with envy. They ride their vehicles the way a man controls a fine, well-trained quarter horse. They weave along stream beds, rise like swallows to clear trees, they turn and twist and dip like swifts in the evening. I watch their hands and feet on the controls, the delicacy of the coordination reminds me of the sure and seeming slow hands of (Pablo) Casals on the cello. They are truly musicians' hands and they play their controls like music and they dance them like ballerinas and they make me jealous because I want so much to do it. Remember your child night dream of perfect flight free and wonderful? It's like that, and sadly I know I never can. My hands are too old and forgetful to take orders from the command center, which speaks of updrafts and side winds, of drift and shift, or ground fire indicated by a tiny puff or flash, or a hit and all these commands must be obeyed by the musicians' hands instantly and automatically. I must take my longing out in admiration and the joy of seeing it. Sorry about that leak of ecstasy, Alicia, but I had to get it out or burst.” (Steinbeck in Vietnam: Dispatches From the War)

#### **Joe Galloway's address at the Wall in July 2000, speaking of helicopter crews.**

[Joe is not a member of the unit] "I love you guys as only an Infantryman can love you. No matter how bad things were....if we called, you came; down through the green tracers and other visible signs of a real bad day off to a bad start.

I would like to quote to you from a letter Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman wrote his friend Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at the end of the Civil War: "I knew wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come---if alive." That was always in our minds and that is how we thought of you.

To us you seemed beyond brave and fearless.....that you would come to us in the middle of battle in those flimsy thin-skinned crates.....and in the storm of fire you would sit up there behind that plexiglass seeming so patient and so calm and so vulnerable.....waiting for the off-loading and the on-loading. We thought you were God's own lunatics.....and we loved you. Still do.” - *Joe Galloway, co-author with General Hal Moore of “We Were Soldiers Once, And Young”, said in his remarks, delivered Sunday July 2, 2000 at The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*

**CW4 Lawrence Castagneto's [not a former member of the Aviation Platoon] comments at the Fort Rucker ceremony when the last Army UH-1 was formally retired, 17 May 2011:** "As a Vietnam Veteran Army Aviator, I would like to thank everyone for coming to this special occasion, on this to be honest...very sad day, the end of an era. An era that has spanned over 50 years. The retirement of this grand old lady "OUR MOTHER" ... the Huey.

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I would like to thank, MG [Anthony] Crutchfield for allowing me to speak at this event and try to convey in my own inadequate, meager way. what this aircraft means to me and so many other Vietnam veterans. First a few facts:

It was 48 yrs ago this month that the first Huey arrived in Vietnam with units that were to become part of the 145th and the 13th Combat Aviation Battalions; both units assigned here at Ft Rucker today.

While in Vietnam, the Huey flew approximately 7,457,000 combat assault sorties; 3,952,000 attack or gunship sorties and 3,548,000 cargo supply sorties. That comes to over 15 million sorties flown over the paddies and jungles of Nam, not to include the millions of sorties flown all over the world and other combat zones since then ...what a amazing journey.... I am honored and humbled to have been a small part of that journey.

To those in the crowd that have had the honor to fly, crew, or ride this magnificent machine in combat, we are the chosen few, the lucky ones.

They understand what this aircraft means, and how hard it is for me to describe my feelings about her as a Vietnam combat pilot.... for she is alive... has a life of her own, and has been a lifelong friend.

How do I break down in a few minutes a 42 year love affair, she is as much a part of me, and to so many others...as the blood that flows through our veins. Try to imagine all those touched over the years ...by the shadow of her blades.

Other aircraft can fly overhead and some will look up and some may not; or even recognize what they see but, when a Huey flies over everyone looks up and everyone knows who she is... young or old all over the world she connects with all.

To those that rode her into combat... the sound of those blades causes our heart beat to rise... and breaths to quicken... in anticipation of seeing that beautiful machine fly overhead and the feeling of comfort she brings. No other aircraft in the history of aviation evokes the emotional response the Huey does... combat veteran's or not... she is recognized all around the world by young and old, she is the ICON of the Vietnam war, U.S. Army Aviation, and the U.S. Army. Over 5 decades of service she carried Army Aviation on her back, from bird dogs and piston powered helicopters with a secondary support mission, to the force multiplier combat arm that Army Aviation is today.

Even the young aviators of today, that are mainly Apache pilot's, Blackhawk pilot's, etc., that have had a chance to fly her will tell you there is no greater feeling, honor, or thrill then to be blessed with the opportunity to ride her thru the sky... they may love their Apaches and Blackhawks, but they will say there is no aircraft like flying the Huey " it is special". There are two kinds of helicopter pilots: those that have flown the Huey and those that wish they could have.

The intense feelings generated for this aircraft are not just from the flight crews but, also from those who rode in back ...into and out of the "devil's caldron". As

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paraphrased here from "Gods own lunatics", Joe Galloway's tribute to the Huey and her flight crews and other Infantry veteran's comments:

Is there anyone here today who does not thrill to the sound of those Huey blades?? That familiar whop-whop-whop is the soundtrack of our war...the lullaby of our younger days it is burned in to our brains and our hearts. To those who spent their time in Nam as a grunt, know that noise was always a great comfort... Even today when I hear it, I stop...catch my breath...and search the sky for a glimpse of the mighty eagle.

To the pilots and crews of that wonderful machine ...we loved you, we loved that machine.

No matter how bad things were...if we called ... you came... down through the hail of green tracers and other visible signs of a real bad day off to a bad start. I can still hear the sound of those blades churning the fiery sky ....To us you seemed beyond brave and fearless... Down you would come to us in the middle of battle in those flimsy thin skin -chariots ...into the storm of fire and hell,..

...we feared for you , we were awed by you. We thought of you and that beautiful bird as "God's own lunatics"... and wondered ...who are these men and this machine and where do they come from ..... Have to be "Gods' Angels".

So with that I say to her, that beautiful lady sitting out there, from me and all my lucky brothers, that were given the honor to serve their country, and the privilege of flying this great lady in skies of Vietnam - Thank you for the memories...Thank you for always being there...Thank you for always bringing us home regardless of how beat up and shot up you were..., Thank You!!!!.

You will never be forgotten, we loved you then..... we love you now... and will love you till our last breath ...

And as the sun sets today, if you listen quietly and closely you will hear that faint wop wop wop of our mother speaking to all her children past and present who rode her into history in a blaze of glory ..she will be saying to them: I am here... I will always be here with you.

I am at peace and so should you be ... and so should you be."

### **MG Patrick Brady, Medal of Honor Recipient [not a former member of the Aviation Platoon]<sup>12</sup>**

Living with the scars of war is difficult, for some unbearable, but all veterans suffer. The Vietnam veteran suffered physically as much, perhaps more, than any veteran of the past century. But no veteran has suffered the mental agony of that veteran. The thing that makes Vietnam so intolerable is what the elite have done to dishonor the source of those scars, to intensify the pain of the Vietnam veteran and destroy their unselfish and honorable legacy.

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Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019

They opened a gash in his psyche and then rubbed salt in it. The media narrative of the Vietnam warrior slandered one of the most noble warriors in our history.

Look at the facts. The average infantryman in the Pacific in World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. His counterpart in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year. Amputation or crippling wounds to the lower extremities were 300 percent higher than in WWII and 70 percent higher than Korea. Multiple amputations occurred at the rate of 18.4 percent, compared to 5.7 percent in WWII. Seventy-five thousand Vietnam vets were severely disabled.

Above our magnificent grunts, the aviation accomplishments in Vietnam are unprecedented. In World War II, aircraft losses were 16 percent, in Vietnam 43 percent. I read that in WWII some pilots completed tours after 25 missions at an average of four hours per mission, or a total of 100 hours! In Vietnam, 100 hours was an average month for many, and 25 missions an average week.

We see horrifying suicide rates among today's warriors, yet the Vietnam veteran, who saw as much or more combat than any warrior ever, after the living through the media calumny of his service and sacrifice, had a lower suicide rate than his civilian counterpart.

The Vietnam veterans not only distinguished themselves in combat, but they came home and became model citizens. They were the best-educated forces our nation had ever sent into combat; 79 percent had a high school education or better. The Vietnam veterans' unemployment rate, personal income, drug use and incarceration rate are more positive than the same non-veteran cohort. And, as a tribute to their patriotism, despite their shoddy treatment, over 90 percent are glad they served.

### **The Huey Pilot**

Casually he walks to the slick,  
A helmet with dark visor in his hand,  
Stepping from the skid into the cockpit,  
The switches and dials at his command. ...  
He may be tired from many runs,  
It seems he lives under this plexidome,  
But with the stick between his legs  
And the pedals at his feet, he feels once again at home.  
He fires up that turbine as the pre-flight is performed,  
The Jesus nut begins to turn,  
That machine begins to rock  
And now starts that steady "Whop,"  
And air begins to churn.  
As those massive blades begin to claw the air he  
Skillfully lifts his baby off the ground,  
The tail begins to rise and the front seems to follow  
But no better pilot will be found.

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I never saw his face,  
I never knew his name,  
But I'll never forget the day the Huey Pilot came.  
With surgical precision, he causes that Huey to hover,  
Dip and dance behind a hill, then he routinely skims the  
Tops of trees, rising only to have his Door Gunner make  
Another kill.  
He listens to the Peter Pilot and Crew Chief as well  
As he watches for popped smoke,  
Glancing down he sees looks of relief on haggard  
Faces, they know he will not choke.  
With bullets pinging on the thin metal and stars  
Appearing on the windshield he holds steady to the stick,  
People are screaming to his rear, mortars dropping  
Dangerously near,  
But he maintains a firm control of his slick.  
He saves a dozen lives and takes supplies where no one  
Else wishes to go; for him it is just another day;  
At base camp he helps wash blood from the rear cabin  
And after he fingers new bullet holes he casually walks away.  
I never saw his face, I never knew his name,  
But I'll never forget the day the Huey Pilot came.  
- Author Unknown –

**The Sound That Binds** by Col (Ret) Keith Nightingale [not a member of the unit]<sup>13</sup>

Unique to all that served in Vietnam is the UH1H helicopter. It was both devil and angel and it served as both extremely well. Whether a LRRP, US or RVN soldier or civilian, whether, NVA, VC, Allied or civilian, it provided a sound and sense that lives with us all today. It is the one sound that immediately clears the clouds of time and freshens the forgotten images within our mind. It will be the sound track of our last moments on earth. It was a simple machine-a single engine, a single blade and four-man crew-yet like the Model T, it transformed us all and performed tasks the engineers and designers never imagined. For soldiers, it was the worst and best of friends but it was the one binding material in a tapestry of a war of many pieces.

The smell was always hot, filled with diesel fumes, sharp drafts accentuated by gritty sand, laterite and anxious vibrations. It always held the spell of the unknown and the anxiety of learning what was next and what might be. It was an unavoidable magnet for the heavily laden soldier who donkey-trotted to its squat shaking shape through the haze and blast of dirt, stepped on the OD skid, turned and dropped his ruck on the cool aluminum deck. Reaching inside with his rifle or machine gun, a soldier would grasp a floor ring with a finger as an extra precaution of physics for those moments when the now airborne bird would break into a sharp turn revealing all ground or all sky to the helpless riders all very mindful of the

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<sup>13</sup>**The Sound That Binds** by Keith Nightingale is reprinted from **Small Wars Journal** per the Creative Commons license granted upon its <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/the-sound-that-binds>.

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impeding weight on their backs. The relentless weight of the ruck combined with the stress of varying motion caused fingers and floor rings to bind almost as one. Constant was the vibration, smell of hydraulic fluid, flashes of visionary images and the occasional burst of a ground-fed odor-rotting fish, dank swampy heat, cordite or simply the continuous sinuous currents of Vietnam's weather-cold and driven mist in the Northern monsoon or the wall of heated humidity in the southern dry season. Blotting it out and shading the effect was the constant sound of the single rotating blade as it ate a piece of the air, struggling to overcome the momentary physics of the weather.

To divert anxiety, a soldier/piece of freight, might reflect on his home away from home. The door gunners were usually calm which was emotionally helpful. Each gun had a C ration fruit can at the ammo box clip entrance to the feed mechanism of the machine gun. The gun had a large circular aiming sight unlike the ground pounder version. That had the advantage of being able to fix on targets from the air considerably further than normal ground acquisition. Pears, Apricots, Apple Sauce or Fruit Cocktail, it all worked. Fruit cans had just the right width to smoothly feed the belt into the gun which was always a good thing. Some gunners carried a large oil can much like old locomotive engineers to squeeze on the barrel to keep it cool. Usually this was accompanied by a large OD towel or a khaki wound pack bandage to allow a rubdown without a burned hand. Under the gunner's seat was usually a small dairy-box filled with extra ammo boxes, smoke grenades, water, flare pistol, C rats and a couple of well-worn paperbacks. The gun itself might be attached to the roof of the helicopter with a bungee cord and harness. This allowed the adventurous gunners to unattach the gun from the pintle and fire it manually while standing on the skid with only the thinnest of connectivity to the bird. These were people you wanted near you-particularly on extractions.

The pilots were more mysterious. You only saw parts of them as they labored behind the armored seats. An arm, a helmeted head and the occasional fingered hand as it moved across the dials and switches on the ceiling above. The armored side panels covered their outside legs-an advantage the passenger did not enjoy. Sometimes, a face, shielded behind helmeted sunshades, would turn around to impart a question with a glance or display a sense of anxiety with large white-circled eyes-this was not a welcoming look as the sounds of external issues fought to override the sounds of mechanics in flight. Yet, as a whole, the pilots got you there, took you back and kept you maintained. You never remembered names, if at all you knew them, but you always remembered the ride and the sound.

Behind each pilot seat usually ran a stretch of wire or silk attaching belt. It would have arrayed a variety of handy items for immediate use. Smoke grenades were the bulk of the attachment inventory-most colors and a couple of white phosphorous if a dramatic marking was needed. Sometimes, trip flares or hand grenades would be included depending on the location and mission. Hand grenades were a rare exception as even pilots knew they exploded-not always where intended. It was just a short arm motion for a door gunner to pluck an inventory item off the string, pull the pin and pitch it which was the point of the arrangement. You didn't want to be in a helicopter when such an act occurred as that usually meant there was an issue. Soldiers don't like issues that involve them. It usually means a long day or a very short one-neither of which is a good thing.

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The bird lifts off in a slow, struggling and shaking manner. Dust clouds obscure any view a soldier may have. Quickly, with a few subtle swings, the bird is above the dust and a cool encompassing wind blows through. Sweat is quickly dried, eyes clear and a thousand feet of altitude show the world below. Colors are muted but objects clear. The rows of wooden hooches, the airfield, local villages, an old B52 strike, the mottled trail left by a Ranch hand spray mission and the open reflective water of a river or lake are crisp in sight. The initial anxiety of the flight or mission recede as the constantly moving and soothing motion picture and soundtrack unfolds. In time, one is aware of the mass of UH1H's coalescing in a line in front of and behind you. Other strings of birds may be left or right of you-all surging toward some small speck in the front lost to your view.

Each is a mirror image of the other-two to three laden soldiers sitting on the edge looking at you and your accompanying passengers all going to the same place with the same sense of anxiety and uncertainty but borne on a similar steed and sound.

In time, one senses the birds coalescing as they approach the objective. Perhaps a furtive glance or sweeping arc of flight reveals the landing zone. Smoke erupts in columns-initially visible as blue grey against the sky. The location is clearly discernible as a trembling spot surrounded by a vast green carpet of flat jungle or a sharp point of a jutting ridge, As the bird gets closer, a soldier can now see the small FAC aircraft working well-below, the sudden sweeping curve of the bombing runs and the small puffs as artillery impacts. A sense of immense loneliness can begin to obscure one's mind as the world's greatest theatre raises its curtain. Even closer now, with anxious eyes and short breath, a soldier can make out his destination. The smoke is now the dirty grey black of munitions with only the slightest hint of orange upon ignition. No Hollywood effect is at work. Here, the physics of explosions are clearly evident as pressure and mass over light.

The pilot turns around to give a thumbs up or simply ignores his load as he struggles to maintain position with multiple birds dropping power through smoke swirls, uplifting newly created debris, sparks and flaming ash. The soldiers instinctively grasp their weapons tighter, look furtively between the upcoming ground and the pilot and mentally strain to find some anchor point for the next few seconds of life. If this is the first lift in, the door gunners will be firing rapidly in sweeping motions of the gun but this will be largely unknown and unfelt to the soldiers. They will now be focused on the quickly approaching ground and the point where they might safely exit. Getting out is now very important. Suddenly, the gunners may rapidly point to the ground and shout "GO" or there may just be the jolt of the skids hitting the ground and the soldiers instinctively lurch out of the bird, slam into the ground and focus on the very small part of the world they now can see. The empty birds, under full power, squeeze massive amounts of air and debris down on the exited soldiers blinding them to the smallest view. Very quickly, there is a sudden shroud of silence as the birds retreat into the distance and the soldiers begin their recovery into a cohesive organization losing that sound. On various occasions and weather dependent, the birds return. Some to provide necessary logistics, some command visits and some medevacs. On the rarest and best of occasions, they arrive to take you home. Always they have the same sweet sound which resonates with every soldier who ever heard it. It is the sound of life, hope for life and what may be. It is a sound that never will be forgotten. It is your and our sound.

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Logistics is always a trial. Pilots don't like it; field soldiers need it and weather is indiscriminate. Log flights also mean mail and a connection to home and where real people live and live real lives. Here is an aberrant aspect of life that only that sound can relieve. Often there is no landing zone or the area is so hot that a pilot's sense of purpose may become blurred. Ground commanders beg and plead on the radio for support that is met with equivocations or insoluble issues. Rations are stretched from four to six days, cigarettes become serious barter items and soldiers begin to turn inward. In some cases, perhaps only minutes after landing, fire fights break out. The machine guns begin their carnivorous song. Rifle ammunition and grenades are expended with gargantuan appetites. The air is filled with an all-encompassing sound that shuts each soldier into his own small world-shooting, loading, shooting, loading, shooting, loading until he has to quickly reach into the depth of his ruck, past the extra rations, past the extra rain poncho, past the spare paperback, to the eight M16 magazines forming the bottom of the load-never thought he would need them. A resupply is desperately needed. In some time, a sound is heard over the din of battle. A steady whomp whomp whomp that says; The World is here. Help is on the way. Hang in there. The soldier turns back to the business at hand with a renewed confidence. Wind parts the canopy and things begin to crash through the tree tops. Some cases have smoke grenades attached-these are the really important stuff-medical supplies, codes and maybe mail. The sound drifts off in the distance and things are better for the moment. The sound brings both a psychological and a material relief.

Wounds are hard to manage. The body is all soft flesh, integrated parts and an emotional burden for those that have to watch its deterioration. If the body is an engine, blood is the gasoline; when it runs out, so does life. It's important the parts get quickly fixed and the blood is restored to a useful level. If not, the soldier becomes another piece of battlefield detritus. A field medic has the ability to stop external blood flow-less internal. He can replace blood with fluid but it's not blood. He can treat for shock but he can't always stop it. He is at the mercy of his ability and the nature of the wound. Bright red is surface bleeding he can manage but dark red, almost tar-colored, is deep, visceral and beyond his ability to manage. Dark is the essence of the casualty's interior.

He needs the help that only that sound can bring. If an LZ exists, its wonderful and easy. If not, difficult options remain. The bird weaves back and forth above the canopy as the pilot struggles to find the location of the casualty. He begins a steady hover as he lowers the litter on a cable. The gunner or helo medic looks down at the small figures below and tries to wiggle the litter and cable through the tall canopy to the small upreaching figures below. In time, the litter is filled and the cable retreats -the helo crew still carefully managing the cable as it wends skyward. The cable hits its anchor, the litter is pulled in and the pilot pulls pitch and quickly disappears-but the retreating sound is heard by all and the silent universal thought-There but for the Grace of God go I-and it will be to that sound.

Cutting a landing zone is a standard soldier task. Often, to hear the helicopter's song, the impossible becomes a requirement and miracles abound. Sweat-filled eyes, blood blistered hands, energy-expended and with a breath of desperation and desire, soldiers attack a small space to carve out sufficient open air for the helicopter to land. Land to bring in what's

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needed, take out what's not and to remind them that someone out there cares. Perhaps some explosives are used-usually for the bigger trees but most often its soldiers and machetes or the side of an e-tool. Done under the pressure of an encroaching enemy, it's a combination of high adrenalin rush and simple dumb luck-small bullet, big space. In time, an opening is made and the sky revealed. A sound encroaches before a vision. Eyes turn toward the newly created void and the bird appears. The blade tips seem so much larger than the newly-columned sky. Volumes of dirt, grass, leaves and twigs sweep upward and are then driven fiercely downward through the blades as the pilot struggles to do a completely vertical descent through the narrow column he has been provided. Below, the soldiers both cower and revel in the free-flowing air. The trash is blinding but the moving air feels so great. Somehow, the pilot lands in a space that seems smaller than his blade radius. In reverse, the sound builds and then recedes into the distance-always that sound. Bringing and taking away.

Extraction is an emotional highlight of any soldier's journey. Regardless of the austerity and issues of the home base, for that moment, it is a highly desired location and the focus of thought. It will be provided by that familiar vehicle of sound. The Pickup Zone in the bush is relatively open or if on an established firebase or hilltop position, a marked fixed location. The soldiers awaiting extraction, close to the location undertake their assigned duties-security, formation alignment or LZ marking. Each is focused on the task at hand and tends to blot out other issues. As each soldier senses his moment of removal is about to arrive, his auditory sense becomes keen and his visceral instinct searches for that single sweet song that only one instrument can play. When registered, his eyes look up and he sees what his mind has imaged. He focuses on the sound and the sight and both become larger as they fill his body. He quickly steps unto the skid and up into the aluminum cocoon. Turning outward now, he grasps his weapon with one hand and with the other holds the cargo ring on the floor-as he did when he first arrived at this location. Reversing the flow of travel, he approaches what he temporarily calls home. Landing again in a swirl of dust, diesel and grinding sand, he offloads and trudges toward his assembly point. The sounds retreat in his ears but he knows he will hear them again. He always will.

### **A tribute to the Army's first generation of combat helicopter flight pilots - By CW2 J.C. Pennington**

YES, by God, we flew in Vietnam (and we were winning when I left.)

As we get older and we experience the loss of old friends, we begin to realize that maybe we ten-foot tall, bulletproof Army aviators won't live forever. We aren't so bulletproof anymore. We ponder... if we'll be gone tomorrow, "Did I say what I wanted to my Brothers?" The answer is "No!" Hence, the following random thoughts:

When people ask me if I miss flying, I always say something like, "Yes, I miss the flying because when you are flying, you are totally focused on the task at hand. It's like nothing else you will ever do (almost)." But then I always say, "However, I miss the unit and the guys even more than I miss the flying."

Why, you might ask? They were a bunch of aggressive, wiseass, cocky, insulting, sarcastic bastards in smelly flight suits! They drank too much, they chased women, they flew when they shouldn't, they laughed too loud and thought they owned the sky, the bar, and generally thought they could do everything better than the next guy. Nothing was funnier than

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trying to screw with a buddy and see how pissed off he would get. They flew helicopters that leaked, that bled RPM, that broke, that couldn't hover, that burned fuel too fast, that never had all the radios and instruments working, and with systems that were archaic next to today's new generation aircraft.

But a little closer look might show that every guy in the room was sneaky smart, and damned competent and brutally handsome in his own way! They hated to lose or fail to accomplish the mission and seldom did. They were the laziest guys on the planet until challenged and then they would do anything to win. They would fly with rotor blades overlapped at night through the worst weather with only a little position light to hold on to; knowing their flight lead would get them on the ground safely. They would fight in the air knowing the greatest risk and fear was that some NVA anti-aircraft gunner would wait 'til you flew past him and open up on your six o'clock with tracers as big as softballs. They would fly in harm's way and act nonchalant as if to challenge the grim reaper.

When we flew to another base we proclaimed that we're the best unit on the base as soon as we landed. Often we were not invited back. When we went into a bar, we owned the bar. We were lucky to be the Best of the Best in the military. We knew it and so did others. We found jobs, lost jobs, got married, got divorced, moved, went broke, got rich, broke some things, and knew the only thing you could count -- really count on -- was if you needed help, a fellow Army Aviator would have your back.

I miss the call signs, nicknames and the stories behind them.

I miss getting lit up in an O' or NCO' Club full of my buddies and watching the incredible, unbelievable things that were happening. I miss the crew chiefs waiting as you got to your ship for a Zero-Dark-30 preflight. I miss pulling an armful of pitch, nosing it over and climbing into a new dawn. I miss going straight up and straight down. I miss the tension of wondering what today's 12 hours of combat flying would bring. I miss the craps table in the corner of the O-Club, and letting it ALL ride because money was meaningless. I miss listening to BS stories while drinking and laughing until my eyes watered. I miss three man lifts. I miss naps on the platoon hootch porch, with a room full of aviators working up new tricks to torment the sleeper. I miss rolling in hot and watching my rockets hit EXACTLY where I was aiming. I miss the beauty and precision of a flight of slicks in formation, rock steady even in the face of tracers flying past you from a hot LZ. I miss belches that could be heard in neighboring states. I miss showing off for the grunts with high-speed, low level passes and abrupt cyclic climbs. I even miss passengers in the back puking their guts up.

Finally, I miss hearing In-Coming! called out at the bar and seeing and hearing a room full of men hit the deck with drinks spilling and chairs being knocked over as they rolled in the beer and kicked their legs in the air; followed closely by a Not Politically Correct Tap Dancing and Singing spectacle that couldn't help but make you grin and order another round.

I am a lucky guy and have lived a great life!

One thing I know is that I was part of a special team of guys doing something dangerous and doing it better than most. Flying the most beautiful, ugly, noisy, solid helicopters ever built... an aircraft that talked to you and warned you before she spanked you! Supported by really talented Crew Chiefs and Gunners committed to making sure we came home! Being prepared to fly and fight and die for America. Having a clear mission, clear vision, and having fun.

We box out bad memories from various missions and events most of the time, but

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never the hallowed memories of our fallen comrades. We are often amazed at how good war stories never let truth interfere and how they get better with age. We are lucky bastards to be able to walk into a reunion or a bar and have men we respect and love shout our names, our call signs, and know that this is truly where we belong.

We are ARMY AVIATORS and CREWMEMBERS. We are Few and we are Proud to have been one of the first combat helicopter FLIGHTS CREWS the world ever saw. I am Privileged and Proud to call you Brothers. Clear Right! Clear Left! Pullin' Pitch [J.C. Pennington] and I were class mates in flight school, Pete Rzeminski]

### **The Chopper Pilots - By Bill Lord**

We were the river people, but we also spent a lot of time on helicopters. I was a radio operator in the 9th Infantry Division, based in the Mekong Delta south of Saigon. By the time I left, someone told me I had made more than 50 combat assaults via chopper. Most but not all of them were routine insertions that could happen as often as three times in a day. Occasionally there was light resistance. A few times there was a good deal of shooting. And since you never really knew if and when the shooting would start, we all developed our own little formula for when, under fire, we would decide to jump out of the helicopter.

If I knew what a differential equation was, I would say this might have been one. There were so many variables. Foremost was altitude. You could jump from very high up and maybe break your legs. The forward speed of the chopper was something to take into account. The landing area might be water, mud or dry land. All were factors. You wanted out of that chopper in the worst way because the chopper was the target. Still, you didn't want to get panicky and jump too soon. So each individual had his own leap point. Mine was probably about the height of jumping from the roof of a one-story house. Survivable and a good middle ground balancing all the risks.

The pilots did not have the luxury of jumping out. Helicopter pilots in Vietnam were among the hardest of the whole bunch of us. They took a lot of casualties but they always seemed to be there when you needed them. Flying us into hot landing zones, flying medevacs to "dust off" the wounded and just getting potshots from all over when they were in the air meant there wasn't much in the way of a routine day for them. They earned every accolade they received. Many, too many, didn't survive: 2,165 helicopter pilots were killed in action, and another 2,500 crewmen.

Many of the survivors stuck with flying. Long after Vietnam those pilots often showed up to fly news helicopters for the television stations where I worked, and I loved to go flying with them. In uniform or out, these were very cool customers.

A helicopter is an awkward contraption. There are huge competing g-forces pulling in different directions, and it seems almost a miracle it can fly. It takes no small amount of skill to fly one even without the overlay of ground fire, steep landing zones and various life-and-death emergencies. And these pilots in Vietnam were never pampered.

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We got a horrifying example of that one afternoon as we lined up to board choppers coming in to take us to the next landing zone. We were spread out in what were called pickets of six men each. Five groups were in a line on the left separated by about 25 yards each. Five more were on the right as the choppers descended onto our positions. You could figure out quickly which bird was coming for you and it was easy to follow it right to the ground. In this case as my eyes followed our chopper, I noticed a short length of barbed-wire fence just a couple of feet off the ground. It seemed too low to make any difference but the chopper came in a little fast, causing the pilot to lift the nose and drop the tail just enough for the tail rotor to hit that wire. The next events happened so fast it's hard to imagine even now how we survived.

At the moment the tail rotor hit the strand of wire, the chopper flipped onto its left side. The main rotor was driven into the ground and splintered into a thousand pieces. It was just our good fortune to have been on the right side of the chopper or we probably would not have survived. We had dived onto the ground but we could still see the right side door gunner and the co-pilot climbing out just as the now crashed chopper burst into flames. The co-pilot must have known that was going to happen because he exited the wreckage with a fire extinguisher. But it wasn't to put out the fire. The fire was already beyond that. He sprayed it directly on the plexiglass windshield in front of the pilot who was struggling to get out. The cold spray of carbon dioxide shrank the hot plastic and the windshield literally popped out. He pulled the pilot to safety as the fire raged.

The left-side door gunner never had a chance. He was pinned under the chopper right next to the fuel tank that was exploding into black smoke. By now we were all up and everyone thought to flip the burning chopper upright, but searing heat prevented us from getting near it. The gunner died very quickly.

The pilot was distraught beyond all description. Anyone would call this a tragic accident, but in his mind it was pilot error. In his mind his mistake had taken the life of one of his crew. There isn't much worse for a guy in his position.

It was a very bad scene. A smoldering chopper. A dead door gunner. Scared soldiers and this inconsolable pilot sitting on the ground wailing.

A few minutes into this drama several new choppers arrived on the scene, one carrying a guy who was clearly the man in charge of this whole chopper squadron. He was all business. He walked straight over to the pilot and told him to get up off the ground. He never asked what happened. No arm around the shoulder. He just walked the crying pilot over to the helicopter he had just arrived in and ordered the pilot to get in and take the stick.

The scene drove things home to us. This was a war. If you are going to be an effective pilot in the future, there is no time for grieving now. It was the ultimate version of getting back on the bicycle. But that's how they did things. There was no time for sentiment.

I met up not long ago with a former Vietnam chopper pilot who had been a few years ahead of me in our high school. He said it was the best job he ever had, despite all the dangers. He

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still missed it. As we talked I could tell that even now, 50 years later, he would happily get back in the cockpit. He still had that gritty commitment that reminded me of all the Vietnam pilots I had known. That's why we all trusted them with our lives. *[Bill Lord is a retired television news executive and former general manager of WJLA-TV in Washington, D.C. During the Vietnam War he served as an infantry sergeant carrying a radio for Charlie Company, 4th/47 Infantry, 9th Infantry Division.]*

### **Fictional Story Describing the Difficulty of Returning Veterans Discussing Their Experience of Combat.**

The Cinder Spires: The Aeronaut's Windlass<sup>14</sup>

Gwen waited for several minutes after the ship had gotten under way and then watched as Captain Grimm returned to his quarters. She followed after, and knocked on his door.

"Enter," he said.

She slipped off her goggles and went in to find him sitting at the little table in his room, a fresh stack of blank pages in front of him, along with pen and ink. He set them aside and rose politely as she entered.

"Captain. Good afternoon."

"Miss Lancaster," Grimm said. "What can I do for you?"

Gwen found herself clenching her fists on the hem of her jacket and forced herself to stop. "I ... I need to talk to someone. But there's no one about who seems appropriate. If I were at home, I would talk to Esterbrook, but ... "

Grimm tilted his head slightly to one side. Then he gestured for her sit down in the other chair, and drew it out for her. Gwen sat gratefully.

"Tea?" he asked her.

"I ... I'm not sure this is a tea conversation," Gwen said.

Grimm frowned. "I pray you, Miss Lancaster, say what is on your mind."

"That's just it," she said. "I ... I am not sure what it is. I have a horrible feeling."

Grimm drew in a breath through his nostrils and said, "Ah. What sort of horrible?"

Gwen shook her head. "I killed a man a few days ago. An Auroran officer. I chose to do it. He never had a chance."

Grimm nodded slowly.

"And I saw that silkweaver matriarch. I saw it ... do things."

Grimm said quietly, "Continue." He turned toward a cabinet, opened it, and withdrew a bottle and two small glasses.

"And ... and I was here for the battle. I saw ... " Gwen found her throat closing off. She forced herself to speak more clearly. "It was terrible. When I close my eyes . . . I'm not quite sure I need to be asleep to have nightmares anymore, Captain."

"Aye," Grimm said. He returned to the table, poured some of the liquor into each glass, and passed one to her before he sat.

Gwen stared down at the glass without really seeing it. "It's just that ... I was among these things. I saw these things. And now ... "

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"Now you're on the way back to be among people who didn't," Grim said quietly.

Gwen blinked and felt her eyes widen slightly as she looked up at him. "Yes. Yes, that's it exactly. I ... I had no idea what the world could be like until I saw it. Felt it." She shook her head, unable to continue.

"How are you going to talk to someone who has no idea?" Grimm said, nodding. "How can you explain something you can't find words for? How can you get someone else to understand something for which they have no frame of reference?"

"Yes," Gwen said. Her throat tightened up again. "Yes. That's it exactly."

"You can't," Grimm said simply. "You've seen the mistmaw. They haven't."

Gwen blinked slightly at that. "I ... Oh. Is that what that phrase means? Because I haven't seen a literal mistmaw."

Grimm smiled faintly. "That's what it means," he said. "You can describe it to them as much as you want. You can write books about what you felt, what you experienced. You can compose poems and songs about what it was like. But until they've seen it for themselves, they can't really know what it is you're talking about. A few people will clearly see the effect, it had on you, will understand that much, at least. But they won't know."

Gwen shuddered. "I'm not sure I want them to."

"Of course not," Grimm said. "No one should have to go through that. Why fight, if not to protect others?"

Gwen nodded. "I thought perhaps I was going mad."

"Possibly," Grimm said. "But if so, you won't be alone."

She felt herself smile a little. "What do I do?"

In answer, he held up his glass, extending his arm to her. She picked up her own and touched her glass to his. They both drank. The liquor was golden and sweet and strong, and it burned into her as it went down.

"Talk to me about it, if you wish," Grimm said. "Or Benedict. Or Miss Tagwynn. Or Mister Kettle, if you don't mind the cursing. They've all seen the mistmaw."

"And they know how to live with it?" Gwen asked.

"I'm not sure anyone knows that," Grimm said. "But they'll understand you. It helps. I know. And in time it isn't as hard to bear.

"What we've done," Gwen said quietly. "The violence. The death." She shook her head, unable to articulate what she felt.

"I know," Grimm said very quietly. "There's a question you need to ask yourself."

"Oh?"

He nodded. "If you could go back to exactly those moments, with exactly the knowledge you had at that time-would you do it any differently?"

"Don't you mean, if I knew then what I know now?"

"No," he said firmly. "I mean exactly the opposite of that. You can't see the future, Miss Lancaster. You cannot be aware of all things at all times. In combat situations, your choices can be judged based only again what you knew at the time. To expect anything more of a soldier is to demand that he or she be superhuman. Which seems, to me, unreasonable."

Gwen frowned, thinking, turning the empty glass in her fingers. "I . . . If I had done anything differently, I think I would be dead right now."

"There you have it," Grimm said simply.

"But I feel horrible," Gwen said.

"Good," Grimm said. "You ought to. Anyone ought to."

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"It doesn't seem very soldierly."

He shook his head. "The moment you can see the mistmaw without feeling horrible, you aren't a soldier anymore, Miss Lancaster. You're . . . something of a monster, perhaps."

"You seem all right," Gwen said.

"Seem. Yes." Grimm gave her a smile with a bitter tinge to it, and poured himself another drink. He held up the bottle, and she shook her head. He put the bottle back down and threw back the drink in a single swallow. "I'm not. But I haven't the luxury to fall apart just yet. I'll be a gibbering wreck later, I assure you, but for the moment there is work to do. I know what you are feeling."

Gwen nodded and felt a shudder go through her, and then leave her body feeling a fraction less tense. a fraction less painful.

He was right. It helped.

"It's funny," she said.

"Miss?"

"After the way I left, I suddenly find myself wanting very much to go home. But ... it won't be the same when I get back. Will it?"

"It will be the same," Grimm said. "You're the one who has changed."

"Oh," she said quietly. They sat in silence for a moment. Then Gwen rose and put her glass back down on the table. Grimm rose with her.

"Captain Grimm," she said. "Thank you."

He bowed his head to her and said, "Of course."

## **The Birth of the Checklist.**

On October 30, 1935, at Wright Air Field in Dayton, Ohio, the U.S. Army Air Corps held a flight competition for airplane manufacturers vying to build its next-generation long-range bomber. It wasn't supposed to be much of a competition. In early evaluations, the Boeing Corporation's gleaming aluminum-alloy Model 299 had trounced the designs of Martin and Douglas. Boeing's plane could carry five times as many bombs as the Army had requested; it could fly faster than previous bombers, and almost twice as far.

A Seattle newspaperman who had glimpsed the plane called it the "flying fortress," and the name stuck. The flight "competition," according to the military historian Phillip Meilinger, was regarded as a mere formality. The Army planned to order at least sixty-five of the aircraft. A small crowd of Army brass and manufacturing executives watched as the Model 299 test plane taxied onto the runway. It was sleek and impressive, with a hundred-and-three-foot wingspan and four engines jutting out from the wings, rather than the usual two. The plane roared down the tarmac, lifted off smoothly and climbed sharply to three hundred feet. Then it stalled, turned on one wing and crashed in a fiery explosion. Two of the five crew members died, including the pilot, Major Ployer P. Hill (thus Hill AFB, Ogden, UT).

An investigation revealed that nothing mechanical had gone wrong. The crash had been due to "pilot error," the report said. Substantially more complex than previous aircraft, the new plane required the pilot to attend to the four engines, a retractable landing gear, new wing flaps, electric trim tabs that needed adjustment to maintain control at different airspeeds, and

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constant-speed propellers whose pitch had to be regulated with hydraulic controls, among other features.

While doing all this, Hill had forgotten to release a new locking mechanism on the elevator and rudder controls. The Boeing model was deemed, as a newspaper put it, "too much airplane for one man to fly. The Army Air Corps declared Douglas's B-18, a smaller design, the winner. Boeing nearly went bankrupt.

Still, the Army purchased a few aircraft from Boeing as test planes, and some insiders remained convinced that the aircraft was flyable. So a group of test pilots got together and considered what to do.

They could have required Model 299 pilots to undergo more training. But it was hard to imagine having more experience and expertise than Major Hill, who had been the U.S. Army Air Corps Chief of Flight Testing.

Instead, they came up with an ingeniously simple approach: they created a pilot's checklist, with step-by-step checks for takeoff, flight, landing, and taxiing. Its mere existence indicated how far aeronautics had advanced.

In the early years of flight, getting an aircraft into the air might have been nerve-racking, but it was hardly complex. Using a checklist for takeoff would no more have occurred to a pilot than to a driver backing a car out of the garage. But this new plane was too complicated to be left to the memory of any pilot, however expert.

With the checklist in hand, the pilots went on to fly the Model 299 a total of 1.8 million hours without one accident. The Army ultimately ordered almost thirteen thousand of the aircraft, which it dubbed the B-17. And, because flying the behemoth was now possible, the Army gained a decisive air advantage in the Second World War which enabled its devastating bombing campaign across Nazi Germany.

### **Where the term "Aviator" came from - recently found diary of Genghis Khan**

Make sure you catch the name and the English way to pronounce ... this is very important at the start of 3rd paragraph in the story. While this explanation is meant for members of the secret society of aviators, those who know one can appreciate the difficulty in living up to the reputation he and the rest must endure.

Aviators come from a secret society formed around a thousand years ago; they are warriors and below is the proof.

A little-known fact is the origin of the word "aviator." In the immortal words of Johnny Carson, "I did not know that."

Phu Khen (pronounced Foe Ken), 1169- is considered by some to be the most under-recognized military officer in history. Many have never heard of his contributions to modern military warfare. The mission of this secret society is to bring honor to the name of Phu Khen.

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A Khen was a subordinate to a Khan in the military structure of the Mongol hordes. Khan is Turkish for leader. Most know of the great Genghis Khan, but little has been written of his chain of command.

Khen is also of Turkish origin, although there is not a word in English that adequately conveys the meaning. Roughly translated, it means "One who will do the impossible while appearing unprepared and complaining constantly." Phu Khen was one of ten Khens that headed the divisions or groups of hordes as they were known, of the Mongol Army serving under Genghis Khan. His abilities came to light during the Mongols' raids on the Turkistan city of Bohicaroo.

Bohicans were fierce warriors and the city was well fortified. The entire city was protected by huge walls and the hordes were at a standoff with the Bohicans. Bohicaroo was well stocked and it would have been difficult to wait them out. Genghis Khan assembled his Khens and ordered each of them to develop a plan for penetrating the defenses of Bohicaroo.

Operation Achieve Victory, "AV", was born. All 10 divisions of Khens submitted their plan. After reviewing AV plans 1 through 7 and finding them unworkable or ridiculous, Genghis Khan was understandably upset.

It was with much perspiration that Phu Khen submitted his idea, which came to be known as AV 8. Upon seeing AV 8, Genghis was convinced this was the perfect plan and gave immediate approval. The plan was beautifully simple. Phu Khen would arm his hordes to the teeth, load them into catapults and hurl them over the wall. The losses were expected to be high, but hey, hordes were cheap. Those that survived the flight would engage the enemy in combat. Those that did not? Well, surely their flailing bodies would cause some damage.

The plan worked and the Bohicans were defeated. Only one of the Bohicans was left standing. He would become known as "The Last of The Bohicans." From that day on, whenever the Mongol Army encountered an insurmountable enemy, Genghis Khan would give the order "Send some of the Phu Khen AV 8ers."

This is believed, though not by anyone outside our secret society, to be the true origin of the word Aviator.

Phu Khen's AV8ers were understandably an unruly mob; not likely to be sociably acceptable. Many were heavy drinkers and insomniacs. However, when nothing else would do, you could always count on an AV8er. A Phu Khen Aviator. Denied, perhaps rightfully so, his place in history, Phu Khen has been, nonetheless, immortalized in prose.

You hear mystical references, often hushed whispers, of "those Phu Khen Aviators." Do not let these things bother you. As with any secret society, we go largely misunderstood, prohibited by our apathy from explaining ourselves.

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You are expected to always live down to the reputation of the Phu Khen Aviator, a reputation cultivated for centuries, undaunted by scorn or ridicule, unhindered by progress. So, drink up, be crude, sleep late, urinate in public and get the job done.

When others are offended, you can revel in the knowledge that YOU are a PHU KHEN AVIATOR!

**Carl Bass:** On 12 Aug 1970, I was co-pilot on Huey Helicopter 16433 with the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. I was flying with CWO Lloyd Enos. We were supporting the battalion that was located at Fire Support Base Kathryn. FSB Kathryn was located 30-40 miles west of the City of Hue in South Vietnam. FSB Kathryn was located approximately mid-point between the City of Hue and the A Shau Valley. FSB Kathryn was also a few miles south of FSB Ripcord, where major battles in the NVA had occurred just a few weeks before.

FSB Kathryn sat on the top of a high ridge line surrounded by rugged mountains all covered by dense triple-canopy jungle. In the early afternoon, we were assigned the mission to fly personnel to a platoon that was located down in the valley north of FSB Kathryn. After leaving the one-ship LZ where the platoon was located at, we were climbing back up to altitude to return back to FSB Kathryn when the engine powering our Huey quit. We immediately entered autorotation. Our choices for our emergency landing were either somewhere into the dense triple canopy jungle or the river that was at the bottom of the valley. We chose the river.

CWO Enos had control of the aircraft and was sitting in the left seat. I, being the co-pilot, was sitting in the right seat and handled making the distress calls and my portion of the emergency procedures. He performed a near text book landing in the river. I remember the helicopter sitting level for a few seconds, and then it tilted to the right side and sank into the river before any of us were able to evacuate the aircraft.

I found myself still strapped inside my seat still wearing my body armor and helmet. The right side of the helicopter was sitting on the bottom of the river. I was not sure how deep the river was but the entire helicopter appeared to be submerged. I knew I could not exit from the right side of the helicopter, and in the muddy water I could feel something blocking my exit via the left pilot's door.

I told myself not to panic. Relax. I knew I could hold my breath for a few minutes, if necessary. I unstrapped my seat harness and managed to remove my body armor over my helmet. Then floated out of my seat and exited thru the left cargo door. I was the last of the crew to get out of the aircraft.

The Huey was laying on its right side in the river with the left skid about 4 feet below the surface. We were able to stand on top of the skid, as we were preparing to move to shore to set up a defensive perimeter. There was CWO Lloyd Enos, myself, a Crew chief [Sp4 AK Marshing], a door gunner [PFC Michael Roesner], and 2 passengers. Both of the passengers were captains, and one did not know how to swim. I would guess we were in the water for approximately 10 minutes when another Huey flew over, saw us, and came down and

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hovered over the river where we were able to be pulled aboard the Huey and returned to Camp Eagle.

A platoon was airlifted in to provide security for the downed Huey until it was removed from the river the following day. The platoon had activity outside their perimeter that night since the location was not secure.

I mentioned that I had told myself to relax, not to panic. I mentioned I took my body armor off over my helmet while under water. I was never able to duplicate that feat. I also had kicked out many of the flight instruments and nearly all of the circuit breakers located in the top panel of the Huey.

The door gunner on the Huey that rescued us had not heard our distress calls. All he saw was people in a river and was about to fire upon us until they noticed the outline of the Huey under water. I have been reliving my experience of being trapped inside a helicopter under water ever since this incident. Occasionally, I still wake up at night thinking I am drowning.

**Craig Bixby:** Hello guys, it is nice that Pete has shared our contact info.

I arrived In-Country November 1968 day after Thanksgiving or so. After spending a couple of weeks in Ben Hoa at the 101st compound doing "P Training" and getting "acclimated," I came directly to the HHC company at Camp Eagle. Though I didn't get to fly for what seemed like forever. I think it must have been Jan or Feb before I started flying as a door gunner for Steve Weiss and became a Crew Chief when Steve went back to the States. I was in the unit Nov 68 - Nov 69 and crewed for many. But, seem to remember Pete [Rzeminski], Kevin Maynard, Joel Murphy the best. But then again, I seem to have an increasing case of CRS!!! After Vietnam, I was at Ft Rucker with no real work so the Army decided they needed truck drivers. So, they made a bunch of crew chiefs truck drivers, sent us to northern Alabama to Ft McClellan so we could convoy 80 trucks to West Point in order to drive the cadets around for the summer.

After that I got out and went home but found no good jobs. So, went into the Air Force and worked on C-141, B-52, KC-135 and retired July 1988. Currently I have been working for a Regional Airline since 1990 and am living in Indianapolis. It would be great to hear from you and revive my memory some. Craig Bixby

I do remember a couple of occasions while we were down in Tam Ky/Chu Lai

One is a vague recollection of a unit calling for a medivac and at the time being told that either there were none available or there wasn't one close. So, the pilot's that day headed toward the LZ to go in and get the wounded. Just as we were setting up a fairly long final the call from a medivac came in they were on the way and close behind us. So, we veered off the approach and watched as the medivac headed in. Only, to see it get caught in a crossfire of some kind of really heavy (.51 Cal?) guns as he neared the LZ and crashed (May 22, 1969)!

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After that I lost track of what was happening because they stopped all attempts to go into the LZ until the heavy guns could be dealt with.

On another day, there was a company in a fierce firefight on some obscure ridge somewhere west of Tam Ky and they needed a Medivac again none were available. We were close by so we went in. I am not sure but I think whoever we were flying that day (Battalion/Brigade Commander) was onboard.

The Ridge was below the mountains and the only way in was a steep, spiraling, fast descent into the middle of the firefight. We set down and my gunner and I got out and aided as many wounded aboard as we could carry and got out there.

As the day progressed we made numerous trips onto that ridge bringing in replacements and taking out the wounded and dead.

Our last trip was made in the dark. This last load consisted of more replacements and ammo.

I remember it being the darkest, blackest, night. No moon, No stars, No horizon. You couldn't really tell where the mountains and the ground were and the sky began.

I think the only thing the guys on the ground had to signal with was a little strobe light. As we got close to the area we were searching for what must have been a little small pinprick of light in all that blackness

For whatever reason, we never picked out there signal even though they kept telling us we were close. After several circuits looking for them we had to return to the field with the replacements and ammo.

Can't help but wonder how they made out on that ridge after that.

I seem to have a pretty vivid memory of this incident but have no recollection of who the pilots were, the gunner was, or who we were flying that day. Weird? - Craig Bixby

(Peter J. Rzeminski): I am amazed at what I have forgotten, or didn't know in the first place; like recently finding out that WO1 John Hayes had been wounded and medivac'd out in July 69. I was still there until Dec 69. Did I hear about it and promptly forget, or did I never learn of his medivac? That's crazy, isn't it? How can I not have known one of our guys had been wounded?

Anyway, I vaguely remember both incidents that you (Craig) describe. I remember seeing the Medivac crash and me flying out of the area. That firebase (I think it was FB Professional) was surrounded by hills all around, and we would often take small arms fire going in. I used to corkscrew my descent mostly over the firebase to avoid getting too close to the hills. After seeing the tracers coming at the Medivac, I dove for the treetops and left the area. There was another huey in the area – it must have been you Craig Bixby. - (Peter J. Rzeminski)

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Bixby continues - Thought of another crew chief - Ernie ~~Shaver~~ Walker, I think he was from somewhere in Florida. He crewed a Loach [OH-6A]. He was a crew-chief/gunner in a Loach that crashed [shot down from a hail of small arms fire], and he was able to pull the pilot [1Lt Ken Tripp] out. [Walker was wounded and crawled out of the crashed helicopter. He turned around and saw that the pilot was unconscious, still in the crashed helicopter. Walker crawled back to the crashed helicopter, which was now on fire, and pulled the pilot out.] Once they were a safe distance from the helicopter, he collapsed and discovered that his foot was pretty badly mangled [SP4 Elijah Ernest Walker; he prefers to be called Ernie, was shot several times in the leg and lost a foot]. A few of us went to see him in the hospital, and got there right after he had gotten the word that they were going to have to take it off and send him home. [Added notes after talking to Ernie Walker – Pete Rzeminski. For further description, see **Robert Davies**, see page 104].

[Some additional insight into the UH-1 crash that John Sutton refers to]: I am not sure if I landed there with someone at the time of the crash or later on as part of the investigation. We couldn't land close so we landed on the outskirts of some little village and everybody but me and the gunner walked to the crash site.

As usual we were pretty quickly surrounded by kids from the village. By then it was accepted as pretty normal for kids to gather around whenever we landed somewhere near town, so we came to expect it and never had too much concern with them around the helicopter. But, on that day, at some point in time I noticed a kid on the outskirts of all the others with a bottle having a rag stuck in the top. Looked to me like a Molotov cocktail that hadn't been lit yet. I immediately reached for my M-16 and loaded a round, started hollering DD (Di Di Mau: move quickly) to the kids, and for the gunner to get the kids away from his side of the helicopter.

By the time I turned back around the kid with the bottle was gone and/or mixed in with the others who were going away looking confused.

Who knows if it was a Molotov cocktail or not? Luckily, I didn't have to shoot a kid that day. The gunner and I probably looked pretty funny to everybody coming back from the crash site as we were prone on the ground on either side of the ship with guns at the ready. - Craig Bixby

**Edson G. Brock:** Ed Brock – I still think about my years of flying helicopters in Vietnam. Some days more than others, some days not at all, and of course my memories have become a little cloudy after fifty years. But it was often intense. When we were in action, an almost daily occurrence in the helicopter units, we saw the horror of war in all its manifestations. These experiences are not easily forgotten.

An example: It was 1966 about thirty miles NW of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City. I was flying the number two aircraft in a light fire team (two helicopter gunships) on a particular morning, covering a convoy heading north out of Cu Chi to resupply some Americans up the road at an outlying base. We were flying "Charlie model" gunships, slightly smaller and faster than the D & H Model Hueys used for troop transport. The aircraft were configured with two 7 or 19 shot rocket pods and four M-60 machine guns.

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Basically, what we did on convoy cover was fly low and fast up one side of the highway and back down the other, out in front of the convoy, looking for bad guys and trying to draw fire. As the pilot, it was my job to fly the aircraft on course, but also to fire the rockets. Because the only way to hit your target with a rocket was to point the aircraft at it. This was usually done in a dive. The pilot not flying the aircraft sat in the left seat and had an optical sight hanging from the ceiling overhead. The sight had handles and triggers on it which controlled and fired the quad M-60's mounted on pylons on the sides of the aircraft. The two door gunners in the back also had M60's hanging from bungee cords.

On this particular morning, after landing at the staging area to attend a briefing by the Lieutenant Colonel in charge, we got cranked up and staggered into the air. Gunships full of fuel and ammo were usually too heavy to hover so we had to have a level surface of some length to allow for a sliding or "running takeoff" as it was known. Once they attained flying speed of about twenty knots they could gradually begin to climb and accelerate to a cruise speed of 100-120 knots.

For the first 20 or 30 minutes, the flight was uneventful. We had flown north up one side of the highway perhaps 4 or 5 miles ahead of the convoy and had turned around and were flying back south on the other side of the road. The lead aircraft was passing over a small village when the fire team leader, a Captain, came on the radio and said in that tone of voice reserved for when one's rectum is really puckered up, "Copperhead 16, receiving fire, receiving fire! Smoke's out." A plume of red smoke was rising from the village, a collection of huts on the side of the road.

I was too low to begin firing rockets immediately, so I initiated a cyclic climb, quickly gaining about two hundred feet of altitude as we were approaching the village. Lining up my grease pencil mark on the windshield with the target, I started punching off rockets, aiming short of the smoke to account for the distance the lead aircraft had probably flown before they could actually have gotten the smoke out. The pilot in the left seat began firing the machine guns and the door gunners opened up. The noise and vibration of a gunship with no doors, in a dive, with all weapons firing is truly astounding. You can feel the air rushing in and smell the smoke from the ordinance being fired. Every now and then a hot shell from one of the door gunners' machine guns would bounce into the cockpit or even down the back of your neck inside your shirt collar. It was an adrenaline rush like no other. But we were in for some bad luck.

I had fired about four pairs of rockets and was pulling out of the dive just above the exploding hooches below when Terry[Cpt Grover], my co-pilot, reached over and grabbed the stick with his left hand to key the mike, "I'm hit!" he shouted, grimacing with pain. A quick glance confirmed the truth of that statement. His right upper arm was a chunk of raw meat, gushing blood. There were fragments of bone and chunks of meat all over the radios, the windshield and me. I pulled up and turned east toward Bien Hoa where the nearest hospital was located, then radioed the fire team leader and informed him of the situation, whereupon he fell in formation behind us and followed us to the hospital.

Terry was bleeding badly so I got one of the door gunners to come up and tie off the injured arm with a bootlace. The flight to the hospital, the 93rd Evac as I recall, was only about 15 or 20 minutes, but seemed to take forever. Terry was getting shocky from the pain and loss of blood. Someone, maybe me but I don't remember, had called ahead to alert the medical personnel that a chopper was coming in with a casualty, but they apparently forgot to tell them that it was one of the pilots that was wounded. So, when I landed on their helipad

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and they came running out to the running helicopter, not seeing anyone in the back like they usually did, they were thoroughly confused. Finally, after some frantic gesturing, and the help of the door gunners, it dawned on them. They went to Terry and proceeded to carefully work him out of the seat onto a stretcher.

As a side note here: these UH-1C helicopters had big 1100 horsepower turbine engines in them that normally ran at close to 700 degrees C. I mention this only to explain why I couldn't shut down immediately. It was necessary to run them at idle for a few minutes prior to shutting down to prevent engine damage.

After shutting down and checking on Terry, who was inside in the ER, I went back out to look at the aircraft. We actually had five holes in various places; none being vital except the one through the nose that had gotten Terry.

He was hurt bad, and a few days later was flown to Japan. The doctors in Bien Hoa had wrapped him in a body cast from his neck to his waist, with a steel rod coming out of the cast in the middle of his chest to stabilize the shattered arm, also encased in the cast about six inches in front of him, bent at the elbow. I didn't see him again until several years later. I was passing through Ft. Rucker where he was living and stopped to see him. He said that on the trip to Japan they nearly killed him. He had told them that he was allergic to penicillin, but someone screwed up and gave him a shot anyway. He started to swell up inside that body cast. I think they had to cut it off, but I'm not sure about that. Anyway, the doctors at Walter Reed managed to put his arm back together and he was back on flight status. In fact, he did two more tours in Vietnam after that.

A few weeks later I flew over the spot where we got hit but had trouble finding it. There was nothing there anymore. I found out that the Convoy Commander was so angry about what had happened that he directed the leader of the tank platoon that was leading the convoy to destroy the village. The huge M-60 tanks were equipped with dozer blades on the front. I'm not sure what they did, if they scraped everything into a pile and burned it or just pushed it all into a ravine. All I know is that it was gone....

I was CO of the 101st Abn Div, 1st Brigade Avn Section - 1970 - based at Camp Eagle, near Hue/Phu Bai. We had 8 LOH's that we used to hunt for bad guys. One of my favorite missions was the "last light check" that we flew almost every evening. Our primary role in this check was to try to find and intercept enemy patrols moving toward our firebases and Camp Eagle, with their mortars and rockets to attack after dark. One of our most effective methods of spotting these guys was to fly low and fast in the streambeds and rivers, often below the overhanging trees. We flew with a 2-man crew, pilot and door-gunner. The door gunner had an M60 machine gun hanging from a bungee cord and 3 cases of hand grenades; including frags, white phosphorus and red smoke. He also carried a machete, which was used to chop down rope bridges. We flew in teams of 2 aircraft, the trail ship armed with a minigun on a pylon on the right side. The pilot aimed it by pointing the aircraft at the target, usually in a dive. Some of my fondest memories are of the crewmembers I served with in this little unit. Also, an occasional nightmare.

This recollection is about me and a LOH, and some dead Americans in the clouds over Phu Bai. Like a lot of guys I know, I have always been reluctant to talk much about my experiences in the two years of flying helicopters over there; not so much because I have any lingering traumatic or psychological effects, but because most people just simply don't have

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the time or the interest to listen to them, or because these types of stories make for really bad cocktail party conversation.

I don't know why I picked this particular story; maybe because it had more of a lasting effect on me than some of the others, but anyway, I began telling about a day that I had flown out to a ridge line near the Ashau Valley to pick up eight dead Americans. An infantry company commanded by a friend of mine had been on patrol in the mountains somewhere west of Camp Eagle, the 101st Airborne Division base near Phu Bai. I was the Platoon Leader of the 1st Brigade Aviation Platoon (Deadbone 6) and was made aware of a developing situation that would require the deputy brigade commander, a Lieutenant Colonel (LTC), to go out there. The company had lost eight men and a scout dog during the day, and some of the men were apparently refusing to continue the mission until the bodies were extracted.

The only aircraft small enough to get into the LZ was the OH-6, an aircraft normally used for reconnaissance and limited attack missions. I had eight LOH's and 5 Huey's in my unit. The LOH was an amazing little helicopter, but there was no way that I could carry eight bodies at a time. In fact, unless I left my door gunner behind there was no way I was going to be able to get in and out of that landing zone with four bodies onboard. So, I got the LTC loaded up, and we took off, minus my door gunner.

It was late in the afternoon and the ceiling was starting to come down, but we were able to get out there in about twenty minutes and locate the unit after they popped smoke. They were on the ridge line of a mountain at about 3,500 feet. There was actually no LZ, but there was a large boulder that they had chopped the trees away from so I was able to put my left skid on the rock and hold it there while the LTC managed to climb out. They then stacked four bodies like cord wood on the floor behind me. The clouds were hanging in the trees, but I was still able maintain visual contact with the ground as I backed away from the boulder, dove into the valley and headed back to Phu Bai to the graves registration unit.

By the time I dropped off the first four bodies and flew back to the mountain to get the remaining four, the ceiling had come down another couple of hundred feet. The LZ was now in the clouds, but I decided to give it a try anyway. Basically, what I had to do was hover up the side of the mountain just above the treetops, so that I could maintain visual surface reference, an absolute necessity in this situation. It took a little while, but I was finally able to locate and slowly approach the boulder again, then carefully hold my left skid on it while they stacked up the bodies behind me.

Going back down the mountain in the manner that I had come up was a different story. As I began to descend, almost immediately I lost sight of the trees and was in dense overcast. In aviation terms, this is called inadvertent instrument meteorological conditions (IMC). I couldn't go back the way I had come, and I couldn't continue downward; a decision that would result in almost certain death.

So, I went up. I pulled collective pitch, increasing power, asking my gutsy little aircraft for everything she had. The aircraft was equipped with basic instruments including an airspeed indicator, altimeter and attitude indicator, but there were no doors on the aircraft and the instruments kept fogging up. I had been trained to fly on instruments but rarely did so. Knowing there were mountains all around me, all I could do was concentrate on holding a 60-knot attitude and maximum power. My plan was to climb above the ceiling and fly east about 60 miles to the South China Sea if I had to. I knew that once I reached the coast I could descend through the clouds and I would probably break out before hitting the water.

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I climbed for what seemed like an eternity, finally catching glimpses of the sun at 8000 feet. I turned east and got on the radio. I knew that the airfield at Phu Bai had Air Force air traffic controllers and radar and if I was lucky they might be able to help me get back down through the clouds. After flying east for about 15 minutes, and after numerous radio calls, I was about to give up when I heard faintly, "Deadbone 6, this is Phu Bai, over." It took me a minute to collect myself before I could explain my predicament. Whereupon, they immediately put me in contact with the approach controller in the radar room. Calm and confident, this guy guided me through a series of turns to identify me then started vectoring me for a GCA (Ground Controlled Approach.) With commands like, "turn left 5 degrees" and "turn right 2 degrees, on course, on glide path." he talked me all the way down. I broke out at about 500 feet lined up with the runway. I was never so glad to see the Phu Bai airfield. I unloaded my dead Americans at graves registration, where they would be cleaned up and identified, placed in body bags and sent home to their families. Feeling very fortunate, I cranked up my valiant little LOH and headed back to camp eagle and a bottle of Jim Beam.

I don't know why but years later, when I was telling this story to my family and friends, and I got to the part where the radar controller was talking me down, I broke down and started blubbering like an old fool. I was never so embarrassed in my life. My beautiful daughter-in-law came around behind the bar and put her arm around me in a spontaneous gesture of support but; to this day I am still embarrassed when I think about it. I was so impressed and thankful for the proficiency and competence of those air traffic controllers that it still chokes me up. I guess I should have picked a different story.

**Letter to Cavalier Magazine regarding the unit's call sign 'Deadbone.'** 28 July, 1970. Mr. Vaughn Bode, c/o Cavalier Magazine, Dugent Publishing Company, 145 East 49th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017:

Dear Mr. Bode: Last night I was lying in bed mulling over some of your latest creations when it occurred to me that you might be interested to hear some of the far-reaching effects of which your groovy little lizard is capable.

You see, I am platoon leader of a Brigade Aviation Section in the 101st Airborne Division, presently residing at lovely Camp Eagle, near Hue, Viet Nam. There are 50-70 men in this platoon, depending upon the state of the war. We fly helicopters and kill an occasional NVA or two if, and when, we can find them. Several months ago, we decided we should have a more distinctive name for our platoon; one which we could use as a call sign on the radio and, more important, one which would be representative of the thinking and attitudes of platoon members. Several suggestions were discussed and a vote was taken. You'll be pleased to know that Deadbone won hands down over the only serious contender, "Flying Circus".

Since then, Deadbones' fame has spread via wireless from Da Nang to the DMZ to the Laotian border. It wasn't easy at first. We were subjected to such indignities as, "Red Bone" and "Head Bone" and, most demoralizing of all, "Dead what?"; but we overcame. The Deadbone callsign is now firmly implanted within the hearts and minds of thousands of radio listeners, probably including a few NVA.

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Amongst our number we have a rather frustrated artist who has very unselfishly volunteered his talents and begun decorating our "mountain" with pictures of Deadbone and his experimental pals. He has, however, a slight proportional problem. If he gets the head right, the bodies are fat and squatty. If the bodies turn out right, the heads look like they should be on something else. We humbly as (sic) your assistance. Do you have an idea for a patch which we could have made so that we might sew them on our uniforms to further proclaim our allegiance? Is there such a thing as a Deadbone poster and, if so, how can we get one?

Enclosed you will find \$10.00 for a one-year subscription to Cavalier. Issues should be sent to the above address in care of the Deadbone Control Officer whose duties include preservation and dissemination of the contents, especially Deadbone! Your message is coming through loud and clear. Keep up the good work.

You may print this letter or any part of it, including my name and the address of the unit. Yours truly, E. G. Brock, Captain, U.S. Army, Aviation Platoon Leader

## **Bruce Clark**

### **(Daily Log, excerpts)**

(18 April 1969) Arrived in my unit today, Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, Camp Eagle. I got to the unit at 11:00am and was put to work right away changing main rotor blades. Our unit has six (6), OH-6As and five (5) UH-1Hs.

(22 April 1969) Couple days ago the motor pool office caught fire. They have started building a new one. Only one ship shot down today. No one was hurt. Washed clothes; cost \$2.20 – 17 cents sheets, 6 cents pair socks, 5 cents underwear, 3 cents for handkerchiefs, etc.

(23 April 1969). OH-6As are our gunships. One craft killed 6 gooks today Had two cans of beer, 5 cents a can and 40 cents for a haircut.

(24 April 1969) Lost, shot down one OH-6A today. Pilot and crew chief okay. Ship was totaled.

(10 May 1969) Aircraft 68-15216 got shot down today. Bullet holes all over the helicopter. Everyone ok, Major shot in the arm and leg, master sergeant hit in the leg, crew chief and door gunner ok, co-pilot shot in the leg, pilot took scrap metal in the arm. Ship went to 5<sup>th</sup> Trans for patch job. Pull guard duty tonight. [Rzeminski: another example of an eyewitness account of an aircraft receiving combat damage, but no published record of the incident appears to be available. Often enough, aircraft were shot up and damaged, and the maintenance crew repaired it and had it back into operations within days or a week.]

(16 May 1969) started 0300. First Brigade moving out; told to pack for 10 – 30 days. 1600 hrs. hopped on a C-130. Went to "Tu Bia" which is about ten miles from Chu Lai. That night about 20 helicopters picked us up and took us to Chu Lai. We are staying with the 71<sup>st</sup> Aviation.

(22 May 1969) received one round from about 50 coming our way. I returned about 500 rounds. We got hit in the fuel cell and the hydraulics.

(24 May 1969) Took a round in hydraulics. Had a forced run-in landing.

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(15 June 1969) Went to a fire base to pick up a PW. He was shot in one leg and the other leg was busted up pretty bad. I'm pulling maintenance on my bird and eating in the spare time.

(21 June 1969) Very busy flying missions, PW's, Vietnamese People, and G.I.'s. Also, carrying supplies all over. They are talking about moving us back to Camp Eagle, then maybe the Delta. Yesterday, I picked up an old man. It would have made you sick, because it made me sick. I'm starting to get use to the people, but you still can't trust anyone.

(6 July 1969) Yesterday we lost a ship; everybody was killed. Also, yesterday, we found a POW Camp. Nobody was there. There were to be 2 American Lieutenants and 3 crew members. All we found was a military boot with the toe part missing. Yesterday, we got up at 0430, flew 13 hours, came back to camp, pulled a PMI (Periodic Maintenance Inspection) 25-hour inspection. I finally got to bed at 0100 and got up at 0400. I am real sick and tired. I couldn't reminisce. The bodies were stuck to the ship. They say they hit a tree and the ship blew up.

(25 July 1969) I'm at Phu Bai, ship's in maintenance having a hot end inspection. I'm going to quit crewing for a while, so I can get some rest. I can't even get a down day. Should be back to Chu Lai today or tomorrow. I did go to church the other day.

(28 July 1969) When I told them I want to quit flying, there was a rumble. The maintenance office said I couldn't quit; he needed me to crew badly. Told him I was rundown and tired. Things did work out OK, I'll start crewing again in a couple days, then back to Chu Lai in three days.

When the ship was in Chi Lai for the hot end inspection, the inspector missed something. When they started the ship, trouble started in the compressor in the engine. The inspector tried to blame the problem on me, so he wouldn't get into trouble. In the end, he got it. Well, I need a new engine, \$56,000.00. Telling Carol, I'm glad it didn't come out of my pocket. Ha, ha.

(1 August 1969) I have started flying again.

(7 August 1969) Bird is dirty because Sam's (Harris) not here. Out of 14 aircraft in our unit, only two are flying. One, of course, is mine. Others all have problems. I have been flying straight through since I came back from Phu Bai. We are to leave 10 August to go back to Camp Eagle.

(13 August 1969) Tomorrow we leave to get back to Eagle.

(17 August 1969) Charlie (Viet Cong) gave us a welcome back salute last night. The First Brigade (mortar attack). That's his hello back to Camp Eagle.

Telling Carol, I should start getting flight pay in September, because I went to the flight surgeon for exam. Also, talked to 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant about getting E-4, Sp4. Told sergeant that crew chiefs are E-5 slots, and I'm still E-3. I'll ask for E-5 later. Ha, ha.

(23 August 1969) Fly for a colonel named "Quarterback." I should be receiving flight pay. Guys say that I should have received E-4 on my third month in-country.

(28 August 1969) Ship's in PE inspection again. Been working until midnight lately.

(6 September) At Phu Bai for another new engine. I talk to Carol [in Clark's letters] about aircraft torque. Red line is 40. We are always at 38, 39 and sometimes 40. Once in a while we have gone to 50, but it makes the oil seals go bad. I was using 2 quarts of oil for every one (1) hour of flight time. The max limit is 1/2 quart for every 1/2 flight hour.

(8 September 1969) Ship is still at Phu Bai, so I've been on [work] details and horsing around. I finally made Sp4. I'm happy now it's Sp4, instead of private.

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(10 September 1969) I crew for another today. Mission was to watch a choo-choo train so Charlie wouldn't bother it. Today, I had my friend be my door gunner. He let me be his door gunner on my first flight in country. It felt funny him being my door gunner.

(12 September 1969) Flew with another crew chief today. We had mission in the Bowling Alley 40 miles [south] from Eagle. My ship's still at Phu Bai with problems. About 200 days to go.

(20 September 1969) I went and picked up a new OH-6A today for our unit.

(22 September 1969) Ship is back.

(28 September 1969) New gunner – name [Sp4 Richard] Black. Nickname is "Preacher," a grunt. He has a German Luger he got from killing a NVA officer. Down day has changed. It was Tuesday, now it's Wednesday.

(6 October 1969) Had about 21.5 inches of rain in past 12 hours.

(11 October 1969) 216 has another PE. Two (2) more and she will get turned in at 1,000 flying hours. She has 800 hours now. I don't want a new one. I want to keep this one.

(16 October 1969) 216 out of PE, ready for another 100 hours.

(20 October 1969) Took a marine to Da Nang yesterday, so he could go home. Taking care of this pig takes a lot of time; been working till 2200 hours every night, to include: filling out forms, Log Book, how much fuel oil is used, filling out forms for parts, etc.

(24 October 1969) Got bumped from my R&R, so I can't go until next month. Dale Foster left a few days ago. He's from Michigan.

(4 November 1969) Received an Article 15 for missing a formation. This should not have happened. I was set up. It cost me \$20.00. I received a new huey. Now our unit has 4 new hueys, and still has old 216., but the bad 68-15216 is still the best.

(11 November 1969) Raining off and on; been cold at nights. One of the OH-6A's went down yesterday. With a little work and parts, it will be back in the air. Pilot hurt in the leg. With rest, he'll be back in a few days.

(13 November 1969) The other night flew over the ocean and used up old ammo. While flying, chip detector light came on tail rotor gear box. Landed immediately. I repaired the problem within minutes and flew back to camp eagle. Had to make formation this morning. First one I made in a long time.

(28 November 1969) Had experience today; my short shaft collapsed. I caught it just before takeoff. It's the unit that turns engine and tail rotor. We will install another one tomorrow. I got my pay voucher; Article 15, \$20.00 was not taken out.

(14 December 1969) Well, 16216 is gone and better placed. I received a new helicopter, 1970 model 16433 [records show 68-16433]. This ship only has 6 flying hours. Now it's Four Double Three.

(25 December 1969) Woke up at 0800. Had a flight at 1000 hours. Flew to Phu Lock seeing troops in the field at 1100. Started flying log, taking Christmas dinners to troops in the field. Late in afternoon; I got my cold dinner, cold ham, cold potatoes and water at a firebase. I missed Bob Hope show. Went to mass at 1930.

A Cobra landed by us with a chip detector light on. I repaired their problem. Boy, this ship was a piece of shit. It needed a lot of repairs.

(5 January 1970) Platoon sergeant put me in for OH-6A school. Tomorrow, I will be flying Gunslinger [Col Dietrich], 1st Brigade Commander, so I need to look real sharp. 87 days and counting.

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(19 January 1970) I'm starting to get jumpy, short-timer. Also, smoking more. Today, first time I got stick time on 16433, What a ride; like driving a new car.

(20 January 1970) I got promoted to E-5.

(3 February 1970) Yesterday, I saw 5 dinks swimming in an area about 7 miles from Elephant Valley. They said I couldn't fire at them, because we don't have permission. There were no friendlies within 20 miles. I know I could have added at least 2 more to my body count. Well, that's the way this war is. By the time we did get permission, they were long gone.

(12 February 1970) Night of 10th of February, one of our firebases got hit pretty bad. I will not say how many G.I.'s got killed. I did know one of them. We weren't real close, but we've talked before. 10th was a bad day for the 101<sup>st</sup>. Charlie really kicked our ass. Only 50 days left. Another day I see myself under pressure. It will be good to get home to leave hearing guns, army talk and looking at dead bodies all the time. It is very hard and very depressing.

(18 February 1970) Seems like I've been in Nam all my life. I quit flying. The 15th [of February] was my last day. I'm training a new crew chief on 16433. He's been in country 6 months. I'll be training him for about one and a half weeks. I'm ready to come home.

(5 April 1970) Came home around 5 April.

**+Raymond Robert Cooreman:** I distinctly recall CWOs Carl Bass (Deadbone 28), Dennis Beattie (Deadbone 10), and myself (Lloyd Enos) having a conversation in which they marveled at how they had become such great friends and that their call signs all were 10 or added up to 10. I was Deadbone 27, so I was almost a 10. (Cooreman was Deadbone 19). I escorted Ray's body home to Minnesota as he was killed 10 days before my tour ended (from Lloyd W. Enos). WO Cooreman was killed during an NVA 122 mm rocket attack on Camp Eagle. We had been finishing up our Christmas party and most of us had gone to bed when a rocket attack occurred. The sirens alerted us to go to the trench in the company area. After we were in the trench a 122-rocket hit, and Ray took shrapnel through the back and out the chest. We tried to revive him but no go. Information is provided from the VHPA reunion in Kansas City in July 1995. During this same rocket attack, WO1 [Raymond] Willis received minor wounds, but was medivac'd out of country because of complications arising with the wounds. (Lloyd Enos)

(William Fitzgerald) There was, a late night/early morning, rocket attack, on Camp Eagle. The last 122mm, rocket exploded, in our company, compound, wounding several people, in a trench. I believe Ray died instantly, from a puncture, wound, through the chest, but I still, tried CPR. The wound was from the back-left shoulder, exiting the center of his chest. I was late getting to the trench, and when I heard the incoming rocket I froze - upright - in the open compound, short of the trench. Ray and the other people in front of me in the trench were motioning me forward to join them, but the rocket exploded sending shrapnel down the trench line. (William Fitzgerald)

**Robert Davies:** Random Memories of my time with Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division - My time in Vietnam had many interesting twist of fate or some suggest divine intervention. It began when I arrived in Cam Ranh Bay and began the in-processing steps. I was late departing the US, so my original orders for the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry

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Division were no longer valid. I was waiting in a long line for one of several clerks to come free and yell “next in line.” I had not paid much attention to these guys until this point, and as I approached the desk I realized I knew this guy! Here before me was a guy that was a neighbor from back home. Coming from a farm in a county in SE Ohio, with only about 10,000, the odds of that are slim at best. He was equally shocked to see this skinny farm boy was a pilot! He offered to send me to any plush assignment I wanted, but I insisted on a unit with OH6’s. He said that was not a smart thing to do and offered the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav or 101<sup>st</sup>. I choose the 101<sup>st</sup> because my Uncle served with them during WW2. This was the first of many happenings of fate and little did I know what was in store for me.

I remember arriving at the Bde [1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne) pad in the back of a Chinook and looking at the barren landscape thinking, I should have chosen the Beach assignment! As I looked down the hill at the few birds there at the time, tents and a few tin hooch’s, I decided that this was going to be an adventure. What was not obvious at the time was the great men who lived and worked in them and the great leaders, mentors, and friends they would become. The one that is first and foremost in my mind was Major Miller. I can only imagine what was going through his mind as he looked at the 19-year-old boy in front of him. As I look back, fate had once more struck in my favor by placing me with a man who was more than a commander. Yes, he was a very good leader, but more than that he had a genuine interest in his men, and he was fair and principled. To this day I contribute my success as a young pilot to him. Thank you, Major Miller! I could write all day about this man’s influence on me.

**Shooting down of 1Lt Ken Tripp and Sp4 Ernie Walker:** Here is a clip from an email I [WO Davies] sent Ernie Walker the other day. (Note: describing the incident where 1Lt Ken Tripp and Sp4 Ernie Walker were shot down)

"I [WO Robert Davies] remember that day well. We were trying to nail an NVA (North Vietnam Army) climbing a rocky hill next to a river for most of the mission. He kept crawling under big boulders for cover. After we got him, I went across some rice paddies to a tree line with a hooch and a big pot of Rice boiling. As I approached it, Ken Tripp told me I was taking .30 cal fire from my 5, and he gave cover with the mini. You guys took hits, and Ken said his TOT (Turbine Outlet Temperature) was going past red line. I directed him to a sand bar where you landed hard. I had 3 pacs (passengers) on board when we landed, and my gunner ran over to help you (Ernie Walker) and Tripp; as well as grabbing the secure radio, mini gun barrel, and personal weapons. We had NVA coming, and the Cobras had zero ammo or rockets left. I scooted downstream to pick up air speed, and over torqued the transmission by a bunch. Got you guys to Fire Base Professional where we met a medivac copter. I cannot say for sure who my chief was that day, does Aldus [Aldous] ring a bell?"

I will elaborate. You guys may remember the river that ran along the Valley of Death [The A/O for the 1st Brigade was roughly an oblong shaped area from east of Tam Ky to the village of Tien Phouc toward the west. Most of this landscape consisted of a valley formed by a lone mountain (Hill 376, Tien Loc Mountain) on the west (later called Recon Zone Alpha), a river meandering north and south near Tien Phouc to the west, and low ridges forming the north and south boundaries. Helicopter crews said this place was called “Death Valley.”] and

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turned north adjacent to LZ Professional. As it passed between two hill masses a couple miles north of Professional is where this went down.

Earlier we had this NVA with what looked like a map case climbing this very unusual hill. It was like a giant had stacked up a bunch of very big rocks in a pile. It was not as high as Fire Base Professional but was in clear sight from there. It was like Swiss cheese; every time we would engage him, he crawled back into a hole and then would pop up somewhere else. I had 2 ARA (Aerial Rocket Artillery – Cobra Gunships) with me, and I put smoke in several of the holes and let them light it up. We lost him in the last exchange, but I was certain he was dead in a crevice.

We spent a lot of time on this and near the end of our fuel. I had one more objective to check out before we went home. I went west across the river low level toward some huts at tree edge across a rice paddy. As I got there, it was obvious that we had a lot of bad guys in the area by the size of rice kettle that was cooking. I saw a couple of NVA running for cover and was preparing to engage when Tripp called that I was taking 30 cal fire from my 5 and to get out of there. I broke left and dropped on the deck. I saw Ken breaking out of his mini gun run on the target. From the tracers, I knew he was hit. He reported he had power but his TOT was climbing. I directed him to a sand bar on the river and followed him in. I think he lost power on his short final approach; he was slow and hit hard, chopping the Tail boom off. I circled as I talked to him; asking if he could exit on his own as I went and checked out the enemy 30 Cal position.

We had a large welcoming party heading our way in the open. I had very little M-60 ammo, the accompanying Cobras had no rockets, no 40MM and they had a couple hundred rounds left on their Mini. I asked them to reserve the mini for the last, whatever that was, and I asked them to direct artillery fire to the area as I landed to pick up Tripp and Walker. I cannot remember how Tripp got to my Loach, but Walker had a severe leg wound and my gunner helped him over. He (my crew chief) made several trips to the downed loach, getting the mini gun barrel, personal weapons, and the secure radio. By now we had an overload condition. I did not know how far my bird would fly with that load, but I certainly was going to find out. Earlier, I asked the ARA (Cobra) guy to get medivac copters on the way with this in mind. When I pulled the collective to lift off the transmission went into red line condition, and the skids were still in the sand. I was beginning to wish I had made a couple short hops. I was still below TOT yellow, so all we needed was the transmission to hold together. I have no idea how far I over torqued, but it didn't matter to me. All I wanted was airspeed and altitude. I skimmed along the water until I had maneuvering speed and began to climb over the trees. I flew to the east side of Professional and climbed around on the south, finally landing on the pad there. The Medivac copter arrived a short time later. I believe I flew my ship back to base and wrote the over torque then, just before heading for the club.

I think this day we put a stake in the NVA's heart, as they had been trying to evade us for over 30 days and most thought they were circling south of Professional. It was a large contingent trying to do an end around to regain their presence in the Tam Key area. I have not gathered any of this from the accounts of Lamar Plain, but that is how I feel. I also think

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the guy we engaged in the rock pile was climbing for a better vantage point to direct Mortar or rocket fire on Professional.

I know we each suffered a lot that day; none more than Ernie, but I think we saved many lives and set in motion the return of the 1st Brigade to Camp Eagle that day.

There are three (3) times that I felt true fear and the feeling that this was it. This was one of them. Another incident was when I flew within 100 feet of a .51 Cal that was trying to take me out. WO1 John Hayes was flying cover; along the same river at the west end of the Valley of Death. Ernie was my gunner that day. I always felt comfortable with him. He was good with the 60 and fearless. I remember one time pointing at a target at my 2 O'clock for him to engage, while he was standing on the skids, almost next to me. As he fired, my hand was so close to the muzzle of the 60 that it singed the back of my flight gloves.

This day was no different. The .51 was in a spider hole. The NVA gunner was looking at me through his sight, thinking he was about to put another notch on the stock; while another was feeding the ammo. Both of them had on NVA helmets, with tree branches hanging from them. Suddenly another jumped up with an AK. Ernie and he exchanged fire as I broke over them; not wanting fly down range of the .51. Hayes was laying covering fire with the mini, and he was shocked when I flew in front of his fire. Neither Hayes nor the Cobras could see the .51 Cal position and wanted me to go back with smoke. As I checked my instruments, I tried to loosen the thickness in my throat and listened to the blades for damage, I discovered that Sp4 Ernie Walker was wounded. We did not stick around even though Ernie said he thought he could do it. I am not sure when this was, Late May early June sometime.

That is my recollection; I wish I could remember who my gunner was that day. Perhaps one of you guys can help with that.

White team adventures with John Hayes; many times, of contact with 51's during Lamar Plain; when Tripp was shot down, but today I want to tell you how Tim [Shawn Michael, Warrant Officer Pilot] ended up on the mission that was his last. We had had a lot of missions in the almost 2 months by this time that involved a lot of enemy fire and us reciprocating, no mission was to be taken lightly. I was scheduled for a first light VR (Visual Reconnaissance), and when my alarm woke me, I started getting ready but for some reason I could not focus my right eye. As I rubbed it felt as though there was some matter around it. I tried to flick it away as you usually would but with no success. By this time, I had turned a light on and was looking for my mirror.

Tim was my roommate, and was awoken by the commotion and decided to look at my eye. I think his exact words were "holy shit" as he looked at my face. By this time, I focused with my left eye on some of the matter on my finger and I saw it was moving! It was ants and a lot of them! We looked at my pillow, and it was covered with those little sand ants. Sounds like a story out of "Soldier of Fortune"!

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Tim insisted I go on sick call and that he would take the mission. He grabbed his gear and said save some beer at the club for him as he left. I learned of Tim's fate as I returned to the Company area. I believe it was Chet [Uszynski, Captain, Aviation Platoon Leader] who met me as I got off the back of the ¾ ton and gave me the bad news. I was devastated. I could not believe it. I carry this memory with me all the time as I wonder if this was just bad luck or was there another meaning or purpose for this to happen. All I can do is remember what a great friend Tim was. Yes, he was another mentor of mine; we had discussions about life, he taught me some martial arts moves he knew (he was convinced I was going to be shot down and would need those skills). I will never forget him. So, my friends here is another piece of the puzzle, perhaps before this reunion is over we can complete the picture with the complete story and a fitting tribute to our friend Tim Michael, Mike Noonan, and Darrell "Mac" McGee.

[Comment – Rzeminski] After talking and comparing experiences at the January 2014 mini-reunion, this seems to be the story/timeline. WO1 John Hayes was the Scout Team leader. His rule was that no married pilots could fly scout team missions (I asked him how come married crew could fly scout team missions, and he told me that he had no control over enlisted crew assignments). John Hayes was shot on 28 June 1968, and was medivac'd out of country. WO Robert Davies took over as Scout Team leader. On 4 July 1969, Robert Davies wakes up and finds that he has sand ants in his eye and has to go on sick call to treat his eye. WO Timothy Michael (married with one son) takes Robert Davies place, and John Hayes has been medivac'd out in June 1969; so, he's no longer Scout Team leader to prevent Tim Michael from flying a scout team mission. Timothy Michael is flying a recon of a dry river bed, when his OH-6A [tail number 66-07812] is struck and causes it to crash; resulting in all on board being killed. [Pete Rzeminski]

Third incident - As a boy, filling a man's boots, being a scout pilot was a good place to start. A 19-year old's sense of immortality, lack of full awareness of the big picture, paired with the adrenalin rush of piloting a hot rod helicopter in a high threat environment was a potent cocktail. You are part of an elite team of Aviator soldiers who dared to do the impossible, but we were always there to help our comrades who had the misfortune of exceeding the limits of their skills and luck, mostly the latter. This is a story of one of those moments when I was sure I had cashed in all my lucky charms; well for at least a fraction of a second.

I wish I had kept a journal of at least dates and time of some of the events but again, the immortal never forgets, or so we thought. Perhaps someone can help with the details of who was with me and the date on which it occurred. We were in the middle of Operation Lamar Plain near Tam Ky, South Vietnam. I was on a mission as a single loach (OH-6A) with 2 ARA cobras covering me (I believe most of our Loaches were grounded with combat damage). I believe this was late June 1969, and I think Lt. Noonan was my AO (Air Observer); but I'm not 100% sure on that. (As a side bar on Noonan - he was a very brave man to climb into a helicopter with me, as he was with me on most of the occasions of likely certain death and considerable enemy fire.) I also do not remember who my gunner was. We can edit this if we find out.

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We had been covering an area west of LZ Professional, when we received word of a platoon pinned down under fire from a .51 cal machine gun with casualties on Hill 376, north east of Professional. We raced to the area low level and established contact with the Platoon. They advised me that every time they tried to climb a rice paddy terrace in front of them, they received heavy fire from a .51 and small arms from a tree line above. If they retreated, they also were exposed, because the enemy was at a higher elevation and had the lower side of the rice paddy covered. They were trapped with wounded, and I believe the Platoon leader had been killed by the .51.

I asked for smoke to be thrown as far as possible, directly down from their position so I could make a pass to access the situation. I am sure this tipped off the enemy that a helicopter was coming, possibly a medivac. I used some trees to the south as cover, as I made a high-speed pass over their position. I asked that, as they lay on the ground, to point towards the .51. That was not necessary, as the enemy was quite proud of their location, and they let me know.

They seemed pretty accurate with their fire, but I was only exposed for a few brief seconds as I darted to the north. I asked my Cobra cover if they saw where the fire was coming from (they were at 3,000 ft), and they said negative. I directed them to hold east of the ridge, ready to attack when I laid smoke on the target. By this time, I was on the north side of a finger with trees providing cover for the short time I needed. My first plan was to pop up and flank them as I laid a Willey Pete (white phosphorus) on them. Their position turned out to be out from the tree line, thus negating me the cover I had expected. I quickly retreated down and back under fire to behind the finger giving me cover. Plan B was to go behind them and approach from the ridge with the cobras on my 6. I needed a landmark to help make sure I came directly over them. I felt the WP would keep them busy as I darted for cover below. Now what to use as a landmark presented a problem. I had a feature on the ridge, but I needed to take another look for one below. I went towards the top of the hill, using the finger as cover. I had the Cobras lay a few rockets in the approximate target location as I popped up and picked my landmark.

The Cobras fired long (overshot the target) with their rockets, so the .51 was not as distracted as I had hoped. I was going about 40 knots and perhaps 25 feet above the trees, travelling down the finger when suddenly the aircraft yawed sharply to the left. All you pilots out there would immediately recognize, this was either a possible engine failure or a loss of tail rotor authority. I was too low and slow to do much, but I was still in the air. Instinctually, I lowered the collective to preserve rotor RPM while bracing for impact. I saw that my tach needles were still joined and in the green, so I felt I would rather take my chances of flying without a tail rotor than crashing next to a .51 position. I sucked the collective to my arm pit just as the chin bubble was brushing the tops of the trees. To my amazement, I also had control of the tail rotor.

As I was sorting this out, the cobras asked what just happened. I could only say I had taken heavy hits and did not know what the extent of the damage was. I feared a fuel control hit or other damage that cause intermittent problems. They said that they could see the general location of the enemy and would engage. I went back to Tam Ky to access the damage. I remember it seemed like an eternity before we reached the pad. The time was good for me

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as it allowed the muscles in my back side to relax, and for me to revert to that immortal swagger of a young fearless Army aviator. At least on the outside, anyway. Yes, this was one of those times that I was but an angel's eye lash of becoming a war statistic.

Oh, what happened to the aircraft you ask? This to me was further proof that someone has been looking after me. There were only two holes in the aircraft, both from the .51's, which is about ½ inch in diameter. They were in the tail boom, about a 1/2 inch in front of the tail rotor. The tail boom is about 6 inches in diameter at this point and inside is a 3" plus or minus aluminum drive shaft that drives the tail rotor. One round passed through just above the drive shaft and one just below. The drive shaft had two creases from the rounds as they passed through. A fraction of an inch in any direction would have meant certain disaster, do you see my point; can this be just luck?

The yaw was caused by the tremendous energy of the two projectiles striking the aircraft so far back on the tail boom, providing leverage for the energy they transferred to the tail boom as they struck the structure 4 times in a fraction of a second (2 times in and 2 times out). I was not more than 100 yards from the gun, so the projectiles still had most of the energy they had left the barrel with. Literally 1,000 of pounds of force. The Loach did not have hydraulic-assist for the controls, and the tail rotor could be controlled with your right foot only; as the pitch in the blade was always pushing back, aiding the energy of the 51's. I think being light on the controls and the impact combined to cause the yaw which was about 45 degrees. This all happened in a fraction of a second but seemed like an hour and a half feature film.

Another thing I reflect on a lot is the value of 2 seconds. This episode was not more than 2 seconds, yet it left an indelible imprint in my mind and in my soul, as many more before and after had. As with me, I am sure all of you have more than one of those 2 second episodes. We must view these brief moments as gifts on which to build; to do otherwise is a wasted opportunity. We must use them as bricks in our foundation, not as quicksand beneath our feet. I am not that 19-year-old pilot anymore, but I am a man who would not trade one of those two second episodes for anything. They have become who I am through them, and those experiences have afforded me wisdom I would not have if not for them. Now the challenge is what to do with it.

**Edwin Davis:** We were flying General Matheson about, when midday we got a call from someone saying that two helicopters had been shot down. The general said to drop him off, and to go and see if we could get the colonel and his men out. When we saw the downed helicopter, WO1 Midkiff started the approach. About a quarter of a mile out, we started receiving fire. You could hear the rounds hitting the helicopter when we came to a hover. I was leaning out, clearing the skids and all of sudden the helicopter just dropped from about three feet. I jumped out and pulled the armor back on WO1 Midkiff's seat. I went back and got my M60 belt of ammo. Looking up, I saw a hole about the size of a softball in the transmission housing. It was a good thing that I had been doing my job bending over to clear the skids. I took my M60 and started laying down rounds on the edge of the plateau. As I continued to fire some rounds, the colonel came up behind me and said quit shooting. You're just telling them where you're at. So, I stopped. We had lots of support from our helicopters, the Air Force and artillery. After about two hours of taking fire and watching green tracers go

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by; watching F4s and gunships, two helicopters full of soldiers came in. They jumped out and we jumped in. As we were flying out, I was firing out the door of the helicopter. I was so excited, that after I finished, I laid the barrel down on my leg. It was hot. We went back to the airfield, and I jumped out and that was it. I don't remember much of what happened after that. I lost my helicopter. It was destroyed with the two others.

**Prince A. “Butch” Denson:** I arrived in mid-May or June of 1966 (I can't remember which month) as a replacement pilot for the original group as they were due to start rotating. I rotated home almost to the day one year later...1967.

I joined the army as a volunteer in May 1964 and had a RA service number and a class assignment for flight school, fixed wing I thought, as I already had an Airman's Certificate for Airplanes. “Needs of the service” arose, and I was sent to helicopter school at Ft. Walters, TX, and on to Ft Rucker to graduate in Class 65-3W May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1965. From Ft. Rucker, I was assigned to Company “A” 3rd Aviation Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division in Wertheim, Germany flying H-34's. BATTALION HQ was in Wurzburg. Good assignment; flew all over Germany into France on occasion and had a big NATO exercise in Norway above the Arctic Circle. We flew all the aircraft there and back. We had our mountain training in the Bavarian Alps, Garmisch, Germany.

Base Camp at the time I arrived [in Vietnam] was at Phan Rang. After about 15 minutes of in-country orientation, and an aircraft check-out there, I hopped on a Caribou and went to Dak To to join my unit about half way through one hell of a fight with the NVA around Dak To. We then made 14 moves, as I remember it, in the 12 months I was there; pretty much in II Corps. The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade was in Hue Phu-Bi when I left for home and Hunter AAF. I had a standard instrument card right after I arrived in Germany, and did instrument work in Germany in all type of weather scenarios. I was happy to have the instrument experience in Viet Nam. I hope that is SOP now when getting out of flight school.

Our call sign was Eagle, and I was Eagle 12. I was a CW2. I was proud to serve and still feel that way today. Viet Nam Veterans have been unjustly maligned, and we all had the courage to do what others were incapable of doing.

As an aside, the acknowledged founder of the VHPA, Larry Clark and I were flight school classmates. Larry is one of the good guys. My son flew CH-47's in Bosnia and Macedonia during that mess; another CWO pilot.

**Jon F. Drake**, call sign Deadbone 40: I arrived at HHC in July, 1970, shortly after the call sign change to Deadbone. After reading a few Cavalier Magazines, featuring our Deadbone namesake, I sketched a Deadbone in my notebook and then later did a color rendition of a Deadbone with some watercolors (I gave this painting to Captain Kraft, our Platoon Leader when I left).

Because of this, several of the other pilots talked me into designing the Deadbone Patch. The patch depicts the infamous Deadbone as an Army Pilot complete with wings. The comic strip

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referred to the Deadbones of Deadbone Mountain, so the background of the patch shows our Deadbone Mountain. In fact, our helipad was called the Mountain pad.

The night that Ray Cooreman was killed by in a rocket attack, I was in the same trench about 30 feet away. With me was a young Lieutenant from HQS, and the Brigade Sgt. Major. I remember the Lt. and me trying to find out if the other was okay, but soon discovered we were both temporarily deaf from the rocket explosion. We then found the Sgt. Major had been wounded, and we helped him while he, in true Sgt. Major style, was barking orders to everyone and anyone.

It was around this time that, December of 1970, Chuck Nowlin was severely burned in the crash of his Loach. His crash opened up a slot for another OH6 driver and I did an in-country transition. After I left Vietnam and the active duty Army (the mandatory early out program was in effect), I joined the National Guard and flew with them for 18 years reaching the rank of CW4 and Master Aviator. During this time, I attended several safety conferences conducted by Chuck Nowlin. I even had the pleasure of having dinner with Chuck and his wife during a safety conference at Fort Rucker.

When Col. Gorman took command of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, we quickly found out that he loved his aviation assets and knew how to use them. One arrangement he made was the dedication of several AH-1G Cobra's from an ARA unit to 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, so we could field several Pink Teams (OH-6 low and AH-1G for cover) instead of our typical White Teams (OH-6 low and OH-6 cover). These teams flew direct support for the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade and not the typical Cavalry missions.

When I joined the OH-6 team I was soon paired up with a Cobra that went by the call sign Toro 92 Charlie. Although my call sign was Deadbone40, I spent virtually the rest of my tour known as Forty and Charlie.

It was during Lam Som 719 (Dewey Canyon II by another name), that the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Viet Nam] began the push into Laos, that saw more than just the Pink Teams going into harm's way. During Lam Som 719, one of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade's Battalions was sent north to the DMZ, and the rest of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, minus this Battalion and virtually all air assets, except its own aircraft, were ordered back to the A Shau Valley.

In order to reopen Fire Base Rendezvous in the Valley, we needed heavy lift ships; except they had all been sent north to the DMZ. We often had to "borrow" lift ships that were heading north as they came into Camp Eagle to refuel. I don't know what they bribed the crews with, but we got enough support to open the Fire Base.

During this time, often the only gun cover for operations was an OH-6 with a mini gun and a lone AH-1G Cobra. Charlie and I once flew cover for a CH-54 Crane that was carrying a sling load that was bigger than my entire aircraft.

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For combat lifts, the radio consoles were stripped out of several of our C&C Hueys as well as C&C Hueys from other units, and they all became lift ships, covered by a Pink Team. It got pretty hairy a few times.

**Peter R. Engelhardt:** I just stumbled onto your comprehensive and incisive account, from an aviator's perspective, of the Battle for Tam Ky. I am very familiar with Col. Dietrich's after-action report, written in September 1969, and Roger Ables detailed account, published in 2009 about "Operation Lamar Plain".

However, yours is the best account known to me. And, here is where I am coming from:

I was the PSYOPS and the Assistant Operations Officer for the S-3, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, operating out of LZ Sally and FSB Whip in May 1969. I was on Whip, when Hamburger Hill unfolded. And, I was privy to many details of that Battle, as they came down. My friends from OCS (Officer Candidate School) were there. And, the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, had units involved.

When I returned to LZ Sally at the end of May 1969, I was told by the S-1 that my number had almost come up, meaning that as an Infantry Lt, I had been a hair's breadth from being reassigned to the field. I thought that reason was the loss of officers at Hamburger Hill. At that time, I was short and did DEROS (Date Expected to Return Overseas, i.e., return to the United States) in August 1969.

However, during my tour of duty with 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, no one in authority mentioned the plight of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, in Tam Ky. In June, I learned that my friend Capt. John Pape (the commander of B Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry - 1/501) had been killed in May. I learned this first hand from Col John Hoefling, who commanded the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. I had worked for Capt. Pape for 4 months in 1968 - 69, before he got his field command. The point is that all publicity concerning the Tam Ky Battle had been suppressed, and even withheld from persons like me, who were planning and executing operations at Brigade Level S-3 (Operations). My shift in the TOC (Tactical Operations Center) was from 16:00 until 10:00 the next day. And, several days per week, I flew in choppers during daylight hours distributing propaganda leaflets and broadcasting Chieu Hoi messages into the jungle. I had very little contact with anyone outside of Brigade Operations. The guys in the TOC spoke with everyone and anyone on secure radios - but again, Tam Ky was never mentioned by anyone.

**UPDATE** (1 December 2018 – Englehardt): I reviewed pp 17-23 of your mini-history, detailing Operation Lamar Plain from a pilot's perspective. A truly excellent write-up.

When we corresponded in July 2015 - see my remark in my 2015 email below - I had completely forgotten the details of my original research done in 2001. I just extracted them from an old Windows XP computer and attach the 2001 email I wrote together with the copy of Col Dietrich's after-action report I had then obtained.

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Everyone writing about the Battle for Tam Ky has done an excellent job in being factually correct. However, no one has really tried to come to grips with why the 1/101 was pulled out of the field on verbal orders and sent to rescue the Americal Division in a "Tactical Emergency".

I interviewed ex-Troopers who had been on the ground and felt in 2001 that the follow analysis was correct:

What no one has ever explained is why the elements of the 101st had to relocate to II Corp, on 48 hour's notice, to solve the "tactical emergency" of the Americal Division. The truth is probably this:

In May of 1969, discipline in the Americal Division was practically non-existent. There was a general contempt for authority in the ranks. Guys refused to go on patrol and just "hung out", smoking dope, etc. The quality of the NCO and Officer corps was not good. The bottom line is that, in May 1969, the NVA had taken control of the Tam KY area, both by day and by night.

So, the Army decided to send elements of the 101st to Tam Ky to "fix the shit" of the Americal Division.

I have spoken several time in the past months with a buck sergeant, who served under Capt Pape. Except for 5 days in the hospital, this trooper saw ground action from the beginning to the end of Operation Lamar Plain.

He told me that the Army had an ice cream making plant in Chu Lai. Even the VC supposedly got ice cream because they found ice cream wrappers scattered in the field.

The 101st just reacted to the tactical emergency and probably did little independent investigation/analysis of the situation on its own. That is why all of you flew into interlocking .51 caliber machine gun fire coming from heavily fortified bunkers. That is why no one speculated that the NVA gunners had preregistered the high ground for indirect mortar fire.

Col Dietrich fails to mention how long it must have taken the NVA to construct "steel-reinforced concrete bunkers" in the jungle. If the Americal Division had been on the job, its units would have heard or seen such construction activity activity which must have gone on for many weeks.

The disaster, which unfolded from the git-go, could have probably been mitigated/prevented by some basic intelligence work. The method employed here by the 101 was this: Just send some aircraft and troops into the area and see what happens.

The 101st had been badly bloodied on the field and in the press at Hamburger Hill. Now, one week later, a worst result was unfolding in Tam Ky.

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As an officer working in 2/101 S-3 Operations, I was privy to everything happening in the 101 AO. But not with Tam Ky. My CO told me that my friend Capt. Pape was killed in action. But never mentioned really where or any of the circumstances. The Tam Ky debacle was covered up. All of us knew that something very bad had happened because of the administrative pressure at LZ Sally to collect new officers and troops to be sent elsewhere.

The Army did everything to suppress what had happened. The Americal Division was immediately disbanded when it returned Stateside in 1970.

I do not expect you to add any of this to your history. But, you might discuss it with your buddies at the reunion.

Engelhardt - Thanks for letting us [Rzeminski] use your email. Some coincidences: As a CWO Huey pilot, I flew some of the broadcasting Chieu Hoi messages into the jungle. I thought at the time that the mission had to be one of the stupidest ones I had ever flown. We were flying over unending jungle; flying low level at about 60 knots. The whole time I was sure that I was going to get blown out of the sky. I got a direct commission after Nam, and I got rified in 72. I joined the army reserves and ended up commanding one of the PYSOPS units for three years. I still thought that flying low level over enemy-held jungle was nuts .[Response to Rzeminski's email from Engelhardt]: I [Engelhardt] had the same point of view that you did when I was in Vietnam. I thought that the broadcasts and leaflet drops were a waste of time. And, the operation put everyone in the chopper at undue risk. 30 years later, I learned that these missions had a profound negative effect on the enemy soldier's psychology. They produced surrenders and demoralized the enemy. There is an old saying in advertising: I know that 50% of my ads are a waste of money and time. My problem is I don't know which is the 50%.

Fast forward to 2001. The 9/11 events devastated my town of Summit, NJ - about 20 persons died at the WTC (World Trade Center), including a neighbor of mine. This tragedy spurred me into investigating my military experience in Vietnam, which I had tried my best to bury and forget for some 30 years. I contacted former 101st Brothers, including persons who had served with Capt. Pape at FSB Professional (subsequently renamed Camp Pape - see the below tribute to Captain John Pape. (Engelhardt)

Pilots and Crew of the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division flew into Camp Pape on a daily base. Thanks to 1LT Engelhardt, we now know the details of CPT Pape's death and the subsequent honoring of the man who died on 18 May 1968; near the beginning of Operation Lamar Plain). (Rzeminski)

In early 2001, I obtained a copy of Col Dietrich's report, which had been re-typed by hand by pilots in your Aviation Battalion and published on the Internet. The original had been released by the Army and was in such poor shape that the document had to be reprinted.

Up to Hamburger Hill, the 101st Airborne Division had enjoyed the reputation as being one of the finest line units in Army. The Battalion Commander (Lt Col Honeycutt) at the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division changed all of that. After the fact, I learned that the Army did

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everything possible to suppress the devastation at Tam Ky. The 101st was dispatched on "verbal orders" to save the ass of the Americal Division (which was rightfully and quickly disbanded several years later).

In June 1969, Col Hoefling, who had the privilege of commanding the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division for 12 months, was promoted and sent to the Pentagon. His replacement was an Army Special Forces veteran, who changed all discipline at LZ Sally. We had a "no Gooks on base" policy up to then. Thereafter, we had Vietnamese tailors, shit-burners, waitresses and barbers on base. Some acted as spotter for the 120mm rocket crews, which the NVA had secreted in hills. Very quickly, we got rockets inside the wire; something that had never happened before. Moral began to slide. And, when I DEROS'd out in August 1969, I realized that the Esprit de Corps of the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division had been dented and was deteriorating.

These two battles were the beginning of the end of the Vietnam War. When great military units like the Marines, the Seals, 101st, 82nd and 173rd Airborne begin to decline, the marginal units are already much further down the slope.

I was one lucky SOB and survived Vietnam; undead and physically unwounded. I carried post-War baggage around with me for 30 years, without realizing it and/or coming to grips with it. My Vietnam postmortem had the desired curative effects.

I thank you for your prodigious effort in compiling and chronicling the history of your Aviation Platoon at the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. We were lucky to have the Black Widows at the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. They were some of the best people I ever worked with at the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

Tribute to Cpt. John C. Pape: As a Lt. with 2nd Brigade, I had the privilege to work for Cpt. Pape for about 4 months during late 1968 - early 1969. He was the officer's officer, the soldier's soldier and a man who I would have followed anywhere and under any circumstances. 29 years later, when I think of Vietnam, I always remember John. The below tribute, published in the Stars & Stripes shortly after John's death on May 18, 1969, is totally accurate but fails to describe the human being behind the "iron mask". I got to know him when we "killed" a bottle of Scotch during the afternoon, before he left for his field command. John was determined to make the Army his carrier. He refused a medical discharge and an easy out to Long Island, where a much better life awaited him. He was dedicated to the mission at hand. He lived the OCS precept of "Mission, Men and Me", in that order. John never put his people in situations of unreasonable risk. John forced his men to dig foxholes every night, the terrain, the hour or the conditions notwithstanding. This discipline minimized casualties but did not save John's life, which was extinguished when a mortar round unluckily landed directly in his foxhole. While time has blurred the details of war in my mind, my memory of John remains fixed. Cpt. Pape was a living example of love of country, unswerving loyalty to his comrades in arms and service beyond the call of duty. He honored his commitments to the highest standards imaginable and will never be forgotten by those who served with him. John, may God grant you eternal peace. [Peter R. Engelhardt]

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Stars & Stripes - Tam Ky Site Renamed; Camp Pape - The new home of the 1st Brigade at Tam Ky has been renamed Camp Pape in ceremonies attended by honored guests, including Maj. General Lloyd Ramsey, commanding general of the Americal Division and Americal Assistant commander Brig. Gen. Wallace L. Clement. The Tam Ky site was named in honor of Capt. John C. Pape, former commanding officer of B Co., 1st Battalion, 501st Abn Inf., who was killed in action during Operation Lamar Plain on May 18. Gen. Ramsey termed the dedication "a tribute to a great brigade and a great soldier."

**Capt. Pape** had just arrived in country when he was wounded during a recon mission. His wounds inflicted by more than 40 Claymore mine fragments and three AK-47 rounds. The Captain refused amputation of his leg, a change in branch of service, evacuation to the States and a profile. Instead he requested that he be returned to the 101st. After recovering from his wounds, he got his wish, becoming S-3 Air for the 2nd Brigade. Still, Pape wanted to return to the field and finally persuaded his brigade commander to give him command of a company.

During the ceremony, the fallen leader was honored as "a hard man to know because he was a hard man. One who set high standards for himself and his men and always achieved them." Now, his memory lives in Camp Pape, home of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

His tour of duty began on 08/07/68; Casualty was on 05/18/69 in QUANG TIN, SOUTH VIETNAM, HOSTILE, GROUND CASUALTY, ARTILLERY, ROCKET, or MORTAR. Body was recovered, Panel 24W - Line 49

**Lloyd W. Enos:** I (WO1 Lloyd Enos) was in the Aviation Platoon (HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division) when the change (From Griffin Call Sign to Deadbone Call Sign) was made. All the Warrants liked "Deadbone" because the little frog like character always did exceptionally well with the Babes and the humor / satire was exceptional. If memory serves me correctly, Captain Edson Brock was our Platoon Leader at the time, and he was instrumental in getting the name changed. I actually have a copy of a letter he wrote to the Cavalier magazine telling them about us. They may have printed it in one of their editions, or at least made a nice editorial comment about our letter. I'm not sure which. I do know we thought it was pretty cool at the time.

I don't know if you have been able to locate Captain Edson Brock, but he would be the go to guy about Deadbone.

Good luck. I would be like to be filled in on what you find out. Time erases, or at least files away so many good old memories.

By the way, it's nice what you do, keeping track of things for everyone. You have become our unit historian and I thank you for doing it.

I do plan on making it to one of the get-togethers at some point in time.

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Believe it or not, I was able to locate that letter after only 30 to 45 minutes of looking. What I have is the carbon copy (remember those) of this hand typed letter, and I think I'll keep that. I will send you a copy though. It's interesting that some letters in the letter appear to be missing, but it's just that CPT Brock didn't pound the keyboard hard enough!

You know Pete; I don't remember us changing the call sign because we had to. I remember that we changed it because we wanted to. I could be wrong though. Perhaps having two Griffins was reason enough for our change to be authorized once we raised the issue. Another point of interest: late in 1970, all aviation units (actually all units) were told we could not use our made-up call signs. We were told to use the SOI and use what it said would be our call signs for the day. Hence, Deadbone 27 became D3B29 or whatever. We all went kind of nuts over this and many aviators continued to use our made-up call signs. Some got some pretty good ass chewings over this, both in the air and on the ground. I left country in January of 1971. I don't know if the guys had to continue using the SOI or if that was something that was short lived. I would be interested in hearing how that all came out though.

Ahhhh....the memories.

**Gary Forbes:** Forbes is not a member of the Aviation unit. He was the Platoon Leader of the Tiger Force. Tiger Force was a task force of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division, and was founded in November 1965 by Major David Hackworth to "out-guerrilla the guerrillas;" a platoon known as a "recondo unit" because it was to carry out reconnaissance and commando functions. Hackworth was a hell-for-leather soldier of savage brilliance, who had revealed himself as a daring hero during the Korean War. In Vietnam, he had realized that conventional warfare was a dead end. Following his lead, his commanders found the best way to locate the new enemy was to blend into the jungle terrain. That meant breaking into small teams, donning camouflage, and carrying enough rations and supplies to last several weeks.

On 15 May 1967, the Tigers were called to a valley west of Duc Pho in the heart of the Central Highlands-Quang Ngai province-where another Army reconnaissance unit, the Hawks, was pinned down by enemy fire. In the late morning, with a dozen Tiger Force soldiers at the bottom of the valley, the enemy launched a surprise attack. Well-fortified enemy bunkers at the top of the valley suddenly opened up, and NVA soldiers began shelling the helpless Tigers below.

Led by the Tigers' Platoon Leader, 1st Lieutenant Gary Forbes, the platoon members charged the bunkers, but were forced down by a flurry of mortars and .51-caliber machine-gun fire. For hours, the platoon was at the bottom of the basin, dodging artillery, grenades, and bullet fire. A graduate of Infantry Officer Candidate School and Airborne School, Forbes was a platoon commander in the Tiger Force (327th Infantry), 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. He earned his first Silver Star on 15 May 1967 while commanding his battalion's reconnaissance platoon when a large enemy force attacked. Forbes and his men attacked the enemy. He was seriously wounded in the chest but refused medical aid. Singlehandedly, he assaulted an enemy emplacement, killing all the enemy soldiers. His great courage and

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leadership led to a rout of the larger enemy force. He would return to Vietnam in 1968 and again received a Silver Star for gallantry in combat action against the enemy.

Tiger Force radioed for helicopters to evacuate the wounded, but each time a chopper tried to land, it was forced to leave because of enemy artillery. One helicopter was able to land in a rice paddy, but was immediately hit by fire and destroyed.

By early afternoon, Tiger Force was no closer to escaping and was running low on ammunition. But the platoon finally caught a break when the soldiers found a new position and were able to call in American air strikes without being hit. For two hours, U.S. jets dropped bombs on the bunkers. The combination of air strikes and the arrival of some additional American troops allowed the Tigers to escape.

The final rescue helicopters were again led by Major Kettles [See Major Kettles for his account of the evacuation], and supported by Aircraft Commander, CW2 Ken Arnold and Pilot WO1 Sam McGee, of the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. Arnold and McGee flew the “Tail-end Charlie” aircraft that landed in the rear of the LZ, soon after the leading five (5) hueys had already departed. As Arnold and McGee lifted from the LZ, they were told that everyone was out of the LZ. Incorrect information; there were eight left in the LZ at the time that Arnold left with his full helicopter. The Aviation Platoon Aircraft began the mission as a shiny, almost new aircraft for the Deputy 1st Brigade Commander, and ended up with well over a hundred holes from mortar fragments and bullets.

On their way to the Duc Pho hospital pad, Arnold and McGee heard over the radios that there were still some soldiers and wounded still left in the LZ. Kettles landed in the front portion of the LZ and pulled out the final Tigers and crew of the downed huey. By the end of the day, two were dead and twenty-five wounded. For some of the injured, including Lieutenant Forbes, the war was over.

**Herbert W. Francis:** [As told by Peter J. Rzeminski]: CW2 Francis was an African-American helicopter pilot (of course, in 1969, he was just a black pilot to us fellow pilots) who joined the Aviation Detachment, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division in the summer of 1969. The 1st brigade was stationed in I Corps, Vietnam. The unit was south of DaNang in support of the Americal Division, as part of the Lamar Plain Campaign. The 1st Brigade returned to Camp Eagle Southwest of Hue, in August/ September 1969. He hit it off well with the other pilots and soon fit in as one of the team.

Two stories that I recall about him:

CW2 Francis was flying a courier-run (what we called ash and trash missions) in an OH-6A (Observation Helicopter, also known as a Loach – LOH; Light Observation Helicopter). The LOH can comfortably hold four (two in front and two to three in back). This particular mission, Francis had dropped off the dispatches/ orders he was carrying and was picking up a passenger; a captain who needed transportation to a firebase (one of the mountaintop artillery bases west of Hue-Citadel). Francis was sitting in the left front seat as the pilot. His crew chief/door gunner was sitting in the rear right seat with his M-60 Machine gun. The

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captain got into the helicopter, and the crew chief made sure that the captain was properly secured in the seat belts, and then crawled into the rear.

Now in those days, we would pull the cyclic slightly back and then pop the collective. This would rapidly lift the helicopter to a five to ten-foot hover, and then we'd accelerate up through transitional lift and off into the sky, at a rapid pace. We weren't showing off, but we all did tend to hot-rod our take-offs. Anyway, as Francis lifted the LOH up to about five feet, it started to spin out-of-control. He kicked in pedal, in order to introduce anti-spin control, but the pedals would barely move. Thinking rapidly, Francis realized he needed to get the LOH back on the ground before it started spinning completely out-of-control and thereby ending in a potential crash. He slammed on the pedals as hard as he could and got some slight movement. He then lowered the collective and put the LOH down, with the blades flexing down (but not hitting the chopper) and first one skid and then the other touching down with the LOH still in a spin. Once on the ground, Francis was able to fully regain control.

After Francis turned off the helicopter, he got out of the LOH to try to determine what had happened. Now, the OH-6A, like the UH-1 Huey, has dual controls for two pilots, but since the OH-6A is often flown by only one pilot, the cyclic and foot pedals can be removed. The right-hand controls had been removed on the OH-6A that Francis was flying that day, but the two rods that the pedals are attached to were still sticking out of the floor. The captain was wearing a bandoleer of M-16 magazines draped over his right shoulder and under his left arm. Apparently, he had removed the bandoleer from around his neck, and wrapped it around the two pedal rods sticking out of the floor. When a helicopter takes off, the pilot uses the pedal to counteract the torque created by the rotors blades spinning. The pedals control the rear tail rotor. If the pedals can't be used, the tail rotor cannot counteract the spinning blades and the whole helicopter will start to spin. This is what had happened when the captain wrapped his bandoleer around the pedal rods.

It doesn't happen too often, but this was the first time I saw Francis so angry that he chewed out a captain – and got away with it. Of course, afterward we would often then tease him about the “incident.” – Pete Rzeminski

One afternoon I was hovering in my UH-1H Huey helicopter at DaNang Airfield waiting for tower approval to take off. My mission had been to pick up some Navy officers (Brown-water Navy) and bring them to DaNang for some meeting. I was then to take them to the DaNang Post Exchange (PX), and then return them to their boat. The DaNang Airfield Tower was often manned by Vietnamese Air Traffic Controllers, and although the International Language for Air Traffic is supposed to be English, it was often hard to understand them, and they tended to ignore us helicopter pilots; giving priority to Navy and Air Force pilots. So, I am at a hover waiting to get clearance to pull out parallel to the runway so I can take off when I hear CW2 Francis come in over the radio requesting clearance to also take off. He was flying an OH-6A LOH that afternoon. He kept calling the Tower but was getting no response. The Vietnamese Controllers were talking to other pilots, mostly jet jockeys, and the Controllers were not answering CW2 Francis' calls. So next thing I notice is an OH-6A flying up and out to the right of the active runway and proceeding to take off. I also hear “O hell” over the radio, and then I heard “abort takeoff.” As the OH-6A is continuing its flight out of the airport, I see

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two Air Force jets popping their landing parachutes to slow down their take-off speed. The Tower starts calling the pilot of the OH-6A who suddenly drops low to the water in DaNang harbor and low-levels it out and away from the airfield. The OH-6A pilot never responds to the Tower, and none of us other pilots would say anything about the identity of the LOH pilot, but oh, how we howled with laughter later that night at the Officer's Club retelling the story of how Francis cut off two Air Force jets and then disappeared over the mountains North of DaNang. He claimed total innocence and stated that he didn't know what we were all talking about – with a big grin. – Pete Rzeminski

**Thomas P. Gatz:** I received your letter about the 1st Brigade Aviation Platoon. I was with the unit from June 1971 until its return to Fort Campbell, Kentucky in January 1972. The Aviation Platoon left Viet Nam in January, 1972. The only three officers returning to Fort Campbell were Cpt Richard G. Neil (the aviation platoon leader-: he would resume those duties at Fort Campbell): 1LT Kermit Wade (pilot- he would assume the duties as the Flight Operations Officer at Fort Campbell): CW2 Thomas Gatz served as a pilot, Aviation Safety Officer, and as the unit UH-1 Instructor Pilot. Upon returning to Fort Campbell, he resumed the duties as the Aviation Safety Officer and became the OH-58A Instructor Pilot. The OH-58A replaced the OH-6As that were used in Viet Nam.

The unit's return from Viet Nam was via a contract 707 or DC8. We did not travel by military aircraft; nor by an ocean-going ship. The orders state that our flight from was to depart from DaNang, Viet Nam to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. However, I recall arriving at the west coast of the U.S. at a civilian airport and beginning leave from there prior to reporting to Fort Campbell. All of the unit's aircraft remained in Viet Nam. I think most of our equipment was placed in a CONEX container and shipped to Fort Campbell. I was on a 2 week leave in the U. S. at the end of December, 1971. Upon reporting back to the unit in January, 1972, I learned of the unit's proposed departure. I also learned that I would be returning to Fort Campbell with the unit. Since I was on leave, I missed the majority of the preparation for the unit's departure.

I have a copy of the Permanent Change of Station orders (NOTE: see included below; if this is the PDF edition) for the unit relieving it from Viet Nam and assigning it to Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Letter of Appreciation, dated 20 September 1971; Commanding Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division.

1. During the month of August, the Deadbones led all aviation units in the Division in the average number of hours flown per aircraft, while simultaneously maintaining a significantly higher rate of operational readiness than the aviation platoons of the other two brigades—and one of the highest rates in the Division. No other unit can match the Deadbones combination of flying hours and rate of operational readiness.
2. Statistics are often cold and impersonal, but not these. They tell me that the Deadbones are dedicated, hardworking professionals: pilots who are willing to fly extra hours to make sure that the troops of this brigade got the support they need; crew chiefs and mechanics who are willing to work around the clock if necessary so that their aircraft are operational the following day. When the Deadbones unmatched spirit

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is added to such dedication and professionalism, the result can only be one thing: the best aviation unit in the Division.

3. There is not a man in this brigade who does not share my appreciation for the work with the Deadbones are doing—from the battalion commander who gets his C&C ship when and where he needs it to the soldier on the fire base or in the bush who gets his hot chow and mail regularly. I want every member of your platoon to know how much his work is appreciated. The Deadbones are doing their share to keep the first brigade “Always First”. Signed Robert Arther, Colonel, Inf, Commanding (1<sup>st</sup> Brigade)

**Roland Gerhart:** I worked as a Telephone Lineman, installing and repairing telephone and teletype lines for FS base Birmingham, Bastogne, and OP Checkmate, and maintaining the brigade switchboard "Kickapoo." I served in Vietnam from 13 October 1970 to 29 October 1971. I was in HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Commo Section for my whole tour. Part of our section supported Operation Lam Son 719 in Quang Tri, Feb 1971, myself included. Some names of soldiers in my section are as follows: Sgt. Morris was Section Sergeant (don't know his first name or home state), PFC David Hickey, Lineman (from North Carolina), PFC William Hudson, Lineman (from Louisiana), Sp4 Lawrence Tilton, Lineman (from Massachusetts) - deceased as of Dec. 2014, Sgt. Jameson, “Kickapoo” Switchboard Operator (from Jamaica don't know first name), Sp4 Sutton, “Kickapoo” Switchboard Operator (from Kansas don't know first name), SSG Applegate, Assistant Platoon Sergeant, Commo ( don't know first name or home state).

Sp4 Tilton was the only one I have had contact with since the war. Larry passed away from ischemic heart disease due to Agent Orange at Sturdy Hospital in North Attleboro, MA on 16 December 2014. I had contact with him just before he passed away, and we did get to talk together. I am keeping in contact with his family at present. As for the others, unfortunately, I don't know anything about any of them.

I have a few pictures if interested. Also, HHC, 1st Brigade, Scout Dog platoon was located across the way from us, and 1st Brigade ARVN (Army Republic of Vietnam) interrogators were located in our area as well.

During the time, I was in Vietnam; the 101st was in the process of Vietnamization. As personnel went home, there was not always a replacement. Sometimes a replacement came from another unit that was going home, and sometimes no replacement was the case. We were almost a full platoon when I arrived in October 1970, but by the time I went home the platoon was down to about 15 men. There were about 5 RTO's (Radio, Telephone Operators) in the Brigade Commo TOC, about 5 linemen, about 2 equipment repair personnel, plus a couple of truck drivers. Some of our responsibilities, such as to maintain trunk lines and bunker line communication between the command bunker and line bunkers, were turned over to line companies in the 1/327 inf - 1/502 inf. ARVN personnel were starting to learn the systems in preparation for their takeover of Camp Eagle. Some fire bases were in process of being turned over to ARVN's or abandoned around the time I was leaving in October 1971.

Oh, I almost forgot. I was friends with SSG Nguyen Van Loc, an ARVN interrogator that worked in 1st Brigade HQ. He lived in Phu Bai. He had a wife and three children. He was in a

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precarious position. He was interrogating Viet Cong and NVA captives knowing that he would be a traitor to North Vietnam if ever caught. I have thought of this for 45 years, wondering if he came to America by luck or was killed or reeducated; and what of his family?

I want to thank you for all of your efforts in establishing and keeping current the “Mini-History” of the aviation platoon and other sections in the 101st Airborne Division Vietnam. I know this takes a lot of time and costs some money. In my opinion you did and do an awesome job keeping things true and interesting. Your efforts are appreciated by us all.

I’m not sure how many of the team mates have or for that matter have wanted to return to Vietnam. My wife Patti and I traveled to Saigon, Hoi An, and Hanoi last year June 22-July 7 2017. If anyone is interested, I found the country for the most part, still very similar to when I left it. People still bring any and everything to the market every day. People still fish the rivers and bring their catch to sell in the city. Scooters; man there are so many scooters. There are very few old men like us. The war in Vietnam in the sixties and seventies and the war in the eighties with Cambodia almost wiped out the men. There are quite a few old women in their sixties on up. Men and women in their thirties and forties are prevalent along with many children. The country is not a whole lot more advanced then it was in 1970. There are many people that still only make \$250.00 per year. That’s about 3 million Vietnamese Dong. There are some people with I-phones but not many. The ingenuity of the people is still amazing. They can make something out of nothing just like they did way back when. In Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) there are 10 million people now. The Embassy is still there hidden in the shadows of a new high rise building. The “Neon 51” is the tallest building in Saigon at present. (51 floors) My wife and I had dinner on the top floor with a fantastic view of the city. The tourist trade is developing rapidly. There are nice hotels and good food in the city. Unfortunately, most ordinary people still don’t have indoor running water or flush toilets in their houses and businesses. The city was built too closely and streets are narrow so sewers are hard to build.

The people love Americans, or probably their money. Realistically, they do love Americans! Your money goes forever in Vietnam. We had two in country flights by prop from Saigon to Hoi An to Hanoi. Hoi An is on the ocean near DaNang. It was very similar to Camp Eagle for temperature and humidity. Hoi An is a nice city with many shops. The beaches are white sand just like they were. We went to Marble Mountain in DaNang and saw many interesting things. The people seem to be a bit better off in the central part of Vietnam compared to Saigon. In Hanoi, we saw the Hanoi Hilton, Ho Chi Minh palace, Ho Chi Minh mausoleum, and The temple of literature. Hanoi is very interesting as well. I had some reservations about going to Vietnam, but in the end I am glad we did it. This little story is for all who want to and still can take the trip back to Vietnam. I say go for it. And to those who don’t or won’t go back for whatever reasons, I just wanted you to know a little bit of how Vietnam is today. The best thing that helped me is to know that the people don’t hate us. Thanks again Pete for your dedication, and feel free to let others read this story or put it in the history if you would like to. “This was an Adventure by Disney tour. It consisted of 30 people in all. The cost was like any other trip. We visited Vietnam for 8 days then Laos for 2 days and finally Cambodia for 2 days. The trip included 2 (4 engine prop) airplane rides in Vietnam and 1 ride to Luang Prabang, Laos, and 1 ride to Siem Reap Cambodia. Each plane ride was about 2 hours long. All of the hotels were 5 star. This is an expensive trip, but you will pay the same to go to Europe for 6 days instead of 12 days in a place you really want to and need to see. The cost

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to go to Vietnam (for coach by Delta) is about \$1700.00 ea. round trip. You can get information [www.partofthatworld.com](http://www.partofthatworld.com)>agents then go to Disney Agent Katy Maxwell, my daughter. This is a wonderful trip, and COMPLETELY SAFE with LITTLE physical excursion. Sincerely, Roland Gerhart HHC 1st Bde. 101st Airborne Div. Commo Section 1970-71.

**Gary Griffin:** I have been lucky enough to never have had a flash back, or anything like that until I was at a men's Cursillo retreat (Catholic four-day retreat). I was in Bradford Vermont in 1992 on the first break of the weekend. The incident below was recalled in an almost movie quality while I was gazing at Holstein Cows grazing in a pasture.

We were in the south flying a company commander back to his unit. Greg [Craig] Bixby was the Crew Chief and I was flying gunner. In route, we heard a medivac request from the CO's unit. Not hearing a response our pilot (can't recall who the pilots were) made them aware we were in route and would do a drop off and pick up. Shortly after the call a medivac ship came on-line and took the lead. We were watching the ship closely as we had never been to the LZ. They were several hundred yards ahead of us and about 100 ft. below us. As soon as they dropped below the ridge line a .51 Caliber open up and the rounds hit their ship dead center. A person was thrown out of the right-side door, the rotor blades broke away from the transmission and the aircraft tumbled to the ground. I did not actually see it hit as we took evasive action and were quickly flying-map-of-the-earth. I did see .51 Caliber Tracers coming from the opposite ridge line but they weren't even close.

I had asked myself the unanswerable question many times, "why them and not us?" I did not receive a definitive answer to that question, but I came to know that the weekend I was on was a gift, an opportunity to connect in a profound way with the spiritual. Long story short in 1999, after 5 years of study, I was ordained a Catholic Deacon at the Cathedral in Burlington Vermont. Life it we know puts us all in many places and spaces and it is only with the passage of time we see the rose beneath the thorns.

#### **Typical day for the Crew Chief:**

0500 Chow

0530 Pre-flight check

    Review Log Book

    Pull filters

    Check rotor linkage

0600 Pilots arrive

    Pre-flight

    Crew Chief replaces filters

    Crew Chief outside Aircraft while Huey fires up

0630 Take off

0700 – 2200

- If command & Control:
  - Bore holes in the sky, refuel every 2.5 hours, relieve bladder pressure, repeat till commander gets hungry (lunch, c-rat stove grilled what's-it) or commander gets sleepy (back to base)
- Post flight

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- Clean A/C – Door Gunner (DG) & Crew Chief (CC)
- Clean guns if fired DG & CC
- Fill out log book CC
- Hash-trash-and taxi
  - Fly to supply point
  - Fly to fire bases
  - Fly to LZ's
- Talk pilots down to ground (sometimes while out on skids) to avoid tree stumps and other hazards
- Refuel every 2.5 hours, relieve bladder pressure, repeat, unless you taxi brass (senior officers) to meetings. Then you could be on the ground for hours. Down time you would Wax A/C, read books, catch some zzzzzzz'z, tell tall tales and scratch your butt.
- When you flew long days, the 25 hour maintenance check would roll around in three days. The added work (2 hours) would see you in the rack at 2300 – 2400, especially if guns needed cleaning.
- We all were running on fumes by the end of a couple of weeks. Thank God for bad weather, so you could drink some beer, play some cards, get some sleep and even write a letter or two.

**Bruce Harvey:** Dinky Dau the Civet - I was with the aviation platoon attached to HHC 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. In the summer of 1969 the brigade airlifted south from Camp Eagle to Tam Ky for Operation Lamar Plain. The aviation platoon was back at the flight line in Chu Lai. One of our crew chiefs [Sp4 Dale Foster] was parked out at Hau Duc, when he saw a cute little animal kitten in a rough cage. It looked like a stretched raccoon, with "masked" black eyes and a really long ringed tail. We decided she was a mongoose, but was more likely a palm civet cat. It was apparently being raised by its Vietnamese owner, until it would grow big enough to become dinner. The crew chief traded some C-rations for her; a meal for a meal was the obvious trade. He brought her back to the aviation platoon's operations hooch at Chu Lai. At one point we put her on a slack wire running from the ceiling light to a corner. She hung upside down, trying to figure out what to do. Then she started swinging her long tail until she had enough momentum to flip on top of the wire. She couldn't quite stay up, and swung back underneath the wire. The next time she got it right, balancing on the slack wire like a circus act, and then walking to the corner and down the screen. We named her Dinky Dau. If you weren't there, that's Vietnamese-French pidgin meaning "crazy".

She went back north to Camp Eagle with us in August, 1969. She was required to get a rabies shot and tag, probably from a veterinarian with the nearby scout dog platoon. We put together a dogtag chain for the rabies tag. Her owner went on R & R and she became mine.

I took her with me on flights in the huey. I'd show up early for the preflight check, she would perform one of her own. She would jump up into the hell hole (in the bottom where the cargo hook was, under the transmission, notoriously hot and dirty). She'd then climb out on top by the rotor shaft, examine the top and walk back on the tail boom. She'd climb up the rotor tie-down, then to the rotor blade then the far end of the opposite rotor blade to take in the view. From there it was back to the rotor shaft and down inside the ship. She'd be out of sight for a

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while, somewhere inside the airframe. When the pilots came by, she'd run to a hole in the frame behind the co-pilot seat that was convenient for keeping cleaning rags – that was her den for the rest of the day. Sometimes she didn't go in there until she heard the engine fire up. I worried then, hoping she wouldn't somehow jam controls such as the tail rotor cables.

One day we had an instructor pilot with a new pilot (a "peter pilot", which is aviation for an FNG). The engine fired up, no sign of Dinky Dau. The huey was parked in a revetment, sandbag & PSP walls on the sides, supposedly to protect the aircraft against shrapnel. They made a fairly tight space without much room to maneuver. The student pilot brought the bird to a hover between the revetments. At that point Dinky Dau popped out from the nose bubble, ran up the guy's right leg, up to his shoulder, across his back then jumped into her hole. He said "WHAT WAS THAT?" The IP said "Oh, that's just Dinky Dau". I was impressed: the PP kept the huey controlled in a steady hover between the revetments while being "attacked" by a strange critter. Later on we shut down at a firebase. The IP said "Here, let me show you Dinky Dau" and reached toward the hole. I don't remember whether I warned him ("I wouldn't do that sir") or just waited for him to find out by experience. Dinky Dau bit him hard enough to draw blood. Lesson: Let sleeping civet cats lie.

This animal could produce a godawful stench that would shame a skunk. She liked to crawl on top of peoples' the mosquito netting at night. If she had to pee, she didn't see the need to move, didn't care if someone was asleep in the cot below. By that time she was starting to go feral, too wild for me to have any control, until she wouldn't let me touch her at all. People would demand for me to do something. I disavowed any relationship. All I could think of was to suggest they shoot her. No one took me up on that.

A week or so later I heard: "WHO OWNS THAT GODDAM RAT?" I saw the brigade XO striding toward my hooch. It's said that it's better to be pissed off than pissed on, but apparently he was both. I slipped out the back, and confess to hiding in a bunker rather than face a one-sided conversation with a light colonel.

So she went wild, slipped her dogtag, and would be seen from time to time. I last saw her peeking out from under a hooch at a movie on a home-made screen; John Wayne no less. That was the last time she bit me.

**John Hayes:** On 28 June 1969, During Operation Lamar Plain and flying in the Area of Operations, Warrant Officer 1 John Hayes was flying a mission with Warrant Officer 1 Herbert Francis, his crew chief Specialist Dale Foster and his door gunner Specialist Thomas Marcotte. WO1 John Hayes hears "boom, boom" and thinks that the tail rotor has been hit because the helicopter suddenly swerves, as if the torque is gone; so he dropped the collective to reduce torque. Specialist Dale Foster says "I think that we are receiving fire, and we've been hit." They had indeed come under intense small arms fire. The reason that WO1 John Hayes thought that the tail rotor had been hit was that WO1 John Hayes had been shot with an AK-47 round that fractured his left leg femur; thus, throwing his left foot off the pedal. Finally realizing that he had been shot, Aircraft Commander WO1 John Hayes turns control of the aircraft to his pilot WO1 Herbert Francis. WO1 Francis regains control of the UH-1 and,

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while under enemy fire, flies the huey to the medivac site. John Hayes is then medivac'd out of Vietnam.

As told to me (Pete Rzeminski) by Major Stuart Miller: Hayes said that he loved throwing grenades into caves. He'd fly up to the cave and throw them in. "Kill them all" he said. When Miller asked him how do you know when you killed them all, Hayes response was, "we stopped receiving fire."

(From an article by Brooks Johnson Oct 23, 2015 in *The Daily News* tdn.com) John Hayes had a big decision to make. So, he went bowling. "If it went one way, I'd go into the Army," he said about one fateful roll in 1968. "If it went the other way, I'd go to college." Needless to say, it went the way that sent Hayes to Vietnam.

A helicopter pilot who earned a silver star, the Tennessee native was often on dangerous scout missions when he could have been starting his first year at Vanderbilt. "We flew low and slow, following footprints, following trails, and found targets," Hayes said. He quickly learned that it was camaraderie that was going to keep him alive and keep him sane. "Everything else sinks to insignificance, except taking care of your buddies," Hayes said. "You can talk about mom and home and apple pie and the flag and everything else, but you do what you've got to do for your buddies." After his risky assignments subsided, it was on a supposedly easy mission that Hayes had a bullet pierce his leg through the helicopter's metal body. "After all of the dangerous stuff I'd been doing, on this supposedly safe mission, that was the one that sent me home," Hayes said. Sent to Tokyo awaiting his ride home in June of 1969 — "I wasn't very high on the priority list for shipping home," he said — Hayes witnessed the human toll of the war as thousands of other soldiers were sent home before him. "When I was in Vietnam there were 250 to 500 soldiers killed every week," he said. "So, you can imagine how many wounded that was."

When he did return home, he decided to join the National Guard, again seeing the camaraderie as an important tool in dealing with a divided world. "We spoke the same language and had the same values, and at that time society was bipolar," Hayes said. "The Guard, for me, was a way to keep it together." Hayes never faced the kind of abuse hurled at other veterans when they returned home. He even had a dinner bought for him in Dallas while wearing his full uniform and medals. He ended up serving in the Guard nearly 40 years, and between that service and the G.I. Bill he was able to put himself and his wife through college.

Following full-time Guard service, Hayes tried out jobs in sales, consulting and human resources, but he didn't want to sit at a desk all day. He became a commercial airline pilot, getting back to the love of flying that caused him to consider military service in the first place. Well, that and a certain hook on his bowling toss. After retiring three years ago, Hayes came to Cowlitz County, where much of his wife's family lives.

Looking back at his service, Hayes says things are different now. "People appreciate the sacrifice. Not just the soldiers, but their families. It wasn't like that in Vietnam," he said. "If you were proud about it you kept it to yourself and your immediate family." Choking up, he told of

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a note left under his windshield — in response to seeing a purple heart ribbon — thanking him for his service. “I’ve still got that note.”

**John Hotz:** Crew chief Huey, &OH-23. Schooling in Vung Tau to crew the first OH-6 we received. Joined 101st Airborne May-67 in Duc Pho. DEROS'd May 68 from Phu Bai. Several of us were short and Deros'd within a couple months' time. Replacement pilots were getting younger. Can't remember the name, but one WO was 19-20 yrs old from Calif. And he had been a glider pilot as a kid. The pilots and EM I knew were probably gone when you arrived. Saw pics on your site. The one with the 23 looks like it was taken in Phu Bai with Mess hall and Chaplain's tent up the hill in background. Would be nice to get in touch with of the gang I served with.

Checking to see if that green outhouse we inherited was still there when you [Pete Rzeminski] arrived in Aug 68. I remember Pop Richert, and I think it was Sadler on water detail filling the shower tank. One of them bets he could stick survival knife into the shit house door. One of them threw, and it buried up to the hilt. A second later the door flew open and out runs a Major, pulling up his pants and running full speed back up to Brigade Headquarters, never looking back. He probably thought what a crazy bunch of SOB's we were. We had no idea it was occupied

**Terry Hunt:** I was just thinking. I transferred in from C 101 (Black Widows) around May-June 1969. Went to Camp Eagle, but I think the unit [Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division] was deployed to Chu Li [May-Aug 1969 to support Americal Division; Operation Lamar Plain]. Think I took a C 123 down. Got an in-house OH-6 transition and flew both white teams and C & C [Command & Control]. At Eagle we had 2 hooch's tied together with a porch and picnic table. I was in the hooch closest to the laundry and O club. WO1 Kevin Maynard was across from me, but I'll be damned if I can remember the other guys. Hooch slept 8 with a wall making for 4 on a side. I remember a guy who played Arlo Guthrey's "Alice's Restaurant" day and night. WO Joel Murphy was in the other hooch with you [Pete Rzeminski] I guess. I remember flying with WO Chuck Alge and flew white teams with Robert Davies and Ken Tripp (he was shot down and medivac'd from Tam Ky). I saw him in New Orleans. 2nd loach landed and got them out under fire. He didn't remember the guy's name (he was pissed about that) [Bob Davies was flying low ship and didn't get hit with any fire. He landed and picked up Ken Tripp and Ernie Walker – notes added by Pete Rzeminski]. Bet we flew together. Were 16 all the warrant pilots we had(?) some fun. I taught a lot of guys to play bridge and euchre too.

**Michael Jacobi:** There is an official document that separated the brigade and another that bought it back.

**MG Barsanti** - I felt the full weight of the deranged CG three times, and we all worked for him when he came over. He was going to court martial me those times. My Brigade commander got between us. Put his career on the line for me he did. I was told later that Barsanti was on chemo. It must have did something to him. He died not too long after. Nonsense stuff. He was a ball width out of trim. Seriously. Make that full rudder. Barsanti or something close to that. Hold on. I'll google it. Found it. His year must have included stateside.

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I flew C & C (Command and Control) when we put Firebase Veghel in. Firebase Bastogne, too and all along that road. Trucks on fire and pushed out of the way. Intense. and flew Westmoreland a half a dozen times.

MG Olinto Mark Barsanti (November 11, 1917 – May 2, 1973) was commander of the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam from 1967–1968, commanding during the Tet Offensive and during subsequent operations around Bien Hoa and Huế. He previously served during World War II (in Normandy, Brittany, and Belgium) and the Korean War (at Seoul, Inchon, and with X Corps), and he is one of the most highly decorated American soldiers in history, receiving approximately 60 decorations, including the DSC, DSM, 5 Silver Stars, 2 Legions of Merit, 8 Bronze Stars, 8 Air Medals, 7 Purple Hearts, and the Croix de guerre with Palms.

Barsanti died of cancer in 1973. In his memory, the University of North Texas has established the Barsanti Military History Center. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Fort Campbell held a dedication ceremony for the Olinto M. Barsanti Elementary School, a Department of Defense Education Activity school. The new school is located in the southern portion of the Fort Campbell Army Post. The 93,000 square-foot, \$18 million building was built to accommodate the growing availability of on-post-housing, and serves the Gardner Hills and The Woodlands housing areas. It opened its doors to approximately 550 Pre-K through 5th grade students on January 3, 2011.

**Charles Kettles:** Retired Army Lt. Colonel Charles S. Kettles, 86, was awarded the Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry during an ambush in Vietnam. Kettles was an Army major and a flight commander who led a platoon (176<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, February 1967-June 1967; then Aviation Section, HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division, June 1967-November 1967) of UH-1D “Huey” helicopters providing support to a 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne unit ambushed near Duc Pho in the Republic of Vietnam on May 15, 1967. As part of *Operation Malheur*, during the early morning hours of 15 May 1967, personnel of the 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division, were ambushed in the Song Tra Cau riverbed by an estimated battalion-sized force of the North Vietnamese army with numerous automatic weapons, machine guns, mortars and recoilless rifles. The enemy force fired from a fortified complex of deeply embedded tunnels and bunkers, and was shielded from suppressive fire. Upon learning that the 1st Brigade had suffered casualties during an intense firefight with the enemy, then-Maj. Charles S. Kettles, volunteered to lead a flight of six UH-1D helicopters to carry reinforcements to the embattled force and to evacuate wounded personnel. As the flight approached the landing zone, it came under heavy enemy attack. Deadly fire was received from multiple directions and Soldiers were hit and killed before they could leave the arriving lift helicopters.

Jets dropped napalm and bombs on the enemy machine guns on the ridges overlooking the landing zone, with minimal effect. Small arms and automatic weapons fire continued to rake the landing zone, inflicting heavy damage to the helicopters. However, Kettles refused to depart until all reinforcements and supplies were off-loaded and wounded personnel were

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loaded on the helicopters to capacity. Kettles led them out of the battle area and back to the staging area to pick up additional reinforcements.

Kettles then returned to the battlefield, with full knowledge of the intense enemy fire awaiting his arrival. Bringing reinforcements, he landed in the midst of enemy mortar and automatic weapons fire that seriously wounded his gunner and severely damaged his aircraft. Upon departing, Kettles was advised by another helicopter crew that he had fuel streaming out of his aircraft. Despite the risk posed by the leaking fuel, he nursed the damaged aircraft back to base.

Later that day, the infantry battalion commander requested immediate, emergency extraction of the remaining 40 troops, and four members of Kettles' unit who were stranded when their helicopter was destroyed by enemy fire. With only one flyable UH-1 helicopter remaining, Kettles volunteered to return to the deadly landing zone for a third time, leading a flight of six evacuation helicopters, five of which were from the 161st Aviation Company [**number six was one helicopter from the Aviation Section, HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, and it was the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade's Deputy Commander's C&C ship flown by CW2 Ken Arnold and WO1 Sam McGee see page 137**]. During the extraction, Kettles was informed by his last helicopter (helicopter 5 of the 161st) that all personnel were onboard, and departed the landing zone accordingly. Army gunships supporting the evacuation also departed the area.

Once airborne, Kettles was advised that eight troops had been unable to reach the evacuation helicopters due to the intense enemy fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, Kettles passed the lead to another helicopter and returned to the landing zone to rescue the remaining troops. Without gunship, artillery, or tactical aircraft support, the enemy concentrated all firepower on his lone aircraft, which was immediately damaged by a mortar round that damaged the tail boom, a main rotor blade, shattered both front windshields and the chin bubble and was further raked by small arms and machine gun fire.

Despite the intense enemy fire, Kettles maintained control of the aircraft and situation, allowing time for the remaining eight Soldiers to board the aircraft. In spite of the severe damage to his helicopter, Kettles once more skillfully guided his heavily damaged aircraft to safety. Without his courageous actions and superior flying skills, the last group of Soldiers and his crew would never have made it off the battlefield.

"We were already 15 feet in the air, but we decided to go back and get the others," Kettles told The Detroit News last year (2015). "The helicopter was already overweight and it flew like a two-ton truck, but we were able to get up in the air and get everyone to safety." Kettles was credited with saving 40 troops on the ground that day, along with four of his own crew. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions. A push from lawmakers in Kettles' home state of Michigan sought not only to upgrade his award, but waive the statute of limitation that bars the medal from being awarded after five years. Congressional action was needed to waive the restriction. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter agreed Kettles' actions merited the award, and a bill passed December 2015, and signed by President Barack

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Obama led to the award's approval. The president awarded Kettles with the Medal of Honor in a ceremony on 18 July 2016.

**Daniel Knox:** I got your e-mail off your Mini-History of the Aviation Platoon of the above unit. I was in the unit from approximately June 1968 - April 1969 when I DEROS'd. Since I was infantry MOS door gunner was my job. I remember flying a lot when I was there but malaria, R & R's, plus a one-month trip home took up time. The only person I remember is Mr. Thibault who flew away one day and never came back. As did some others, if memory serves. I also remember a night infantry resupply that scarred our blades badly. I look forward to our future communications and refreshing my memory of that time in life. Thanks for your history lesson.

Hello Mr. [Major Stuart] Miller, The last time we saw each other was when I DEROS'd from Viet Nam, April 18 or so, 1969. I finished 1.5 years there, with 7 months or so in the infantry and 9 months in HHC, 1st Brigade, Air Platoon, as a door gunner. It has been a long time, and I remember some but not others of the unit. I am writing to find out when, or if, there will be another reunion of the unit in the near future. I would like to attend if possible. I have been to one reunion with my old infantry unit, 2/327th, C Company but have lost touch with the Air Platoon. It would be my privilege to attend one with the Air Platoon. The only person I really remember is Mr. Thibault who flew away one day and never came back. As did some others as I remember. You may remember me as a rather hard case, withdrawn, with rather harsh words for some officers. But, I worked hard and did my job. I hope to hear from you soon and re-establish contact with the Air Platoon.

### **Aviation Platoon is Merged into A Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB)**

**Raymond Knox:** completed five (5) tours with the 101st Airborne Division 1979-1995. Therefore, **he did not serve with the 101<sup>st</sup> while the division was in Vietnam.** However, he gives us insight as to the post-Vietnam heritage of the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

SSG Raymond Knox served in: 1) Casper Flight Platoon (Thunder in Vietnam), HHC, 3rd Infantry Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, 1979-1982. When I was first assigned to Casper Flight Platoon, December 1979 at Ft Campbell, I was told that the 101st Airborne Division came back in (January) 1972, and that the 123rd Aviation Battalion, as part of the 23rd Infantry Division (Americal - Vietnam, 1965-1971) was deactivated in 1971. The 123rd was reactivated as the 123rd Aviation Battalion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky on 16 December 1985. The Battalion was formed by combining the assets of several units, including Divisional Infantry Brigade flight detachments,

- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Vietnam - Eagle, Griffin/Little Griffin, Deadbone)
- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Vietnam - Brandy)
- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Vietnam - Thunder),

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- the 163rd Aviation Company (General Support) (Vietnam – RoadRunner/Woodstock), and Battery A, 377th Field Artillery (Vietnam – Gunner).

And if memory serves me right, 163rd Aviation Company for flying the Division Command staff and supporting other unit commanders.

2) Deadbone Flight Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, 1985. I arrived back in early 1985, and I was assigned to Deadbone. When I was in Deadbone (1985), we only had the patch on our flight bag. They would not allow it on our uniforms. But some Vietnam Vets in our unit wore it on their flight jacket. I put it on my SRU-21/P survival vest. It was still our call sign, and in the Mission Office we had a big 4-foot-tall one on the wall.

At the end of 1985, I reenlisted for an assignment in West Germany. While stationed in West Germany (1985-1988), with Field Station Augsburg INSCOM (formerly ASA), the Army went regimental, in 1987. Our Flight Detachment was reorganized from INSCOM (Intelligence Security Command) to MI (Military Intelligence). To my surprise, when I eventually was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, again in January 1990, the Aviation units had also been reorganized in 1987 to the Regimental system.

3) When I returned to Ft Campbell, Kentucky, the 3rd time, the three (3) unique Infantry Brigade Flight Platoons (1st Brigade-Deadbone, 2nd Brigade [Brandy in Vietnam], 3rd Brigade-Casper [Thunder in Vietnam]) were combined with the 163rd Flight Company (Roadrunner/Woodstock in Vietnam) as 6th Company, 101st Aviation Battalion. It was the last Huey (UH-1) unit.

I was assigned to HHSC, 8-101st (formerly 5th Transportation). We deployed to Saudi Arabia for Desert Shield and Desert Storm. So, my 3rd assignment counted as two tours of duty since we deployed overseas and returned.

4) Although, I never was able to be permanent party in HHC, *No Slack* Flight Platoon (Brandy in Vietnam), 2nd Infantry Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, I was on temporary assignment (TDY) to them for a Multinational Forces & Observers (MFO) Sinai Egypt mission in 1985. I had requested and received orders to do two (2) back to back MFO Egypt Peacekeeping tours. First one at North Camp and second one at South Camp

5) On my final return to Ft Campbell, they said I could choose between 8-101st and 6-101st as they had a position in both. I choose 6-101st because it was created by combining the original old Huey units.

I did a year in 6-101<sup>st</sup>, D Company (Witch Doctors) as the NCOIC of the Battalion QC shop.

Then, when I received a red telegram from the Department of the Army stating that I was part of about 6,000 that qualified for an early retirement (to meet downsizing goals), I put in my retirement papers and retired the month before 6-101st transitioned to Blackhawks. It was the end of the Huey legacy in the 101st. I piece of history I was proud to be part of.

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I retired July 1995 from 6/101<sup>st</sup>, and by the following month, they transitioned from Huey's to Hawks.

1/101st Regt (Expect no Mercy) AH64

2/17 Cav OH58, UH60, AH1

3/101st Regt AH1

4/101st 5/101st & 9/101st Regt's UH60

6-101st Regt UH1 (What I call a "single engine all weather freedom fighter"), But I am a little biased, as I was a Huey Crew chief for just over 10 years LOL

7/101st Regt CH47 (I think they had twelve (12) in each of the three (3) companies and were 159th prior to the reorganization.)

8/101st Regt was 5th Transportation, and after reorg consisted of HHSC, A, B and (H 159th non-Division) companies.

**Raymond Longhenry:** Last night I got into reading your very fine history, and I've got to say I was a bit shaken up when I saw that Captain Bob Croft had passed; and also Captain Richard Neil. They were both very good men. Bob was an awesome pilot--he checked me out for being an AC [Aircraft Commander] on the UH-1H's and later the transition to OH-6A's which I flew scouts in.

I flew with the Lancers for about five, six weeks - even crash landed a Huey into a cemetery up by Dong Ha while asking the NVA to chew hoi<sup>15</sup>. Around January 5th 1971, I was transferred to the Deadbone's to replace Cooreman. Raymond Cooreman KIA. I never knew his first name, and it blew me away that one Raymond was replaced by another.

Bill Walsh was my AC when we left Deadbone Mountain to pick up a couple troops on a ridgeline helipad inside Camp Eagle. I was flying and lining up for final approach. When I reduced power, all hell broke loose with a monster size explosion that shook the whole ship followed by numerous small explosions. The two guys near the helipad looked up at us on short final then ran like hell and dove over the hillside. Bill and I held the collective pitch right where it was at, letting momentum carry us to the pad. EGT was maxed out when I cut the fuel control/valve. We de-assed the ship pretty fast and joined the troops with fire extinguisher in hand. One of them said that a giant flame came out the turbine exhaust, past the tail-rotor.

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<sup>15</sup>Efforts to destroy the National Liberation Front (NLF) included the "Chieu Hoi" (Open Arms) amnesty program begun at the insistence of American and British advisers, including Sir Robert Thompson. The program, like all others in Vietnam, generated remarkable statistics—almost 160,000 deserters and 11,200 weapons turned in—but only meager results. The program was conducted in classic American fashion with leaflets dropped from the air in NLF-controlled areas and Vietnamese psyops (psychological operations) personnel haranguing peasants via bullhorn from hovering helicopters. Those who rallied to the government were usually low-level personnel, many of whom may not have been keen about the NLF program to begin with. The program, in part because of its failure to develop face-to-face contacts, attracted few members of the NLF political or military cadres. In fact, critics charged the program was an "R and R" for the NLF, allowing NLF soldiers to "rally" temporarily to recuperate themselves and then return to the NLF. Evidence shows that some may have "changed sides" as many as five times. Of those who rallied, however, were some who sincerely changed sides and were recruited into the GVN military, often as Kit Carson Scouts. Good Kit Carson scouts were highly prized by American military units because of their familiarity with guerrilla movements, tactics, and booby traps. Regrettably, far more of the Chieu Hoi deserters also infiltrated American and ARVN military units and caused grave problems.

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A few hours later we were back at the Deadbone maintenance ramp when Captain Neal announced he had another ship for us to fly. I told him I wasn't going to fly anymore that day--just fuc--it. He braced me on the ramp and ordered me to fly. I did too.

Three days later I was made AC, but during the party that night I started feeling ill so I walked over to the Mash hospital, and they checked me in with a high fever and pissing blood.

After the Army I ended up going back to flying and escaped my unknown to me, PTSD by moving to Alaska. Fighting forest fires was kind of like being at war. But you really can't escape drama when it's your time. In 1981, I got into a white-out landing in a mountain saddle and ended up hovering into the side of the mountain. I got a few cuts around my forehead when the departing rotor system clipped my door frame. My passengers and I walked off the mountain into the trees as small avalanches cruised by us just a couple hundred yards away.

A week later I was back in the saddle again. Having forgotten that the previous year, I had a series of nightmares while at a tent camp on Kodiak Island. The first few times--was that I was going to crash into a mountain... Then nightmares came that--I was going to crash into a mountain and also crash into the water.

So five, six months after hitting the mountain I found myself crossing Cook Inlet with three passengers in a Jet Ranger when I heard a pop and saw my N-1 spooling down to idle. We were about six, or eight miles offshore when I entered auto-rotation and gave out a mayday call. The inlet was glass smooth, but I remembered a patch of seaweed we'd passed. I wanted that for depth perception, yet it was gone. Some teaching from Army flight school pops into my head about the lag of an altimeter ---at a hundred feet I flared--stood that bitch on her tail--then leveled and pulled all the pitch just before plopping into the sea with the floats.

My passengers looked at me with this questioning look--- something like--where's the fish? I got on the intercom and said, there's no fish--the engines out--we only have idle power. The NOAA ship Rainier picked us up and the helicopter.

I've done some writing too Peter. A couple works of fiction, 'The Weather Angels' and 'A Vision in Time'. They have some helicopters--but I was never very good. My daughter is putting the screws to me about writing down my flying stories, so I'm into about twenty pages so far.

Bringing back the memories gets a bit stressful though.

**Thomas M Marcotte:** I arrived at HHC Sept 1968 along with Darrell (Mac) E. McGee. We were both SP 5's, 67N20, Single Rotor Turbine Utility Helicopter trained at Fort Eustis, VA.

My memories are not clear on a lot of things back then, but some are as clear as day even today. I remember when we got rid of the 23's and got the OH-6's. That was a big deal. Sgt Rock was the platoon Sergeant. After Mac and I were there a few months, he appointed us

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as maintenance team leaders in addition to having our own ship to crew. I think he was trying to work us to death. One of the fun things we did was take an engine from a wrecked mule and build a rail type drag racer that we ran on the PSP beside the maintenance tent.

The First Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne required that red and white circles be painted on the helicopters. At first, they wanted them painted on the underside of the UH-1's, but the crews refused to put a "bulls-eye" on the bottom of the helicopters. They then required them on the pilots' doors, but the pilots complained that it made them a target, so the circles were moved to the cargo doors. This resulted in crew chiefs getting shot at. So, the final solution was to paint the "bulls-eye" on the front of the tail boom, just behind the crew-chief. When the cargo doors were pulled back and locked in place, the "bulls-eye" was covered.

I remember when Mr. T (Thibault) was shot down and how many missions we flew searching for him. I guess the worst memory is July 4, 1969. The unit had been moved south to support the Americal Division (Lamar Plain Campaign). Mac and I were flying as crew chiefs on two OH-6's. We were on search and destroy mission with a Huey above us (Craig Bixby was the crew chief), then a Cobra, then an F-104. I was in the High LOH. I don't remember my pilot's name. Mac was in the low LOH, flown by Timothy Michael, with Michael Noonan as observer, flying up a river bed when they were hit by a trip wire RPG. The ship crashed over a little ridge from the river bed and hit a tree. The aircraft was so crumpled that when my pilot landed in the riverbed, and I went to try to get the crew out I could not. I went back to my helicopter to get a spare M-60 barrel to use as a pry bar. On my way back, the ordinance in the ship exploded, knocking me to the ground. When I got up and looked back to my ship, my pilot motioning me back. There is nothing like watching a crew burn up and not being able to do anything about it. I received a couple shrapnel in the arm but nothing serious [because this wound documented and was not forwarded to his medical record, Marcotte has not received the Purple Heart to which he was eligible for - Notes, Rzeminski]. Mac was a great guy. He helped a lot of the new guys learn the ropes.

After Viet Nam, I spent a year at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA where I got out of the army; spent a couple years trying to find a job and going back to college. Finally went to work as a letter carrier for the Post Office. Did that for four years then worked for the Army Reserve as Huey mechanic for ten years. Then went to FAA as mechanic for two years when I became an Aviation Safety Inspector. Retired from FAA December 2011.

Some additional members of the unit, but no contact information:

Tom Cogburn, maintenance  
Carl Reid, ~~pilot~~ Maintenance  
Steve Weiss, maintenance  
Sgt Weeks, maintenance  
Jack Ashwood, maintenance

If you look on the "Virtual Wall" and search names from the unit, you will get additional insight into the people of the unit. It took a long time to come to face with that time in my life. Thank you for what you are doing.

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**Kevin Maynard:** As told to Kevin Maynard by Major Stuart Miller. WO1 Mike Martin was considered our best OH-6A pilot at the time based on the comments and observations of the Division Standardization Instructor Pilot, so I asked that he be made the unit IP and orders were cut accordingly. We were terribly short of loach pilots (LOH-light observation helicopter, OH-6A) pilots, so when you showed up at about 7 AM in the morning of that early Dec (1968) day, I told you, you would be trained to fly loaches so that I could send you on a mission the next day. I instructed Martin to take you out for your in-country orientation and training on the OH-6. After the orientation, Martin began the training by demonstrating “his own brand of Zero airspeed autorotations from 1,000 feet.” He was brazen enough to tell me this when he came back to Eagle. Needless to say, the helicopter could not recover in time, and he hooked one of the skids on a rice paddy berm and spread the helicopter all over the paddy. The radios apparently still worked, as upon notification, I sent Jack Rees [maintenance officer] out to the crash site to survey the damage and bring you two back.

You were both covered with mud but were completely free of injury. So, I determined that I would continue the check ride so I could use you the next day. I took you up to the Hue Citadel airfield to finish the check ride. The airfield was a shale covered strip used mainly by O-1's from the 220<sup>th</sup> Avn Co that never had been topped with asphalt or even permaprime. After you made two perfect running auto rotations, we did a couple of low level auto rotations, also very well done. I then instructed you to make one more running autorotation and then we would head back to the barn. If you remember, the loach had very thin skids and even thinner shoes, about the thickness of a quarter or less. We had had that machine for a little over a month, and apparently the skids had developed some holes. On that last autorotation you again executed perfectly and the helicopter skidded to a full stop as planned. Suddenly the nose pitched forward, the chopper rose up and then settled back on the skids and I felt a vibration through the cyclic. So, I got out to see what had happened, and found the entire tail rotor assembly spinning around the drive shaft with the tail boom totally separated. What happened was that the main rotor had flexed down and caught the FM radio attaching point on the tail boom, which caused the boom to peel like a grapefruit since there were no structural members in the boom. I signaled for you to shut it down, and you reached down behind you to pull the fuel shut off valve (which you had been told by someone, sometimes doesn't work – I don't know who told you that, but it's true). This time it worked and the engine shut off before the loach could beat itself to death.

I called back to operations and told them to have Jack Rees come up and take a look at the damage I had caused. When he arrived, he took one look at it and determined that all it needed was a new tail boom and he would have it ready for the next day's mission. What a miracle man.

I told Pete [Rzeminski] the reason I came to the reunion was to personally apologize to Maynard for putting him through two crashes in less than 24 hours after his arrival in the elite 101st. Maynard shared that he was thinking; “if this is what the first day in country is like, what the hell is the rest of the tour going to be like.” He soon found out

**Samuel E. McGee III** Yes, I was assigned to the Headquarters aviation section from June 66 to June 67. We had some old H13's and two UH-1's and a Beaver. I remember Ken Arnold, I

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think he came into the unit several months before my DROS. I just received your letter a couple of days ago and today, June 22, 2016, the attached story was in the national news [article about then-Major Charles Kettles [See page 128] to be awarded the Medal of Honor].

I was involved in this extraction operation that was being conducted by the 176<sup>th</sup> Aviation Company. I was in the aviation section operations tent when the request for an aircraft to support the extraction came in. I grabbed a co-pilot and two gunners and took the deputy brigade commander's UH-1 [66-01176] which was one of our two UH-1's, and we took off as quickly as possible. I joined up with the 176<sup>th</sup> flight as they were on final approach to the extraction LZ, I noticed a downed UH-1 at the far end of the LZ, and I was now Tail-End-Charlie in the flight. In the LZ, we were taking quite a bit of mortar fire and machine gun fire from both sides of the LZ. The extraction had air support and bombs were being dropped on both sides of the LZ. Unfortunately, the bad guys were pretty close to the LZ and bombs did not have much effect on reducing hostile fire.

We took as many troops as possible, almost all of them were wounded; however, there were more troops than the flight of UH-1's could lift. We were so heavily loaded, especially with that darn command radio set in the back, that I was not sure we had enough power to get out of the LZ, I had the co-pilot keep his finger on the emergency fuel control in case we had to over stress the engine coming out of the LZ. Since we were the last ship, and taking on wounded, the rest of flight took off before we were ready. When we were finally loaded to the max, we took off and received a lot of attention from the bad guys with gunfire and mortars; but we did get off without having to go to emergency fuel control so we didn't have to cook the engine. We went directly to the Duc Pho hospital pad and offloaded the wounded and then flew over to the HHC pad to post flight the aircraft. The aircraft began the mission as a shiny, almost new aircraft for the commanders and ended up with well over a hundred holes from mortar fragments and bullets. The amazing thing was only one very small lubrication line on the transmission was damaged. Everything else was just superficial holes; even the rotor blades had holes.

One of my gunners on that mission was a young black guy, and during the post flight inspection, I showed him a piece of mortar fragment the size of your thumb lodged in the top of the gunners well just above where his head was. He turned a little pale when he saw how close it had come to his head.

The end of this story is not quite so pretty. The deputy brigade commander (a full Colonel) came out to "his" aircraft, and he got mad as hell at me when he saw all the damage and deck covered in blood. He didn't even ask how the mission went, he just went on and on about how his new aircraft was f'd up. Anyway, I was 2 1/2 weeks from going back home and didn't care, I was just happy that I wasn't hurt and none of the crew was hurt on that mission.

The guy that's getting the Medal of Honor [Charles Kettles] is credited with saving some 44 lives on May 15, 1967, while serving as a helicopter commander in the 176<sup>th</sup> Aviation Company, 14<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion, Americal Division, near Duc Pho in Vietnam's central highlands.] had to go back into that LZ one more time to pick up the troops that were left behind, I didn't support that last sortie due to time it took to inspect all the damage. In the

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article on the MOH it mentions “an aircraft from another unit”, that was our HHC aviation section UH-1, the 176<sup>th</sup> and the Headquarters aviation section had the only UH1’s at Duc Pho. As shown in your letter, I did make another 1-year tour in VN. I was a WO in the 101st, but I received a direct commission to 1st LT and made CPT shortly after starting my second tour with 134th Avn Co. I had many jobs with the 134th. Being one of the few 2nd tour guys, I was an airlift platoon commander, gun platoon commander, operations officer and even did SIP duties on the side. But I never had a mission as interesting as that one in May 67 at Duc Pho.

Update: Out of curiosity, I checked my awards and decorations and in fact I was awarded the Air Medal with V for the May 15 mission, I could only remember the ass chewing I got for getting the deputy commanders aircraft all messed up. When I get a chance, I will copy some of the old orders I have with some of the HHC aviation section pilots’ names and id numbers and send them to you.

**Carlos J. Melendez:** I flew Gunslinger as his Command & Control bird when he commanded Strike Force, the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. I was with the 129th Combat Assault Helicopter Company at the time. The 10th Combat Assault Battalion was the Direct Support package at the time.

See Page 18 above: “Americal personnel. First Brigade pilots were briefed by pilots of the 71st Assault Helicopter Company - the “Rattlers” (the lift crews) and the “Firebirds” (the gun crews).” (Flt School Classmate may still have been around during this time. His name is “Bud” Henry from Mesquite. TX.)

I’ll call you. As a favor, I would ask you to forward names of any of the enlisted men who served in the Aviation Section circa 1966-1967. Reason, trying to find my crew chief – [George] Kincer. He was the best and an outstanding crew chief.

I’ve edited your mini-history. Did you ever wonder how Gunslinger [Col. Dietrich] could roll his own cigarette sitting in the jump seat?

**Carl E. Midkiff:** The Brigade was called the “Nomads of Vietnam” because they moved so often. We were known as a fire brigade, when a fire (big trouble) broke out, away we went toward the trouble. The Brigade had been sent to Vietnam in July 1965 and was called 1st Brigade (S), the S being for “separate” since the rest of the division remained at Fort Campbell. I reported to the Brigade rear base camp at Phan Rang and in a few days, I was sent to Brigade forward base camp which was set up on the airfield at Kontum in the central highlands. When the Brigade rejoined the Division (or the Division rejoined the Brigade) which was arriving from Fort Campbell in January 1968, it had moved 28 or 29 times. I joined them at Kontum, and left them at Phan Rang, so I figure I was there for 12 or 13 moves from Dec 66 to Dec 67.

Everything I say regarding things that happened that long ago starts with “As I remember it.” I turned 80 a few months ago and getting old is a bitch, but when you consider the alternative.....

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I arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate) in December 1966. Until I left in December 1967, the Air Aviation Officers normally consisted of about seven (7) Warrants and one (1) Captain; whose primary job was to fly the missions. Around 50 enlisted men, NCOs, crew chiefs, mechanics and other soldiers, were assigned to the Air Section, and we could not have begun to perform our mission without them. They were a good bunch.

There was also a (Major) Aviation Officer who worked out of the Brigade TOC (Tactical Operations Center). We usually didn't see too much of him, and there were about forty (40) enlisted soldiers. There was no Platoon Leader, because there was no Platoon. I don't recall a section leader slot. I assume that the Major was in my chain of command. Whoever the current Captain was told me what to do, and I did it. For some of the guys that don't know it, in December 1966, we had six (6) H-13 S models, two (2) old B model Hueys and a L-20 Beaver. By December 1967, we had replaced the B model Hueys with two (2) D models and just finished replacing the H-13s with H-23s. We still had our Beaver.

Major Peterson was at Brigade when I got there and, in about February/March 1967, Major Jim Rafferty was at Brigade and was there until at least September 1967. I remember that for sure because in he and I went to Brigade Jump School in Phan Rang in August 1967. I don't recall who replaced him or when. Russ Maxson or Ken Arnold will remember who was before Major Rafferty, and Mike Jacobi will remember who replaced Major Rafferty.

Captain Jerry Brown was the senior (mission flying) captain in December 1966. When he left in 1967 he was succeeded by Captain Carlos Melendez, who was succeeded by Capt Tom Churchwell, who was probably the last Air Section Captain. I left in December 1967, and Carlos left a month or three before me. I don't remember a Major Kettles, and Mike Jacobi was a W1 or maybe a W2 when I left.



Our pocket patch which we seldom wore. I include this because the Vietnamese Folks who made them up mistakenly put "Winos" instead of "Wings" Of The Eagle.

The Brigade had six (6) H-13 Scout helicopters (similar to the ones on the MASH TV series) assigned, though we normally had 4 or less available. We also had 2 old "B" model "Huey" utility helicopters and a 6 place DeHaviland "Beaver" airplane.

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We always tried to set up away from the Brigade proper, because nobody paid too much attention to what the air section did and we operated under the principle of "out of sight, out of mind". Having said that, we were always on time for missions and received very few complaints from anybody. I suppose our mission was to support the Brigade anyway we could, using the assigned aircraft and personnel. I believe we accomplished our mission. Life in a Brigade air section was much different from life in regular aviation units; much less structured. There were a lot of different occasions where we could make up our own missions that would never have been allowed in an Assault Helicopter Company.

Our normal flight uniform was fatigues, sleeves rolled up and jungle boots (rolling the sleeves down was for fire protection in case of a crash). Leather boots soon rotted away, and we couldn't get any more. The problem with jungle boots was they were part nylon and in a post-crash fire would melt and stick to your skin; incidentally, so would nylon underwear. I think we had 3 "chicken plates" (chest armor), and you had to wait till someone left to get his. Sometime in early 1967 someone got a good idea. Many of our enlisted guys didn't fly and would cut the sleeves off their jungle fatigue uniforms. We pilots would get the sleeves and have elastic bands sewn around the tops, this gave us sleeves we could put on and take off like gloves.

While Brigade Aviation duty was considered a good assignment, there were many better assignments (and many worse). Our H-13s and H-23s were piston powered and less reliable than the jet powered Hueys. A few things happened to us that come to mind as I am writing this..... Shortly before I got there, Ken Arnold had an engine failure in a H-13 over a mine field at Nha Trang. The helicopter was bent a little but he was OK. Later at Due Phu, Ken Arnold had a throttle to stick open and had to auto rotate a H-13 on to the Due Phu airfield. Jerry Brown took a bullet thru the tail of the L-20 Beaver on the first trip to Due Phu. Carlos Melendez and I took a round in the Huey rotor blade. Russ Maxson, flying a H-13 with a LRRP NCO, killed 2 VC soldiers and captured a VC Nurse. Russ knocked her over with the skids when she ran. I hit a 14-foot-high stump with a rotor blade in severe winds south of Phan Rang. Ken Arnold had a blade strike on an Eagle Flight with a H-23. Col Bolcar and I had a transmission failure and made an emergency landing with a H-13 at Mo Due. The helicopter was OK except for the ruined transmission and the ruined engine which had cooked due to no cooling air. A Chinook helicopter came and picked it up, took it back to Phan Rang and proceeded to drop it from about 20 feet. It was evacuated and we never got it back.

Ken Arnold took multiple rounds through one of the Hueys making an emergency medical evacuation with the Tiger Force. Gary Sauer had a control turnbuckle shot half in two in a H-23. I met him at Quang Nhai, where I begged some safety wire from an Air Force crew chief I safety wired the turnbuckle so Gary could fly back to Due Pho, He wasn't really happy but I used the old maintenance officer kicker "It's okay, if you don't want to fly it I will." (I used that kicker several times as a maintenance officer and was taken up only one time in ten years).

WO1 Stefan Nickoloff, Sp4 Edwin Davis-our crew chief and I were shot down in one of our Hueys in the Que Son valley, the helicopter was destroyed, but none of our crew were hurt [see page 109].

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I made an emergency medical evacuation in an H-13 flying a soldier with severe malaria from an island off Chu Lai to the Hospital. A lot of these incidents were at extremely low level and things happen very fast. You are not only flying, but you also are looking for different things and you don't have much reaction time. Lots of other interesting things happened but these came to mind now.

One day at Phan Rang, I had a Huey back for maintenance when I received a call from the Brigade "P" training area. P training was combat preparatory training required for incoming Brigade personnel before they were assigned to their unit. It seems that the training was getting a little too authentic; a sniper was shooting into the training area. A maintenance sergeant and I took the Huey and went looking for the sniper. The poor Huey was bouncing so bad I could hardly fly it, but we were able to find the guy and capture him. We brought the prisoner (and his bicycle) back to the Brigade rear headquarters. They called me the next day and said he was a confirmed Viet Cong. Around the same time, a Navy C-47 (R4D) airplane passing west of Phan Rang lost a wing and crashed. With the same broken Huey, and the same maintenance Sergeant, we took 3 loads of troopers out to secure the crash site. It was a very thickly overgrown ridge, and I had to chop my way down thru some light trees with the rotor blades; very noisy, but still was about 8 feet above the ground. The troops didn't want to jump that far with all their gear but the maintenance Sergeant told them " You're airborne ain't you? Git out." They did! In the Brigade Air Section, you never knew what you were going to be doing next.

We conducted our maintenance in the field at Phan Rang. It was the best maintenance area we had in Vietnam. We were always short of tools, so I visited the tool issue room at the Air Force base. I had been a Crew Chief on B-47 Bombers in the AF for 8 years; so, I could speak their language. For a couple of H-13 rides (complete with firing the guns and an autorotation demonstration of course), I was able to get two complete aircraft mechanics tool sets.

The POW camp raid. Sometime around June 67 an assault was mounted to raid a VC/NVA prison camp supposedly holding American and South Vietnamese prisoners. I don't know whose idea it was to include the Brigade H-13 and 2 H-23s. The crew chief sat on the right side of the H-13 and fired a M-60 machine gun either offhand or by hanging the gun by a bungee cord from the door frame.

The raid involved several infantrymen from the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, the Aviation Battalion that was supporting us, intelligence, the Air Force, and many other folks, I don't know about. The raid staged out of the special forces camp west of Quang Ngai, I think it was Ha Than but I'm not sure. Ha Than is about 20 miles NNW of Due Phu. I had never seen so much preparation for any mission.

Our Brigade H-13 and H-23s were so slow, we really didn't get to actively participate in the mission; we were much too slow. We took off before anyone else, and they still passed us on the way. By the time we got to the camp everyone else was coming out. The raid netted no American prisoners which disappointed all of us, but they were able to liberate 22 South

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Vietnamese prisoners, 18 men and 3 women. They had been badly mistreated, some for years.

Around September of 67, we started to get rid of our H-13s and pick up H-23s. We were running short of H-13s, and the 1st Cav had a higher parts priority than we did. In order to check out in the H-23 a pilot had to have 10 hours solo in the aircraft. One morning, I flew about 20 minutes with Maj. Jim Rafferty (a H-23 instructor pilot) and 10 more hours between then and noon the next day. I then flew about another 20 minutes with Maj Rafferty and was flying in the AO that afternoon. I hated flying the H-23, I still think they were the worse flying helicopters I ever flew. Our Hueys had jet engines, and most all airfields in Vietnam had jet fuel, However, our H-13s and H-23s burned aviation gasoline, which was sometimes difficult to find. The availability of aviation gasoline almost always called for better planning (fuel wise) and longer waits to refuel. Another thing was the H-23 would not fly as long without refueling as a H-13. Sometimes we had to fly to a destination, fly someplace else for fuel, then fly home.

I retired as a CW3 senior army aviator, airplane and helicopter pilot and maintenance technician. I worked civil service at Fort Knox for 27 years, mostly as an instrument flight instructor in the flight simulator. When the flight simulator closed, I spent my last 3 civil service years teaching M1-A1 tank driving in the tank driving simulator. To celebrate my 65th birthday in 1999, I jumped out of a Beaver at Bardstown Ky.

Regarding the day Major Kettles [See page 128] won the Medal of Honor, I will send along a little more about the Brigade Air Section that day. First, that was almost 50 years ago, and I am close to 82 years old. Everything I write will be to the best of my memory. I tried not to make up or embellish anything. I think my memory isn't too bad, but I'm not sure my wife would agree.

On 15 May 1967, I was flying a H-13 out of our 1st Brigade Forward base camp (I think it was called Carentan located near the beach just to the east of the Duc Phu airfield. I received a radio message ordering me to return to the base camp immediately; no reason was given. When I landed at Carentan, I was told to get the General's Huey (Dukes Stallion) refueled and get ready to make an emergency Med Evac to the hospital at Qui Nhon. I was to be AC, Captain Jerry Brown was the co-pilot, and Sp4 Edwin Davis was the crew chief. Captain Brown was the Air Section OIC, and primarily our airplane (Beaver) pilot and mostly did the pilot duties at the Brigade TOC.

As I remember, we moved the helicopter to the medevac pad, and the medics loaded, I don't know how many badly wounded troopers on board. We were so fully loaded that I still remember just barely clearing the concertina wire surrounding the Aid Station/ hospital as we took off. The flight to Qui Nhon took maybe 30 or 40 minutes, but it must have seemed longer to the guys in back, they were really in bad shape. Obviously, we were going as fast as we could.

We were set up for a straight in approach to the hospital pad from the north when the Qui Nhon tower told us we couldn't land because EOD was checking for a suspected mortar shell

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in the middle of the field. We had told them we had wounded aboard, and I repeated it (as strongly as a W-1 could), and told them to get the EOD folks away from the round till we passed overhead. This they did, and we continued our straight in, off loaded the wounded guys and returned to Duc Phu.

As Sam McGee says the DCO's Huey was in fact a new aircraft. My primary additional duty was maintenance officer, and I had picked up 2 new D Models from Vung Tao a month or so before. One was used for the General (BG Matheson) and one for the DCO (Deputy Commanding Officer). They probably both had less than a hundred hours on them. The Huey did have a number of holes in it, but our maintenance folks and our newly arrived DS support platoon managed to get it fixed. The DCO Sam mentioned (He shall remain nameless) sometimes had a short fuse. I managed to raise his ire on two separate occasions. He left the Brigade shortly after that and was replaced by Col. Collins. The helicopter then became "Rips Mule" (as opposed to Gen Matheson's "Dukes Stallion"), and it survived for 4 more months. On 29 Sep 67, Steve Nickoloff and I were the pilots when the aircraft was shot down and destroyed in the Hiep Duc valley northwest of Chu Lai. After about 5 hours on the ground we were picked up, all the crew survived.

At a reunion, maybe 15 years ago, Ken Arnold told me the story of his and Sam McGee's flight on 15 May 67. He also told me that the unit that they picked up was the Brigade Tiger Force and after that the area was called Tiger Valley.

I think we still had 8 pilots at the time, we know where Sam McGee, Ken Arnold, me, and Jerry Brown were. That leaves Steve Nickoloff, Gary Sauer, Russ Maxson and Butch Denson (if he was still there). I don't think Carlos Melendez, had joined us yet. Steve and Gary have passed away but the other guys will have their own versions of 15 May 1967.

If you still have my DVD of 66/67, Photo # 64 shows Carlos Melendez and I in front "Dukes Stallion" on the beach the day the Brigade arrived at Duc Phu. Iron Duke was the Generals call sign. Cottonmouth was DCO Col. Collin's call sign, and the DCO's helicopter was called "Rips Mule" #65 might interest you also. The DCO, when Ken Arnold and Sam McGee got shot down was Col Oscar Davis and the helicopter was called "Oscars Horse". Photos 99 thru 105 show both D Models when they were brand new, "Oscars Horse" while it was being repaired and after it was destroyed on 29 Sep 67.

I don't have any idea about Jerry Brown's whereabouts. He left around June or July and Carlos Melendez became Air Section Boss and Gen Matheson's regular pilot. Around the first of December, I was getting real short and was bugging Brigade about orders when a letter showed up in the mail. It had Jerry Brown's return address on it and came from an APO New York number. The letter said, Dear Carl, you are coming to Delta Troop 3/12 Cav in Budingen, Germany. We have 6 H-13s and 2 B model Hueys. I did go to D Troop. Captain Jerry Brown was Troop commander for about 6 months then was transferred, and I never heard from him again. Maybe Carlos Melendez can find him, he was/is a private investigator.

Please don't forget to include Jerry Brown's name on our medevac flight crew mission. I can't remember the Crew Chief and Gunners names or even if they were with us.

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**Stuart A. Miller:** [Major Stuart Miller was our “Platoon Leader, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Aviation Officer. He was a fine officer, and even more important to some of us new Warrant Officer Pilots and Enlisted Crews, he was a decent and fair man.] [The following are his words:] It was so good to talk to you [Pete Rzeminski] and laugh about our shared experiences with the 1<sup>st</sup>BDE, 101<sup>st</sup> Air Assault Div. Just wanted to let you know that your DVD's arrived yesterday and I have already been through them a couple of times. I swear to God I had completely forgotten you and your name. How can that be? But as soon as I talked to you and then saw your pictures, everything suddenly came back to me. Thanks for making the call. Seems to me that you may have been the [O]H-23 (63-12894) pilot who brought back our first casualty; an Arty observer who got shot through the wrist from the side. [The observer was holding his M-16, and a round came through and hit him in the wrist. The round continued through the chopper, without hitting anything else. The pilot landed on a nearby firebase, where the observer was treated and then flown back to the Hospital in Phu Bai. - WO Thibault.] You were the fourth pilot to serve in the new Avn Plat, [Arthur] Negetti, [Richard] Neil, and [Ernest] Thibault were the others. Forgot all their first names. I hated those Hiller H-23's and successfully managed to avoid getting qualified in one, though I'm sure you guys tried to make me learn. As I had probably fewer hours than most all of you all in helicopters, it was a real experience for us all to learn how to fly them and survive in combat. Must say that we did pretty damned well. The only casualties while I was there were the Arty observer mentioned earlier, and Mister Thibault and another Arty Obs [Note by Rzeminski; irony – the Artillery Observer (his name was Ronald Goodman; Ernest Thibault) turned out to be the captain I was sitting next to on the commercial airline, Flying Tigers, flight into Vietnam; I realized this when we went to visit WO Thibault in the hospital] who were shot down in a loach, disappeared for 24 hours [two (2) nights and three (3) days], and then were recovered before being evacuated out of country for injuries they had from the crash. Some other names I remember were John Rock, the platoon sergeant (million stories about him) and Jack Rees who came to us as our Maintenance Warrant, after I had run off the previous alcoholic when he was delivered to me carrying two cases of beer and nothing else (no weapon, no TA, - NOTHING). He lasted less than 12 hours.

Anyway, I had already left country and was an instructor at the Infantry Officer Advanced Course when one afternoon I call from Johnny Hayes to inform me he was out at Martin Army Hospital recovering from a .50 (maybe .52 cal) gunshot wound [Note: John Hayes said that it was an AK-47 round that shattered his left femur] that had shattered his knee. When I picked him up, he had the same great smile he always had, but he had to use a cane, having just gotten rid of his crutches. It was great to see him again, and he brought me up to speed with what had been happening. Apparently, things got much worse just after I left.

Got a phone call from Jack Rees in about 1980 or 1981 seeking some kind of advice. He informed me that he had received a battlefield commission and was then a Captain at the Transportation School at Ft. Eustis. I then lost contact with all of you. By the way, I don't know if you guys knew this, but the reason we had the highest aircraft availability of any unit in Vietnam, was because Rees had somehow stowed away 12 UH-1 and 6 OH-6 complete engine assemblies and more than 25 FM radios, so that he could turn around each of our helicopters should a deficiency arise, in less than 12 hours. I imagine it upset the supply

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chain a little, but the generals always thought we were miracle men. Never asked where or how he got all that stuff, but I suspect it was all from the night the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav Div had over 350 aircraft destroyed when they were overrun up north of LZ Sally.

He came to the 101<sup>st</sup> from the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav when we were so short of maintenance personnel when we converted over from an Airborne to an Airmobile Division. I have been trying like hell to remember the name of the kid [Pete Rzeminski – I think it was SP4 Huberdault] I made the operations specialist (Think he was a radio operator by MOS). He was one of the quickest learners for a young soldier, that I ever had the pleasure of working with. If you or any of the others remember his name, please let me know.

As crazy as John Rock was, I doubt he ever made it out of Vietnam alive [Pete Rzeminski – I've been told that Rock is still living and "doing okay." I don't have any contact with him]. At the beginning of our tours, he had been in the Army a total of six years, starting out as a door gunner on the bde cmdr's helicopter, and been promoted to SFC over those years, all spent in Vietnam. Could tell you a million stories about him, but one of my most vivid recollections was the time when he was called to the HHC first sergeant for him to explain why our crew chiefs were being put on guard duty. He went absolutely berserk, and began causing a commotion out on the company street lying on his back and screaming at the 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt, that he couldn't possibly think of doing such a thing. Sometime during the melee, the Bde Cmdr called me and told me that I had better get on over there to help settle things down. The Bde Cdr also told me that under no circumstances were my men to be subject to guard duty or any other duty beyond making sure the machines were ready to go at all times. So, when I arrived at the spectacle and told the 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt that our men were exempt period, Rock got up off the ground and received an ovation from all in attendance, most of whom were crew chiefs or maintenance people, but there were a few others. He was absolutely nuts.

Pete, I do completely remember you now, just needed a little kick in the pants, to help start up this old brain. Here's my data in the format you sent me. I would really enjoy communicating with all you have identified, and will do so shortly.

Stuart A. Miller – Bde Aviation Officer and Aviation Platoon Commander – Major and Strap Hanger. 502 Brentwood Ave, Severna Park, MD 21146, Tel: 410 647-3496Smiller6@comcast.net , Class: 60-9 Fixed Wing Aviator Crs. Unknown- Rotary Wing Qualification Course 1968, Vietnam Tours: 220<sup>th</sup> Avn Co – Phu Bai, stationed in Quang Ngai – Apr 65 –Aug 65; 12<sup>th</sup> Avn Gp – Saigon- Wrote Visual Surv Plan for Vietnam – Sep 65 to Jun 66, 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, 101<sup>st</sup> Air Assault Div – Bde Avn Off & Avn Plat Cmdr – Jun 68 to Jun 69. Happy to hear that you continued service in the reserve and made it to LTC [actually – Col – 06, Pete Rzeminski). Are you still active in the reserves?

Update: Pete, I got your mini-history, and the e-mail you received from Tom Marcotte late yesterday; and all that got me to rethinking what in hell really went on way back then. So, I popped in your DVD's and went over the pictures again, and determined that I had made a couple of critical mistakes when I commented on your pictorial essay when you sent me the DVD's originally. I think I told you that Negrette and I had found Thibault and his Arty observer the day after he got shot down. It couldn't have been Negrette as he had already

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departed for home by that time. So, It had to be you in the right seat and me in the left, with Ashwood (crew chief) on the left door, and McGee on the right door and John Rock riding in the stagecoach (maintenance UH-1, tail #736) armed to the teeth with his M-16 and an M-79 grenade launcher. Thanks to Tom Marcotte for coming up with the names of those two soldiers whom I had been trying to remember all these months. As you probably remember, as we hovered around that big rock outcrop that morning, I spotted an NVA soldier with an AK-47 pointed right down my throat. I yelled for Ashwood to open up on him, but he had already been hit by a round that creased his forehead rendering him inoperable. I knew that we were getting stitched, and looked around to my right to see Rock holding up my helmet bag which was on fire after a round had hit my strobe light. He threw it out the door, and let loose with a couple of quick grenades, one of which hit the NVA soldier dead in the middle of his chest, causing him to do a back flip off the rock just before the grenade exploded. By this time, you had control of the aircraft and started a right descending turn while I was trying to assess the damage and read out the instruments for you. Seems to me that oil pressure was a little low but everything else seemed to be OK until we got back home and counted the 29 holes that son of a bitch put in that machine including shooting away the damper arm, which you got an excellent picture of.

I can hardly believe all the deep “do do” you guys got into during that Operation [Lamar Plain] near Tam Ky. I am very familiar with the area as it was part of my AO on my first tour as O-1 pilot flying out of Quang Ngai. There used to be an Australian Special Forces camp up the Tra Bong river valley that helped to keep the VC and NVA from continually overrunning Chu Lai; when the Marines were the only ones there before the Americal Div came in. Thank God you guys were able to save the Americal from them-selves. It was one of the most screwed up units in the entire Army.

Tom [Marcotte], I know it takes a long time to get over losing one of your best friends and especially so tragically. But you should know that each one of us who flew the machines you and McGee and all the rest of the crew who maintained the machines and took care of us when we made it back, will always be indebted to you for your simply outstanding service to us and to your country. We never said it to you directly to you during the heat of battle when we should have, but now, many many years later, a very belated thank you ever so much for helping to get us back home safely. And for those who didn't make it back, it wasn't for you guys not trying.

Pete, from your roster, here's my list of people I remember being around:

Officers:		Enlisted Soldiers:
1st Lt Lasater	WO Herrin	SP7 Rock
CW2 Rees	WO Davies	SP6 Weeks
CW2 Negrette	WO Murphy	Dale Foster
CW2 Neil	WO Alge	Huberdault
CW2 Rzeminski	WO Martin	Bixby
WO Thibault	WO Maynard	Ashwood
WO Sutton	WO Carlson	McGee
WO Von Hatten	WO Hayes	Marcotte
	WO Ruby	

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Excellent start on your unit history! Have you considered becoming a military historian in your old age? Thanks for all the stories and memories. - Stu Miller

Pete, I just finished reading your latest update [2016] of the unit mini-history and find that you have done some masterful work. You really have it all coming together now! Was especially interested in all the expanded stories and recollections of members of the unit whom I never met or knew. Damn, you have captured the essence of one small aviation unit that knew how to fight, and went on to distinguish itself over a period of years. I always knew that you guys would be great both on the battlefield and as normal human beings even despite your youth and inexperience. You all proved me right in my assessment. It is a really good read. Stu Miller

**MG Barsanti, GEN Westmoreland** - As told to me (Pete Rzeminski) by Major Stuart Miller: In June of 1968, 1<sup>st</sup> /327 discovered a buried, cache of weapons and equipment just west of Firebase Veghel and just off the road leading to the Ashau valley. MG Olinto Barsanti, CG of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, wanted two of the largest artillery pieces to be shipped back to Fort Campbell for display. So, he ordered a chinook to be flown by the Division hook SIP to be sent to pick up the pieces. As the hook was lifting out with the first load, an RPG was launched from somewhere nearby striking the hook and totally destroying it and crew members aboard. The incident caused considerable consternation, and was even reported in that day's Stars and Stripes. A couple days later, the MACV CG, GEN William Westmoreland was flown up to Phu Bai to observe a Phoenix project and be briefed at the location which later became firebase Anzio. For whatever reason, I (Maj Stuart Miller) was flying the Brigade Commander [COL John W. Collins III] in his Command & Control (C&C) UH-1 that day, and we were first to land; then Gen Westmoreland, and finally Bold Eagle, MG Barsanti came in. When Westmoreland spotted Barsanti, he got up from his chair and grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and said to him, "come here little man, let's go outside and talk". With a bemused Major Miller looking on, Westmoreland proceeded to chew Barsanti out: saying "Little man, you are f\_\_king up my division, and if anything, like the Chinook incident happens again, you will be gone the next day." I had never heard a general get chewed out before that day. And, I hope I never again will.

You and all the others need to know how much I appreciated all your efforts. You all never ceased to amaze me with what I considered a learned very professional attitude in your respective demeanors and the manner in which you conducted your business. Believe you me; I learned more than you will ever know, from a group of excellent young aviators. The pleasure of association was all mine. [Stuart A. Miller, Col, US Army(Ret)]

**+Timothy Michael:** I (Craig Bixby) was Mr. Michael's Crew Chief on many missions together the summer of 1969. I remember him as unpretentious; that he didn't take himself too seriously, and that he was a great pilot.

He was also a great guy to be around. He enjoyed playing the guitar and singing. He talked a lot about his wife back in the States and how he missed her. He always enjoyed a good laugh either on someone else or himself. Several examples still stand out in my mind.

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One day we were carrying around "Silver Hawk" the 101st 1st Brigade Commander. As we were approaching one of the Firebases he called ahead on the radio, to inform them we were inbound with the Colonel, with the announcement that we had "Chicken Hawk " on board. Little did he know the Colonel was listening on the Frequency in back!!!!

A joke on himself occurred on another day. After landing at a Firebase he promptly got out of the helicopter and took a leak INTO the wind!!!! Here he had just asked for Smoke to be popped so he could land into the wind and then he stands outside the helicopter and lets the wind make a mess down his front. It was awhile before he was allowed to forget that one!!!!

He had decided that the missions with the Huey's were too tame and boring and he wanted more excitement. So, he became duel qualified in the Loach and began flying "White Team" Missions. It was while flying Low Ship on one of these Recon Flights JULY 4TH 1969 that he was shot down and another bright young life was taken by that ugly war.

I was flying within a few miles of where he went down. When we got to the area the "High Ship" had already landed, and we flew covering fire but there just wasn't anything anyone could do. What a helpless, frustrating feeling to have so much help so close at hand and to be completely useless.

To this day there isn't a 4th of July that I don't remember the fun we had and the tragedy of that day in 1969 and offer a prayer for Tim and the family he never got to see again.

Tim, I hope that you're winging carefree and happy and remember, watch out for the wind direction.

**Joel Murphy:** I [Robert Davies] have many stories to tell, like my first mission with Murphy or this one:

"I [Pete Rzeminski] had completed a mission and was flying out of the mountains southwest of Camp Eagle, heading east towards the South China Sea. I was at about 2,500 feet AGL (above ground level), and flew as if I didn't have a care in the world. On our radio sets is an emergency frequency called "Guard". Any one transmitting on the emergency frequency will come up on "Guard" and every pilot in the area will pick it up. As I stared ahead, I noticed, with peripheral vision, a sudden movement below me. I was startled, pulled the stick sideways a bit, and the chopper swayed. I then saw that two Air Force jets had sandwiched me – with one flying upside down underneath me and the other flying over me. As they flew away, I heard them laughing on "Guard" saying did you see that SOB jump? I laughed with them. Those jets were an amazing sight. All during my tour, I never tired of watching them. WO Joel Murphy was a different sort, and Bob Davies's story gives you some real insight into his personality." [Pete Rzeminski];

As **Robert Davies** describes it: "Murphy was flying along the coast when he was buzzed by two jets. He called them over the radio and stated that if you do that again we'll fire on you. The next time they came by, Murphy ordered the crew to use the machine guns to open fire on the jets. The jets scrambled straight up, saying "we were only kidding."

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Murphy was scheduled to go on R&R (rest and recuperation), and he mailed to his wife to send him a money order. In a couple of weeks, it arrived. There was only one problem. It was a gift certificate for Bonwit Teller, a department store; completely useless to him in Vietnam. Murphy was so angry, that I think he personally could have hovered at over a foot. (Pete Rzeminski)

**Alex F. Nagy:** I was transferred to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), Support Aviation Detachment late August 1967, from the 48<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company. They only had a U-6A (Beaver) which had not been flown in a while. It was just me; no crew chief. I was dual qualified, so my last 60 days I just flew ash and trash out of the 101<sup>st</sup> forward base, Duc Pho. Their primary base was Phang Rang. I was only with the 101<sup>st</sup> until October 1967. It was my understanding the 101<sup>st</sup> did not have an Aviation unit. When I was with the 48<sup>th</sup> AHC at Tuy Hoa, we were assigned to the 101<sup>st</sup> for their aviation support. This was in the 1966-1967-time frame. I was with the 101<sup>st</sup> at Duc Pho when the ammo dump [located on the beach] caught fire and caused severe damage, explosions etc.

I was with the 101<sup>st</sup> when they stood down, brought the forward troops in for fresh supplies, a steak dinner on the beach and one company command of Jewish descent gave a pair of tennis shoes to a company commander of Arabic descent. This was after the Arab Jewish skirmish around that time period. I used to receive the Always First Brigade newsletter, the last one is dated September 2008. I hope this helps you.

**Richard G. Neil:** Only pilot to have served two tours in the aviation unit, first as a Warrant Officer, and second as an Officer (Captain). Captain Neil was the Aviation Platoon Leader in 1971-72 and retained that position when the unit returned to Fort Campbell. He was the Officer-In-Charge when the HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade PCS'd [Permanent Change of Station] back to Fort Campbell in January 1972.

**Jay A. Nichols:** I found my PowerPoint file of the Deadbone Legacy by Ed Brock, so I've attached it for you. Captain Ed Brock sent a letter to *Cavalier* Magazine, and it was published in one of the issues. Also, attached a picture of Ralph Purpura. He and I did quite a bit of scouting together. Also, I didn't see Joe Chitwood's name in the list. He was the maintenance officer when I got there in May 70 and left sometime in the late summer I believe. He was also our unit IP; taught me how to fly OH-6. He was the first IP that allowed me to try and kill myself during an autorotation. The first auto he made me do by myself was a perfect auto.... for a Huey! There I was at 10 feet with nothing left. After what seemed like hours, we made it to the ground without breaking anything; but it sure felt hard! And there was Joe, sitting there with his arms crossed the whole time. When I asked him why he didn't get on the controls, he said something that I adopted as an IP the rest of my career. He said, "I'm not going to be with you when this happens. The only way I'm going to help you is if there is a chance I'll be killed in the crash."

Joe was on his second tour; first tour was flying Medevac.

**Raymond Ornatowski:** Pete Rzeminski, thank you, I got the patches in the mail from you (Griffin and Deadbone), and the note about how Griffin become Deadbone. That was really

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interesting; thanks a lot. Well, here is how I got to be a door gunner. I got my draft notice a day before my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. I had to volunteer for airborne school because my older brother was with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division; (he was airborne infantry in the 50s), and I would never have heard the end from him, unless I went airborne, too. Going airborne automatically put you in the infantry, which was okay with me - I'm Polish ya know. I was supposed to go to A Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 502<sup>nd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, but when I got there on a fire base with B Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 502<sup>nd</sup>, A Company was getting pounded while taking on this NVA (North Vietnamese Army) base camp in the big valley (A Shau Valley), you know where that is. So I ended up in B Company.

I got my butt shot up 20 July 1968. I took 3 rounds from an RPD (Russian 7.62 mm light machine gun), which is a light machine gun that fires the same round as an AK47. Two rounds went through my right shoulder, and one round caught the inside of my shoulder just right, and it went down and caught the edge of my right lung and stopped behind my heart. It happened about 8 in the morning. 3 more rounds hit my M60 (American, belt-fed, 7.62 mm machine gun); one where the shells eject, one on the bolt, and one on the butt plate. If I had not have been carrying the M60, I would have been dead a long time ago. The 2 rounds stopped by the M60 would have hit me in the stomach, and that would have been the end of me. The round that hit the bolt put a ding on it, and the bolt wouldn't go forward. So it wouldn't fire.

My good buddy, Jim O'Toole (James Edward O'Toole, Jr., Boston - is honored on Panel 51W, Row 20 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial) took 2 rounds in the chest, and 2 more in his right leg. He died a short time later. So, I grabbed his M16, cause I did not know why the M60 would not fire. Hours later we found out why. I lucked out again. When I got to the hospital, about 6 that evening, the Doctor said that I was lucky the rounds had gone right through. So, there were no x rays taken. After about a month in the hospital, I got orders to return to combat duty on August.

I think now "HOLY SHIT," - yes, with a slug still behind my heart that no one (including me) knows about, I have to go back into the field. Airborne Infantry was all volunteering, so if you still had your arms and legs and you had time left in country, you went back cause help was hard to find. When I got back to the bush, I was just in time for another NVA base camp battle in the Big Valley (A Shau). None of the guys could believe that I was back, and Lt. Rice was about shocked. Trouble started when I started to carry my 80 to 90-pound rucksack. My right arm and hand swelled up to about twice their normal size. I had a hard time firing the M16. I then got chewed up (wounded again) with frags a few times; and then the wounds got infected. I was sick as hell. The Medic, who we called Doc. kept shoveling me full of the wonder drug Darvon in an attempt to get the swelling down. But he thought I was sick from some bad C rations. You know how they can be. Lt. Rice made me go to an Aide Station on one of the fire bases we were getting ammo from. They said It wasn't bad Cs. It was from the Darvon. So, they sent me to a hospital. There I told the Doctor about this pain that I was having in my back, and he said we are going to take some X rays. Turns out that there was a slug laying behind my heart. He said I was lucky to still be alive.

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Yet, two weeks later, I am back in the bush with my unit. And there, while still in the Big Valley (A Chau), soon as I started to hump the jungle with that rucksack again, my arm and hand swelled up big time. So, after a couple of months of that, Lt. Rice sent me to HHC, 1st Brigade. The sergeant running the officers club was going home, and before I know it, "HOLY SHIT," I am now a bar tender. I did that for a couple of weeks or so.

And then one-day Maj. Miller [Aviation Platoon Leader, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division] came in for a drink, because I think those young pilots of his were getting to him. As we were talking, I asked him if he needed any door gunners, and that my MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) was 11B (Infantryman) AND B didn't stand for bartender. 11B is infantry and 11 2P is airborne infantry. And he said, I can always use door gunners. He said that next week, he and some pilots were going down south to bring back some Huey's and Loaches, and that I was going to go with them. I was in. The First Sergeant said that I was nuts when I asked him if he could find someone to take my place tending bar.

I loved flying with all of you guys. I thought it was the greatest job of all. I feel so bad for the guys that got hurt and those that died there. How lucky we were to make it home in one piece. Pete, you have no idea how glad I was, when I saw you guys in February (2015 unit mini-reunion). I never thought that I would see some of you again. That's it. I was a door gunner. Thank you so much for everything. - RAY O (from Kathleen O...he said "that was worth \$100 Million dollars to see those guys!) don't tell him I told you that :) KO

### **Typical day for the Door Gunner**

(Hi Pete) Sorry it took so long to get this to you. You asked for this few months ago. Door gunner was a great job. I loved it. We got up about 5:30 am. I put the 60s. on the Huey, and then loaded any ammo we needed. Ready to go by day break. We always carried some C rations, a few cans of pop and a few cans of beer; just in case we might need them in an emergency. As you know we pretty much flew all day. We would refuel several times a day. Fuel nozzle was on my side, so I was the one to filler up. As you remember, we did everything; lots of resupply to the guys in the mountains, ammo resupply, even did medivac.

We flew cover for the guys that were flying recon in the Loch. I remember when we picked up Jack Ashwood, and the pilot and observer when they got shot down. We took them all to the hospital. I think that we also took Walker, and whomever [1Lt Tripp] was flying his Loch to the hospital when they went down. There was always something going on. Never a dull moment. There were times when we would still be flying after dark, when we got back to camp Eagle and the day was done. My job was first to clean the 60s. And then help Larry Carlson, who was the crew chief, do whatever his daily maintenance was. I would also clean the inside of the Huey. But the very first thing that I would do when we got back, was to go to the Officers club to get 6 cans of beer. We always parked [UH-1H 67-19]496 right by it. That was an important thing to do. Then we went to work on what we had to do. And when we were done with that, we would get another 6-pack to take back to the Hooch. Next day to start all over again. Sometimes, I would take Jack Ashwood's place and fly gunner on his Loch. I also flew gunner for McGee at times. There was another Loch crew chief that I would sometimes fly for, but I can't remember his name. He was going to go to Flight school. If I remember right, [CW2] Murphy was giving him some lessons on flying. He wanted me to go

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with him to flight school, and many times I wish that I did. I do know that it was great to have known all of you guys in Aviation. I would do it all again if I had the chance.

## **Interviews with men of the 1st Brigade (Separate) who arrived on the USNS Eltinge**

### **John Pagel II, PFC**

- 11B Infantry Soldier with B Company, 1 Battalion, 327th Infantry (Not a member of the Aviation Platoon. Did sail over on the USNS Elroy Eltinge. They now call themselves the boat people. Pagel wrote *The Tale of the Eltinge*)

### **- - - The Tale of the Eltinge**

PFC Pat [Payne], I'm not sure if you witnessed the beginning of this adventure or not. Anyway, about 4pm on the afternoon of 8 July 1965, Sergeant Anderson gave us the word to grab our gear and fall outside in company formation; the trucks were on the way to take us to the airfield. So, steel pots on our heads, our load bearing equipment on, carrying our individual weapons, we man-handled our "A" and "B" bags down the stairs and outside. Excitement level was way high, but after having been on alert so many times in the past, it didn't seem real. Everyone was formed up in platoon and company formation. We could see that Charlie Company, across the way, going thru the same drill. Headcount was made and reported all present or accounted for. We were ordered to remove the 101<sup>st</sup> patch from our uniform shirts, because we were involved in a "SECRET MOVE." Remember how we had been told all along that we weren't supposed to be telling people we were going to Vietnam? Still can't figure out how the ladies at the laundries off post didn't guess the secret when they were sewing everything on our jungle fatigues. It gets better as this story plays out. So, there we are standing at rest in formation awaiting the trucks. As usual it's hurry up and wait. After about half an hour, we're told to fallout but stay in the area. If we have to use the latrine we are to tell someone. More wait and no trucks. It gets dark, and we're still waiting and still no trucks. But we're still being told the trucks are on the way, so we can't move back into the barracks. So, we spend the first night of our Vietnam adventure catnapping on the grass in the company area. Can't leave the area, trucks are on the way.

At last at about O-Dark-Thirty, the trucks arrive at last; just before sunrise as I remember it. Cattle trucks and about at that point we resembled a herd, but we at last began the first leg of our "Secret Move." It all still doesn't seem real, just another alert or drill. We trucked on down to Campbell Army Airfield, and there sitting for us are aircraft waiting for us. Not AIRFORCE transports as we would expect. No waiting on the tarmac are commercial airliners, and they even have stewardesses on board. They must be all part of the plan to keep it a "Secret Move." No one was there to bid us farewell; not even the Division commander General Powell. After struggling to board the aircraft and get our gear settled, we were on our way West. At this point, the higher up's still hadn't filled us in on our complete travel itinerary, so we didn't know how far we would be traveling in comfort. For a lot of us this was the first time on a jet aircraft. We were able to have drinks on the flight, as long as they weren't alcoholic in nature and none of the guys got out of hand with the stews. There was some swapping of Jump Wings for Stew Wings, but except for friendly smiles and kind words that was the extent of the interaction between troops and crew.

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Word at last was passed that we would be landing in San Francisco, and shortly thereafter we started to descend. I was sitting by a window and looking down. All I could see below was either fog or clouds; no sign of the city or airfield. Down we went into the clouds, down, down and down some more. I'm looking for the clouds to part and the ground to appear, but all I'm seeing is clouds. When we did come out of the clouds, we were low over water, and I didn't see a runway in sight. The plane continued to drop, and then made a turn and the wheels touched down on a runway extending out into San Francisco Bay. I thought for a minute we were landing in water. So here we were on the ground at San Francisco International. I would have expected a secret move would have us landing at either Alameda Naval Air Station or Travis Air Force Base to keep the secret from being discovered, but no. Instead of offloading us at an area away from the main terminal, we deplane at the main terminal. As we left the aircraft, all of the stews gave us warm smiles, but they had tears forming in their eyes. Still wonder to this day how those air crews were sworn to secrecy about their part in our secret move.

After deplaning and moving thru the jet way, here we are trooping thru the main terminal with our steel pots, with airborne chin straps, M-16 rifles (first stateside Army unit to be issued those), our load bearing equipment and our two duffle bags each. We're not wearing a unit patch, but with us wearing jump boots and carrying M-16's, it wouldn't be too hard to figure out what unit was on the move. So we march thru the terminal with all these civilians witnessing our secret move to the outside where we board Greyhound Buses. Still don't know what our final destination for the day is.

After what seems to be a rather short bus trip, the buses come to a stop on a pier located in the Alameda Navy yard. After we unload the buses and gather all our gear, we notice two grey ships tied up to the pier. One looks modern, clean, new paint or as the Navy saying goes "Ship Shape." The second ship looks old, tired, in need of work with rust streaks showing on its side. The second ship, the USNS General Leroy Eltinge, is of course the one we shall board for the trip to Vietnam. In keeping with the theme of all this being a secret move, all the pay phones along the pier are inactive. A number of guys reported this after trying to make a last call home. So we struggle up the gang plank from the pier to the rust bucket like a herd of pregnant cows carrying all our gear. Once we reach the main deck, we enter a hatch in the super structure and start snaking our way down an endless series of ladders. What we land lubbers would call stairs. I guess we went down five decks to our troop compartment, where we were to sleep for the duration of our time on board. The compartment was big but very cramped, since it was a berthing compartment. It looked just like the scenes out of the old Actor John Wayne movies when he plays a Marine. Our beds or racks were pipe frames with canvas stretched between; kind of like an Army cot without the legs. The racks were stacked five high, with maybe 24 to 30 inches between the lower and next above. I lucked out and got a top rack, so all I had above me was a pipe running over me. I was able to put one duffle bag at my feet, the other on with my Mae West at my head, my M-16 along my left side and hung my LBE over the pipe above me. Compared to the guys below I had a king size bed

We must have been one of the last units on board, because shortly after reaching our berthing space we could hear that preparations were being made for the ship to depart. After getting my gear situated, I made it back up to the main deck to witness our leaving San Francisco Bay. Going back topside, I almost got sick. The ship was already clear of the pier and moving, so there was the bow to stern motion of the ship and I'm going from side to side

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up the ladders. I swear I could feel myself going green in the face. As soon as I hit the main deck and could smell fresh air I was OK. When at last I made my way out on the main deck, I found myself watching the city of San Francisco slip past as we headed toward the Golden Gate Bridge and beyond. One of the landmarks of San Francisco caught my eye. It was Coit Tower, which was built to honor the firemen who died during the fire after the great earthquake of 1906. Seeing that tower made my mind flashback to 1958, when I was in San Francisco with my parents on vacation. During our sightseeing, we visited the tower and I remember watching ships leaving the harbor and wondering where they were bound for. I wondered if at that moment another 14-year-old kid was watching us from the top of the tower and was having the same thought. The next sight to oh and ah over was the Golden Gate Bridge itself. A real sight to behold and we got the special tour by seeing the bottom side.

After passing the extreme western tips of California, the only view in front or to the sides of the ship was the Pacific Ocean. We could still see land off the stern, until it finally dropped below the waves. The sun was bright, the air crisp and fresh and the ocean was smooth, but there were no deck chairs or shuffle board.

That evening we had our first meal at sea. There was no real rhyme or reason to feeding us. We all followed one another down a series of interior ladders (stairs remember) down to the mess deck. Chow was served on the stainless steel trays we were all use to, and then we had to find a spot at a table to eat. The mess deck was standing room only. There were no chairs to sit in, and you stood at the table and ate your food. I remember the food during the whole crossing as being pretty good; our mess cooks must not have been allowed in the galley. The coffee was excellent. The majority of the economy cruise we were booked on; the water was smooth enough to eat without having to chase your tray across the table. There were a couple of meals where things did get interesting. One of the guys in the company got seasick as soon as the ship left the dock, and he was sick the full time we were aboard. I can't remember his name but he survived well enough to walk off the ship when we landed. After eating, we moved back up to the main deck for air. Ventilation below decks was bad, and it got worse as time passed, and we got closer to our destination. I think everyone had a late night that first night; everyone seemed a little keyed up, a lot of questions and no answers and nobody wanting to go below and sleep in the berthing compartment. I wasn't too excited about sleeping 5 decks down and no way out in case we sprung a leak. Eventually the sandman got the better of me and I did.

Next day after climbing to the main deck, we were totally surrounded by water with nothing to be seen in any direction except water. After morning chow, we settled into what was to become the daily routine aboard ship. First priority was finding someplace to sit. We were told that we had to be out of the berthing compartment by 0800 and were not allowed back down there until after 1700. Since we, the enlisted troops, were restricted to the main deck only, and there was almost 4,000 on that ship, the space along the superstructure of the ship and the rail filled up fast. If you weren't able to find a spot to sit, you joined in a column of troops just circling the main deck hoping to find an open spot. There were even restrictions on where to sit: no sitting in front of a hatch or ladder, no sitting on any hand rails, no climbing up on lifeboat davits or other ship equipment on deck. So you would walk the track hoping to find a spot. If not, you could luck out when somebody gave up their spot to go below for noon chow, but that generally meant going without eating yourself. Another priority was getting hold of something to read. Paperback books were worth their weight in gold. People were so bored

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after a while that people that never cracked a book were pleading to borrow the book you were reading. You could even trade a book for a place to sit. There were no formations, no briefings, no organized activities all the time we were in transit. Boredom set in real fast. Another distraction we came up with later in the cruise to lessen the endless hours of boredom was making rings out of quarters. Remember back then quarters were made of silver and not wafers like they are now. The ring making process consisted of holding the coin vertically between your forefinger and thumb of one hand and striking the edge with your mess kit spoon. After each blow you would rotate the coin and strike again. On and on hold, rotate and hit. This started off small but after a while it seemed everyone on the ship except the lifers and officers were engaged in this mindless task. You could identify fellow ring makers by the black and blue tips of forefinger and thumb on one or both hands. The process would widen the edge of the coin to resemble that of a white gold wedding band and in doing so reduce the thickness of the center of the coin. The final step was to pierce the center of the coin and trim it out to fit your finger. After this had been going on for a while the Captain of the ship made an announcement over PA system that what we were doing was against Federal Law. Our reaction to that was "What are they going to do? Cut our hair and send us to Vietnam? After a time, we even got bored doing that.

Looking back now on that time and after all these years, I realize with all those long hours of nothing to do, none of the conversations I can remember had nothing to do with Vietnam. We all knew where we were going. None of us, except a few old timers, knew what to expect, but we just talked about everything else except Vietnam.

Word started going around that based on the condition of the ship, the General Leroy Eltinge must have been General Custer's intelligence officer before the battle of the Little Big Horn. Truth be told, I found out years later that the Eltinge was built by Kaiser Shipbuilding in Richmond, California during WWII as a Liberty Ship. I learned from Chaplain Bowers that during the Korean War, when he was an enlisted tank mechanic, he had been on the same ship going from the states to Germany. The ship was USNS, not USS denoting a ship of the regular Navy. The Captain was regular Navy, but the rest of the crew was made up of civilian merchant marine seaman. One crewman everyone got a kick out of was a short Pilipino. He had a handlebar mustache that looked like the horns on a Texas Longhorn. It was perfectly waxed and curled at the ends.

The boredom also got the rumor mill cranked up and running. First was that we were being shadowed by a Russian submarine and everybody seemed to know somebody that had heard that from a reliable source? The combined heartbeat aboard ship really went up one day when we saw a whale blowing off thru his blowhole; almost a panic. Then as we started getting closer to Hawaii, the rumor started that we'd be stopping off there for jungle training. Needless to say, we went past Hawaii without stopping. After that, we were going to get jungle training on Okinawa; didn't even come close.

To top everything off, the ship was only able to produce a limited amount of freshwater each day so we had to take saltwater showers. You probably already know that normal bath soap doesn't lather in saltwater. It just goes on like grease and then doesn't rinse off. So with the lack of showers and bad ventilation in the berthing compartment, I started sleeping on the main deck every night; found a spot under a ladder leading to an upper deck so I wouldn't get stepped on. The berthing compartment got worse with each day and getting closer to the Equator and the rising temperature. I saw some of the troops trying to wash their uniforms by tying rope and hanging them over the side into the wake alongside the ship. Did I happen to

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mention we had no facilities for laundry on the cruise? Anyway the washing of the uniforms suspended by rope into the wake just succeeded in shredding the clothes because of water rubbing the material against the hull of the ship. But all was not lost; somebody on board had a sense of humor. We started having movies at night up on deck; you'll never guess what the features were? They showed us the old TV series COMBAT with Actor Vic Morrow. What more could we ask for?

Shortly after the two week point in our all-expense paid cruise, the ship developed engine trouble and we came to a stop out in the middle of all that water. I think we were without forward motion for about a day and when they got the old bucket fired up again we altered course for Subic Bay in the Philippines for repairs. Of course, the rumors of us getting jungle training before hitting Vietnam took off again. After tying up dockside at the Subic Navy Base, we were amazed at actually seeing land again. It seemed like it had been forever since last seeing California. During the time it took for repairs, they allowed a battalion at a time to leave the ship. It was only for a short time, and we were restricted to the navy base itself. A group of us took off looking for the nearest EM (Enlisted) club. I've never been much of a drinker, but the idea of a cold beer sure seemed like a great idea. It looked like they had every MP (Military Police), SP (Shore Patrol) and AP (Air Police) in the Philippines in the area to keep an eye on us. Found out later that a boat load of MARINES had come thru the week before and tore the place up. It was late afternoon by the time we located the EM club, and had our cold beers, and since we didn't have a lot of money or things to spend it on, we headed back towards the ship before sundown. As we were headed back to the ship and it was near sundown, we heard the first notes of retreat being played over the base PA. We knew from our good military training that the lowering of the National Colors would commence shortly. So we stopped walking and turned towards a large American Flag on a pole and rendered hand salutes during the lowering of the flag and the playing of the music. The effect seeing the flag lowered that night affected me more powerfully than any previous time in service. Maybe because of where we were going. While we were standing at attention and saluting the colors, the MARINE detachment on board a naval ship, I think it was a missile cruiser, were making cat calls and throwing verbal insults at us. We were good troops and ignored them, and when the music ended, we lowered our salutes and continued on our way. Before we passed the ship, we could hear the Officer of the Deck, and possibly the ranking MARINE, doing some serious chewing of MARINE ass.

Also, while we were tied up in Subic while the repairs were being performed, a team of Naval Underwater Demolition swimmers put on a demonstration of dropping off and picking up of their team. They came all the way across the bay from their base about a distance we guessed of 3 miles to show us how good they were. Two boats were involved. One was a powered boat, while the other was a black inflated job kind of like a Zodiac that was tied fore and aft to the bigger boat. They started their run astern of our ship and picked up speed as they came even with us. The swimmers would at timed intervals transfer from the bigger boat to the inflatable, and then into the water. After all the swimmers were in the water, the boat circled back around to the starting point to our stern and built up speed again; this time they had a pickup man in the inflatable with what looked deformed Hula Hoop. The swimmers in the water were treading water facing in the direction the pickup boat was coming from, with their right arms up out of the water. The swimmers were between our ship and where the pickup boat would pass so we had front row seats. The idea was that swimmers would hook

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the hoop with their upraised arms and swung into the inflatable without the pickup boat reducing speed. On the first pass all the swimmers except one managed to connect with the hoop. The pickup boat again made another pass to pick him up, and he missed again. Again, the boat circled and made another attempt; he missed again. The boat then changed course for their base across the bay, and I guess it was the diver in charge yelled over a bull horn for the swimmer to swim home. Like I said before, I estimate the distance across the bay to be about three miles.

Anyway, at last the repairs to the engines were complete, and we continued on our merry way. We knew our remaining time aboard ship was drawing to an end, but still nobody was talking about Vietnam. Shortly after leaving Subic Bay, we were informed that LT Olyphant was being detached from the company, and Sergeant Anderson the platoon sergeant would be taking over the leadership of our platoon. Rumor was that the LT was going to be liaison with Special Forces. Also, about this time, we got the word to sew the 101 patch back on our jungle fatigue shirts, bitch, bitch, and bitch. Rumor again was that General Westmoreland was going to be there to greet us when we landed. If you remember, not only was Westy there, but also Maxwell D. Taylor, out-going Ambassador to South Vietnam; another former commander of the 101st. I think he hung around because one of his sons was a company commander with the 502nd. Also, we were given little books explaining such things as the culture and history of Vietnam, Vietnamese officer ranks, some basic Vietnamese words. One bit of info contained in the book that we found amusing was dealing with how to identify the enemy. I believe it went something like "The usual uniform of the Viet Cong is black pajamas and a conical hat." Needless to say, when we got off the ship and learned that that was the standard attire of the average Vietnamese, we started feeling a bit paranoid. A day or so before we landed, some of the troops got Mohawks to imitate the hair dos of the WWII 101st, prior to their jump into Normandy. I felt sorry for those guys when we left the ship, because we had to have our steel pots on, and the tropic sun had fried their scalps.

Then the cruise ended and you know the story as well as I from that point on. Had to share with you what you missed on the cruise.

### - - - Drowned on Patrol

**John Pagel II** was on patrol with his unit. It was during the monsoon season, and the rain was pouring down. They were walking along a road when several of them were swept off of the trail and into a nearby rice paddy. The others were able to get pulled out of the water, but Pagel had sunk to the bottom with all his gear on. He tried to get back to the surface, but the bottom was silty, and the waterfall effect of the falling water kept him from getting back to the surface. As Pagel recounted, I realized that I wasn't going to make it, and it got real peaceful; thinking of my parents, my girl, and a cheeseburger. And then everything went black.

The story continues as told by his fellow soldier **Patrick Payne**: A Vietnamese man was watching all this going on. He got into his boat and paddled to the site where Pagel went down. The Vietnamese man took his paddle and dipped it into the waters. The paddle ended up under the back side of the shirt of Pagel, entering at the back of the collar, and Pagel was lifted up and into the boat. The Vietnamese man then proceeded to tap Pagel on the forehead (his way of doing resuscitation). It worked, because Pagel spit out the water, and came back to consciousness. "The end of the story is that after I regained consciousness by

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the boatman beating me on the forehead with the heel of his hand, their form of CPR, I gave him the only thing I had of value, my Timex watch. Everything else I owned was in my pack attached to my LBE at the bottom of the paddy. So that day my life was equal to a self-winding Timex watch with a Twist-O-Flex band; I took a licking and kept on ticking. I would have given him all the gold in Fort Knox, but all I had was my watch. He seemed grateful for that."

**Pagel** continues the story. When they got back, the supply sergeant wanted Pagel to sign a statement of charges for the missing gear. He refused. Pagel later became the unit's armorer. When a new Company Commander arrived, and a change-of-command inventory was conducted, it was discovered that there were missing about 10 M-16's and about 25 .45 pistols. The new Company Commander turned the information over to the CID, and the supply sergeant was found guilty of selling them on the black-market. The supply sergeant ended up in Leavenworth.

**Gregory Parrish:** On page 22 and again on page 28 of the USS Waddell Cruise Book [<http://www.usswaddell.com/cruisebooks/1970CruiseBook.pdf>] there are pictures of me landing on the ship. I believe this happened in January 1970, but I am not sure. We departed a fire base [perhaps Satan II] at noon that was nearly socked in and ended up on top of the cloud base. Eagle Radar was down and we headed east looking for a break in the overcast that never happened. I went on Guard to contact Phu Bai approach and could not get them. I got an answer from the USS Waddell; who had me on their radar. I was low on fuel and running out of options when they offered us to land on their deck. The cloud base was about 300 feet, and they gave me an approach to the ship. We broke out and saw the ship lying in the water and landed on a small had pad next to the gun turret. The captain had the aircraft tied down and invited us to lunch and a tour of the ship. They offered to sail as close to shore as possible to return to Camp Eagle. We stayed in contact with flight ops via the ship radio and would report departing the ship. The Captain asked if we needed anything, and I told him that our mess hall could not get fresh vegetables. When we departed he gave us a crate of vegetables. I asked him if he needed anything, and he stated that they could not get recent Stars and Stripes newspapers. We departed the ship at about 4 pm and returned to Camp Eagle flying at about 200ft AGL (Above Ground Level). We returned to the ship a couple of days later; delivering all the Stars and Stripes newspapers that we could stuff in 155 canisters and dropping them in the water next to the ship where they could recover them. The aircraft crew included me and a crew chief whose name I do not remember.

**Jack Rees:** My time line in Vietnam starts in April 1968 with the Black Widows, C company 1 BATTALION 101 AB at LZ Sally. I was a WO1 maintenance pilot for UH 1-B,C&H helicopters. Dec. 68 I was assigned to HHC flight platoon as CW2 maintenance officer and OH6 & UH1 testpilot. 24 April 1969 I was reassigned to Ft. Wolters Texas as a quality assurance test pilot.

My second tour was with D troop 229 Cavalry, 1st Cavalry from January 1972 to August 1972. I was an O2 Service Platoon Commander and AH1G test pilot at Ben Hoa Airbase. I was reassigned to the 34th General Support at Saigon August 1972 with duty as fixed wing Division Leader and U21 & AH1G test pilot. I was reassigned January 1973 to Red River Army Depot, Hooks Texas with duty as pilot for C47 & C7 fixed wing aircraft.

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Pete I hope this makes sense to you. I think what you are doing is great. Thanks for your slides. What memories! I really enjoyed the wisdom that came while doing Drambuie shots and playing liar's dice with Major Miller and WO John Hayes. - Jack Rees

**Michael Roesner:** My military career started back in November 1969 which started out with a bang -- in Viet Nam June 1970 – Jan 1971. I took a 3-year break as a civilian, got married and found myself back in the army. I had great assignments in Greece, Turkey, and Panama. Bosnia had its faults. I was commissioned in 1980 and retired as a LTC (Lieutenant Colonel) after 28 years in the army. My federal career began in 2001 as a logistics planner with the Joint Interagency Task Force – South in Key West. In 2005 I accepted a position as a program analyst for the Inter Agency Group – Counter Narcotics at MacDill Air Force Base. 40 years later and 20+ moves behind us my wife Sher has elected to stick around for the long haul. We celebrated our 40th anniversary at St. Thomas Island.

Stories always seem to be more interesting, funnier, and more believable if you know the characters i.e., Captain Neil/ SFC John Rock, or if you share/shared the same interest i.e., Viet Nam/helicopters. Or you speak the same language i.e., tell the new guy to see SFC Rock and get a bucket of rotor wash for the Huey. We have all seen the good, the bad, and the ugly of war --- I'll stick with the comical and attempt to keep them short.

**First Sergeant John Rock:** In between breaks in service Sher and I went and visited John and his wife Elaine at Fort Campbell, Ky. Finding his house wasn't all that hard. In the middle of his front yard he had a large gray boulder with bold black letters "ROCK". We had a pleasant dinner and a few drinks. John suggested he and I go out and indulge in a few more at one of the finer establishments in Clarksville. At this point, I have drawn a blank on what happened next so I need to fast forward by several hours (midnight or so). Rock was demanding the young Sgt MP open the back gate up in order for us to get back to the house. The Sgt stood his ground and wouldn't let us through and was now threatening to call in HQs that there was a drunken First Sgt at the rear gate. First Sergeant Rock finally reached a very uncomfortable compromise with the MP. He had the MP call the Command Sergeant Major of the post and tell him First Sergeant Rock is at the back gate, was in no condition to drive, and needed to get home (2 blocks away). Next thing you know the MP opens up the gate, walked over to Rock and with a shit eaten grind on his face "First Sergeant, the Command Sergeant Major will see you promptly at 0600 hrs." I'm not sure if he made it or not. Last I heard Rock married an Army captain.

**Mr. (CW2) [William] Clark:** We got this high priority mission to fly three donut dollies out to one the fire bases. We had the C&C bird which was set up with a fairly large three radio console directly behind the pilots and centered. The ladies had headsets on and tuned in on the local frequency. Half way to the destination Clark asked if any one of them wanted to get up in the front seat. Of course we heard all the reasons why not --- against regulations, I can't fly, no way am I unfastening my seat belt etc.... Clark did convince one of the girls that the crew was sworn to secrecy and nothing would ever be mentioned – she agreed. The Peter Pilot (Bill Walsh if I'm not mistaken) was demoted to the rear of the aircraft. Safety belt undone, and carefully maneuvering his way out of the seat, and ensuring he didn't bump the

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collective or cycle, reaching over the console and pulling himself over it, he gracefully fell into one of the girl's lap --- definitely good for a laugh among all of us. Our female volunteer saw the difficulty our experience peter pilot had in this transition, but wasn't about to pass up this opportunity to fly front seat. Taking her headset off, unfastening her seat belt, she slowly started the climb over the console. Clark gets on the radio "Watch this." I wasn't sure what he meant by that until he started giving the bird right rudder --- the helicopter was no longer in trim, the wind howled through the open doors, grabbed the dress and twirled it around her waist, her head, and the console. Our volunteer did make it to the front with a smile on her face and did get the stick time promised her.

**COL Paul Gorman, Bde CDR:** Went on to become a 4 star general and the SOUTHCOM Commander. Retired in Virginia.

**LTC O'Shea Battalion CDR:** and always had his shillelagh. One of my first missions was flying him to some unknown firebase. Right before final approach a rocket/mortar exploded. The LTC didn't wait for the skids to touch before jumping out. The worst part was knowing we had to go back and pick him up.

**Crew of A/C 433 Pilot Lloyd Enos/Co-pilot Carl Bass/Crew Chief Marshing/ Gunner Roesner:** "I got you going down in the blue" Pathfinder nick-named Greek on Firebase Tennessee (?) as Enos made a controlled landing in the river. Lesson learned – take the chicken plate off during amphibious landings. Carl Bass is retired and resides in Central Oregon.

**WO Bill Walsh:** I'm convinced he was flying the helicopter two of the three times I had blade strikes. But in his defense we were literally under the jungle canopy the one time.

**1LT Charles Nowlin/Specialist Dave Tampio:** Crashed on a mission; Nowlin was severally burned and Tampio suffered injuries when the chicken plate hit him in the back. I believe Nowlin became a flight safety officer at Rucker. Dave Tampio became a police detective in Killian.

**WO Fitzgerald/ Specialist Ralph Purpora:** Not sure which Fitz but I do recall one of them and Ralph came back from a mission and the little bird looked like Swiss cheese. Last I heard Ralph was back in NY, NY.

**Specialist Rolland "Buck" Scheppe:** The pilots were hosting a party at the officers club with some out of town (Camp Evans and Phu Bai) aviators. With everyone wearing the same uniform, Buck and I removed our rank and casually strolled in and up to the bar. Of course our own warrant officer type pilots didn't say a word. Somewhere around our second or third beer we get tapped on the shoulder by none other than our commander, Captain Richard Neil. He did let us finish beer before leaving. Last known location Madison, Wisconsin

**WO Fitzgerald/Specialist Ed Hines:** Again not sure which Fitz, but Hines went down twice in two weeks.

**Captain Robert Kraft:** Remember the commercial with the cool looking guy with his wraparound sun glasses and Silver Slim Cigarettes --- that was Kraft.

**Al Decker:** Huey crew member

**David Dean:** OH-6 Crew Chief

**Specialist Allen Branning:** OH-6 Crew Chief. Louisiana

**Specialist Richard Berghorn:** OH-6 Crew Chief. Last time I seen him was at Spartan School of Aeronautics, OK 1973

**Specialist James Jurgen:** Maintenance Chief

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**John Romer:** There was a lot of activity going on in Late Spring and Summer of 1969. Some dates,

Operation Bristol Boots, 24 April-15 May 1969. (Ruong Ruong Valley, Thừa Thiên and Quảng Nam Provinces) - [including Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division] flying scout, in Ruong Ruong Valley and the A Shau Valley, in preparation for *Operation Apache Snow*;

The fight for Dong Ngai Mountain (creation of Firebase Airborne in the northeastern A Shau Valley) 23 April-4 May 1969. John Romer participated in this "Mile-High-Battle" while flying as a pilot with B Company (Lancers), 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

*Operation Apache Snow* (Including Hamburger Hill); 10 May-7 June 1969.

John Romer then transferred to the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in July 1969 to join in *Operation Lamar Plain*, 16 May-23 August 1969, the battle going on in support of the Americal Division.

John Romer, I graduated from flight school in July 1968. My wife was expecting our second son, so I requested a delay from Vietnam, which was granted. I was assigned to Fort Carson with B Company (Lancers), 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. We flew our helicopters to California and then returned to Fort Carson. We flew by commercial airline to Vietnam in February 1969. Our UH-1s were reunited with us in March 1969 and we had about a month to learn the lay of the land before flying into our first major battle. We still needed to fly to/near a firebase, see it on the ground and point to the map; this must be the firebase. We were so new in-country that we didn't have aircraft-commanders (AC) yet; just two pilots per aircraft.

The fight for control of Don Ngai Mountain in the Northeastern A Shau Valley was anything but simple. A logistical nightmare for planners, the operation – the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division's first major since becoming airmobile a year earlier – would ultimately lead to establishing Firebase Airborne. It was destined to become a major asset during *Operation Apache Snow*, which included the fight for Hamburger Hill 17 days later. But on 23 April 1969, Dong Ngai was still in enemy hands. The twin-peaked 5,491-foot mountain, or Hills 1771 and 1774 to the American's, was an integral part of the North Vietnamese Army's (NVA) "warehouse," a six-square-mile area of the Northeastern A Shau. Much of the mountain's southwest side protected a huge supply and ammunitions cache supporting NVA operations in Thien province.

On April 22nd, a FAC (Air Force – Forward Air Controller) plane on a routine patrol over the northern end of the A Shau spotted some huts on a ridgeline below Dong Ngai Mountain, in the sector known at Division as "the warehouse area," a known NVA logistics center. The FAC pilot immediately called in an air strike on the huts. In a short period of time Air Force "fast movers" zeroed in on the FAC's marker rocket and began pounding the ridge with 250 and 500 lb. high explosive bombs. Suddenly, tremendous secondary explosions literally tore the top off the ridge. The bombs had found an NVA munitions storage area. The next day, B-

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52s pounded the area even harder with hundreds of tons of 1,000 pounders, causing even more secondary explosions.

On 23 April 1969, C Troop, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was tasked to conduct the aerial insertion. In preparation, B-52's started their barrage before dawn. After 12 minutes of bombing, 8-inch and 155mm fire from Firebases Bastogne and Berchtesgaden unloaded for another 15 minutes. Finally, Cobra helicopters ended the prep with a 10-minute aerial rocker artillery attack. After the prep, C Troop's lead helicopter started the approach and almost immediately received fire which caused the engine to start smoking. It went on to crash with only one pilot surviving. The rest of the crew and five soldiers died in the crash. The other five helicopters landed at the base of the mountain. Additional troops were airlifted to the base of the mountain and began the slog up. A total of 17 Americans were killed that first day, along with two helicopters shot down and five shot up.

Division Intelligence decided to send in an aerial rifle platoon from the 2/17th Cav to do a BDA (bomb damage assessment) of the lower LZ, and to determine the size of the enemy storage area. The CH-47 Chinook moved in to lower the platoon by ladder and was raked by a heavy burst of ground fire which sent it crashing into the jungle. Seven cavalymen were killed in the crash and two others were seriously wounded. The dazed survivors crawled from the wreckage and set up a defensive perimeter around the crash site just in time to meet an attacking enemy platoon coming down off the mountain. The cavalymen beat off the attack, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, but lost five more of their own in the process. Two more platoons from the Cav were rushed in to reinforce the crash site, and lost two more helicopters and ten men in the process. Hanging on through the night against repeated enemy attacks, and losing two light observation helicopters and a Cobra gunship in the process, the cavalymen were in imminent danger of being wiped out. Their casualties had reached forty.

The relief force, now including Delta Company 3/187th, would attempt to combat assault into a prepared landing zone on top of Dong Ngai (the upper LZ) and then attack downhill toward the Cav perimeter, catching the NVA in a trap. After a pair of F-4s worked over the upper LZ with 500 lb bombs, and Cobra gunships gave it a final prep, the first ship of the relief formation went into the upper, single-ship LZ. It never made it out again. Intense enemy anti-aircraft fire turned the LZ into a deathtrap. Three of the next five lift ships into the perimeter were shot down, the last one blocking the upper LZ. The surviving cavalymen and aircrews, 58 in number, stripped the machine guns and ammunition from the four downed Hueys and set up a perimeter around the seven men injured in the crash. Two others had been killed. The survivors of Bravo Company held on for the rest of the night. The next morning (24 April), the remainder of Bravo Company and half of Alpha Company combat assaulted into the lower LZ, securing it and helping the Cav evacuate its dead and wounded. Once completed, the paratroopers struck out for their trapped comrades above them.

At the higher LZ, the pilots of the downed Huey blocking the LZ managed to repair their ship, with parts from other shot down aircraft, and fly it out of the LZ. Delta Company immediately reinforced and managed to get five ships in and out of the LZ before the NVA woke up and shot the next two down.

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Lieutenant Colonel Honeycutt (Blackjack), commander of the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division [3rd Brigade] landed on the lower LZ on the afternoon of 25 April and took charge of the operation. He set up a CP (Command Post) just before dark, then endured an hour long mortar attack, followed by two company-sized infantry assaults which nearly overran the perimeter. Calling in napalm less than 50 meters from their positions, the paratroopers beat off the final attack and the enemy withdrew.

On 26 April, a supporting element of B Company (Lancers), 158th Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, including WO1 John Romer and WO1 Steve Brownell flying UH-1 (67-17647) attempted to land into the higher LZ on top of Don Ngai Mountain as part of a five helicopter formation. The LZ had been blocked until the crews of the shot down aircraft managed to repair their ship from parts from the other shot down aircraft. The first ship in Romer and Brownell's formation was shot down as they were making their approach, so everyone else diverted to the lower LZ, with WO1 Steve Brownell flying the aircraft.

Then we (Romer) returned to the upper LZ and the approach to the upper LZ was going well. The area was a steep slope with a few shattered trees from the artillery. As we started to come to a hover, and just as the troops were about to jump out of the aircraft, there was a very loud noise. Instantly everything was in slow motion. The rotor blades hit the ground and disintegrated; the windshields were completely shattered. We were stuck by an RPG, which had impacted directly at the crew chief's seat, SSGT James Dorsey, immediately killing him. WO1 Brownell was severely injured by shrapnel. The aircraft crashed and broke in half. Brownell, door gunner O'Herron, and I (Romer) were on the ground in the middle of the combat zone.

As evening approached, and at the recommendation of the infantry who were dividing their time between shooting and digging foxholes, we aviators began furiously digging holes in which to hide. There was a smashed teak-wood trunk, shaped into a "V." All I (Romer) had was a scrounged-up M-16, a chicken-plate and a poncho-liner. I borrowed an entrenching tool, and I (Romer) told O'Herron that I was going to dig a slit trench for as long as I could dig. Then I would turn it over to him until he couldn't dig any more.

We kept digging until we had a trench that the three of us could hide in. Brownell was in pain. It was cold up in the mountains at night, so I gave him the poncho-liner. It was cold and freezing, and I shivered all night. Air strikes and artillery were being fired all around. There was the whistling sound of the shrapnel zooming through the trees above our heads. F-4 fighters were screaming overhead, their undersides streaked with hydraulic fluid, dropping bombs in the tree line around their position. The hole digging exercise was beneficial; those holes saved our lives. Brownell was on morphine, which seemed to keep most of his pain at bay.

As Brownell recalls: "The only good part of the night was the arrival of the C-47 gunship. It circled our hilltop most of the night, protecting us from the NVA, who seemed to be all around us. The gunship would shoot a continuous stream of tracers in wavy lines all around our position. This was very reassuring, because no enemy troops could advance on our position

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under the withering fire of that wonderful mini-gun. Just before daylight the gunship left us; left us alone in a dreadful silence. The time until dawn seemed to last forever.”

The next day, 27 April, Brownell continues: “As the afternoon wore on, our unit was running out of food and water, and more importantly, ammunition. I started to dread the idea of another night in my hole. My arm was growing stiff, but the medic kept me pumped up on morphine, so pain was minimal. We had a number of wounded who desperately needed evacuation. I was the least injured. Finally, one of our helicopters got into the area, hovered and took aboard four or five of the seriously wounded during a 'mad minute' where everyone fired into the tree line to keep our neighbor's heads down. Shortly after, another helicopter was able to approach, and I was loaded with the remaining wounded.”

Not too late in the afternoon, some A Company pilots landed and O'Herron and I (Romer) helped with unloading ammo and supplies. The wounded were then put onto the huey. Brownell was placed onto the second aircraft. I began to wonder if I was going to spend another night on the ground. Later in late afternoon, some more helicopters arrived with more ammo, water and supplies. O'Herron, me and five other guys were lifted out on one of the departing choppers.

When I arrived back to the company area, everyone was surprised to see that I was still alive. I guess I was lucky that my stereo and fan was still in my hooch.

**Richard J. Ruby:** Ruby was the one playing the guitar and singing in the hooch at night. On this occasion he was flying a Huey far to the west of Camp Eagle near the border and was shot up with small arms fire. He flew back to Camp Eagle, and we went to see why he had flown back so soon since we knew it was too early to return home. On arriving at the helicopter, we found that Ruby had been shot thru the knee and also his little finger. I don't think anyone else was hurt. Upon inspecting the helicopter, we found 28 bullet holes in the bottom and knew that an AK47 had a 30 round clip and that 2 rounds must have gone thru the same holes!!! So someone had probably emptied a whole clip on his helicopter. Ruby had lost all his radios and couldn't call back to let us know he was returning home. He also had lost his hydraulics boost and was leaking out of the bottom of his helicopter. He was sent home shortly after that, and we missed his singing and playing the guitar. For the next week we all kept our hands inside the bullet proof plates so we wouldn't get our fingers shot off!!! (Bruce Sutton)

**Peter J. Rzeminski:** Near the beginning of the **Operation Lamar Plain** description above is the mention of Col. Bresnahan, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Commander meeting the Americal Division Commander at 1415 at the General's Headquarters. What isn't mentioned in any report is how Col. Bresnahan arrived at the Americal Division Headquarters. I [as Air Craft Commander and Richard Von Hatten as my pilot] had flown Col. Bresnahan down from Camp Eagle to the Arrival Airfield (AAF) Tam Ky South in a UH-1 (huey). Once there, I was directed to fly Col. Bresnahan to the Division Headquarters. Not having flown in this A/O before, I landed near what looked like the Headquarters and asked for final instructions as to where to land and drop off Col. Bresnahan. I was told that it was just a short hop to a VIP landing pad, and I took off again and flew at about 50 feet, looking for the pad. I thought that I

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had found it, and I made a landing in the center of a large grass covered courtyard; surrounded by buildings on several sides. As I came down, my rotor downwash started whipping up clouds of dust, and papers started flying out the doors of some of the buildings. Oops, I quickly put the huey down, and an officer ran up and yelled what the hell was I doing? I told him that I was dropping off the 1st Brigade Commander. He told me I had missed the VIP pad, that it was over the buildings, overlooking the South China Sea. Col. Bresnahan, and his staff hopped out, and I flew over to the actual VIP pad. I never heard another word about the landing; not that I was going to ask Col. Bresnahan his opinion.

Near Tam Ky we were welcomed to share hooches with the 71st Assault Helicopter Company (on the beach, next to the airfield). Their call signs were the “Rattlers” (the lift platoon) and the Firebirds (the gun platoon). I stayed with the Rattlers. At Camp Eagle, we were just an aviation detachment to the HHC, 1st Brigade, so we were treated like any other 101st Airborne Trooper – nothing special; since the Headquarters Mess Hall operated normal hours. When we stayed with the Rattlers and the Firebirds (see page 18), it took some getting used to. The unit was organized around the life and missions of an aviation unit. The mess hall opened up before dawn to allow meals for the crew before we did our pre-flights and take off for missions. It was also open when we landed after dark. At Camp Eagle, there were many nights I came in from a mission and ate C-rations for dinner. Like I said, it took a little getting used to being treated as aviators; with special needs based upon our missions, and our constant presence out in the A/O during the day.

One morning, while still at the Firebirds flight line, I got up before sunrise and pre-flighted my huey. The crew and I got some breakfast and coffee, and then we got the engine started. Armed Forces Network (AFN) was available on the radio, and we could tune in to it on our ADF radio. We took off from the airfield and headed north as the sun was coming up over the South China Sea to our right. I tuned in to AFN, and it was playing Fire (I am the god of hell fire). I turned up the sound and started moving the chopper in synch with the music. We flew at 90 knots low level over the trees, watching the sun come up – it was exhilarating and we thought we were so cool. *Apocalypse Now* has nothing on us.

As a chopper pilot, my first view of the Ashau was from the air, as we headed into firebase Eagle (Fall of 68). I remember looking down and seeing what looked like five or six burned out helicopters in the valley (turned out to be marine helicopters.)

One mission I had was to transport an army sniper to the fire base at the end of the Bowling Alley, on Highway One, North of DaNang. He had a modified M-14, with a Monte Carlo stock; a long silencer, and a starlight scope. He'd spend the night picking off VC coming through the valley. The following morning, I had to fly out some of our 101st Airborne troopers to collect the bodies. They'd load them into my huey, and we'd fly them out to the local District Headquarters for identification. My unhappy crew would then have to wash out the chopper when we got back to Camp Eagle.

There was a UH-1 chopper that had been shot down. It had gone down in triple layered canopy, and it couldn't be pulled out. A Blue Team (Infantry Soldiers) had to be airlifted several miles away, and they hiked to the location. They blew a clearing in the jungle, and I had the mission of flying in some more explosives and bringing out

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the salvageable equipment. They were going to blow it up in place since it couldn't be recovered. The man-made clearing was just about rotor blade wide. I was flying an OH-6A, and I came to a hover just above the trees. My crew chief climbed out onto the skid so he could see where we were descending. I then descended straight down for about 250 feet, with the front tips of my rotor blades occasionally hitting some leaves or branches in front or my tail rotor clipping leaves and branches in back. Except for never having done anything like this before, I felt pretty calm. I eventually made it down to the ground, which was uneven; so I parked the front of the skids on the ground, and hovered so the rear would be off the ground but level. The Blues unloaded the explosives and loaded up the gear which the crew chief had pulled from the chopper. I then pulled pitch and started the ascent back up. I made it up without incident, and my crew chief climbed back into the chopper. He was Specialist-Six Rock (don't you love that name - it should have been Sgt. Rock), and he had been crewing choppers, in Nam, for over four years (I think he was slightly crazy). In reality, he was our chief maintenance tech, and he came out on this mission to supervise the removal of the equipment. After flying with me down into the jungle through that hole in the canopy, he said that he'd be willing to fly anywhere with me. I felt pretty good about my flying skills after hearing that from him. And to be honest – I thought that was really cool flying (if not slightly crazy). To this day, I don't know why I was selected to fly this mission. At our reunion in January 2014, I was told that the only thing Spc-6 Rock was afraid of the day that he flew down on my skid, was when he got off the skid and looked down. He said that he had seen a tiger paw impression in the mud that was as big as his head. He continued the mission, but kept looking around for the tiger.

For some reason that I don't now recall, I was in Saigon and I visited a friend of mine. He was a Captain (a Virginia Military Institute and a West Point Graduate) in the United States Army Criminal Investigation Command (USACIDC, usually abbreviated as just CID - investigates felony crimes and serious violations of military law within the United States Army.) I had met him up in Camp Eagle when I was flying him around to various locations. We were sitting in his office having a cold drink. He told me this story, in his soft Southern drawl. There had been a major black-market investigation going on for some time, and eventually several high ranking officers (non-generals) and NCO's were tried and convicted. This CID Captain had been investigating an army general who was stationed in Vietnam. There was sufficient evidence to indict the general. One morning a jeep pulls up outside the CID Captain's office and then General Westmoreland walks in.

**General Westmoreland** asks the CID Captain did he have a file on the other general, and the CID Captain says yes he does. General Westmoreland says to show him the file. General Westmoreland looks through the file and then states to the CID Captain, we handle generals, and takes the file. A week later, the other general had returned stateside and announced his retirement.

**Charles Alvin "Charlie" Beckwith (AKA Charging Charlie)** commanded the 2nd Battalion ("No Slack"), 327th Infantry (Airborne), 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. I often saw him as I flew missions up to his firebase. He had these puckers (scars) on his abdomen, and back then I thought that if they had been caused by bullets, then I didn't know how he could have survived them. Turns out that he had been wounded in early 1966 when he took

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several AK-47 bullets through his abdomen. Colonel Beckwith was an amazing man who went on to create the famous Delta Force unit.

We used to call the OH-6A, the pregnant Easter egg, self-castrating. It had an A-frame surrounding the cockpit, which protected the pilot from crashes. It also had self-sealing fuel tanks, to protect the fuel from rounds entering the fuel tank, and to keep the aircraft from burning upon crashing. I took off from a fire-base (I think it was FSB Roy) that was on a peninsular, surrounded by water. I had on board a mostly full tank of fuel, and three pacs; in other words, I was over-weight. I was halfway through gaining altitude (about 800 feet), when the engine suddenly quit. No warning, and instant silence - except for all the red lights flashing on the dashboard. I was still over water, so I started auto-rotation, and headed for land; while calling out a May-day. As I continued to go down, I made the decision to not go into the water. As we neared land, I popped the collective while keeping the nose down, for maintaining airspeed. We leveled out enough for me to reach land. I slowly reduced airspeed and turned into the highway. As I approached the ground (more rapidly that was standard for an auto-rotation, but remember, I had already popped the collective once), I pulled back on the cyclic to continue to lose forward airspeed. When we were about 15 feet above the highway, I popped the collective one more time, and attempted to land at about zero airspeed. We came out of the auto-rotation with zero airspeed and full collective up about five feet above the highway. We hit hard, and the blades, at slow rotation, flexed down and cut off the tail boom. We spread the skids, but everyone walked out of the wreck. I have to admit that all those hours of auto-rotation training took hold. Everything was automatic; and I seemed to have forever to make decisions and to pick the place I wanted to put it down. I was still disappointed though that I didn't have a "perfect" landing. I wanted my own Broken Wings award.

I was told by the Crew Chief of 16375, Ernie Walker at our 3th mini-reunion, that he believes the engine went out because of contaminants in the oil. He had sent an oil sample in for analysis. He believes that the contaminants caused the bearings to seize and then the engine froze up. That was probably why I had such a complete "engine-out" with no warning, and why I couldn't restart the engine. Walker didn't fly that day, because Sp4 Terry Clay was getting ready to finish his tour and wanted to fly one last mission.

[From accident report: OH-6A; 67-16375 - At approximately 1655 hours, on 23 April 1969, WO Rzeminski took off from the 1 Battalion, 327th Airborne Infantry pad, at Fire Support Base Roy. Three other people were on board [Sp4 Terry L. Clay, crew chief; 2Lt T. H. Ingram, passenger; 2Lt R. L. Strickland, passenger]. WO Rzeminski had about 300 lbs of fuel on board, but elected to refuel at the Rock Crusher to ensure enough fuel to complete his mission. Approximately two (2) minutes off FSB Roy, the chip detector light came on. This was immediately followed by the engine out light. WO Rzeminski entered autorotation, and since the aircraft was over water, turned inland toward Highway 1. WO1 Rzeminski made a "Mayday" call on FM to the 1/327TH ABN INF. The aircraft hit on Highway 1 Initially on an approximate heading of west. Upon impact, the aircraft bounced once turning 90 degrees to the left, and coming to rest on an approximate heading off south.]

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Watching airstrikes; I had landed on a firebase, up in the hills (I think it was Firebase Professional – I Corps). F-4's were making runs on the hill next over. I would see the flashes of the 20mm rounds coming out of the jet's cannon, and then hear the sound seconds later. Then I'd see the rounds striking the ground and exploding; then I'd hear the sound. Damnedest thing I ever experienced. When the jets were dropping napalm, the jet would come in on a steep dive. As it approached the target, it would release the napalm bomb (looked like a silver container from far away). Then it would reverse and climb for the sky. The napalm bomb kept going on a trajectory that had it landing about 150-200 feet from the summit. Upon hitting, it would explode and the fire would travel uphill – absolutely chilling. I had to take some RLO ["real live officer" - a commissioned officer] out to the SS Hope to visit some of his wounded. This was in 69 off the coast of Hue, I Corps. The ship had a helipad, and I was guided down by some navy guy. The ship was moving up and down a good 6 feet. As I tried to land, it would move down away from me, and of course, it felt like the whole ship's crew was watching me. So, I brought my Loach to a hover as the ship moved away from me again. I stayed in place and let the ship come back up to me. It came up a little hard, but not too bad. I dropped the collective, and I was landed. The RLO got out and told me to wait. So now I am moving up and down with the ship; I started getting seasick. I prayed, "Dear Lord, don't let me get sick." I was turning green and trying not to get visibly sick. Thank God the RLO returned, and we took off. As soon as I was in the air, I felt better. By the way, I don't like water, and I don't swim too well. I was always asking myself, how did I manage to get selected for these kinds of missions?

As my time in Viet Nam was coming to an end, I continued to fly every chance I could. The military date of return to the United States was called "Date Expected Return Over Seas" (DEROS). If you had "DE-ROS-ITIS", you had a fear of being killed or wounded in the last thirty days before you returned to the United States. Some line soldiers would come in out of the field, or volunteer to become door gunners –imagine that, or some Pilots would volunteer to stop flying the last month, to avoid getting shot down prior to departing for home. I had the opposite of DE-ROS-ITIS. I couldn't stand the boredom of sitting on the ground and not flying. So I flew every day I could, including my last day. The sky was overcast and the clouds were down to treetop level. I took the brigade commander, Colonel Dietrich, to a firebase, heading out either west or southwest of Camp Eagle. We had to fly down a river to approach the firebase, and I thought, "This is pretty dumb - that if the NVA opened up on us, we'd have nowhere to go". I mentally prepared myself to pull up into the clouds and perform a controlled 180. I had the frequencies on the radios for Phu Bai to hopefully make a Ground Controlled Approach (GCA); you can't say that chopper Pilots weren't paranoid enough. Even though I was willing to fly the last day in Nam, I wasn't willing to get shot down on the last day in Nam. I safely landed at the firebase (I'm pretty sure it was Birmingham), waited for the commander, to conduct his visit and then flew him back to Camp Eagle. I said good-bye to everyone, hopped on a truck and was driven to Phu Bai to fly to Cam Ranh Bay to process out.

My preferred drink is Jack Daniels. Someday, maybe you can lift a glass to fellow crew members, dad, granddad, grand-granddad; three (3) ounces Jack Daniels with two (2) ice cubes. Oh, by the way, when you are in the club with your NCOs; they don't pay for their drinks, period, end of message - understand?

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**Bob D. Steele:** Original set of pilots who arrived with the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Separate), were: Captain Ron Miller, 1LT Edgar Schneider, 1LT Leonard F Keys, CW2 Bob Steele, CW2 Bill Marchman, WO Ken Wymer. There was six H-13's, and six pilots. Don't recall any of the EM'S since we did not use crew chiefs very much. We did have 1 UH1B that was a C&C ship. It was a heavy bird and was underpowered. The Brigade preferred to use a "D" model, so this aircraft was not used very much.

**John Sutton:**

**A Soldier's Christmas Story, 1969** When I was a young boy I lived in a children's home for four years. This is the story of another children's home; an orphanage in Hue', South Vietnam. I visited it during December 1969 and it has haunted me for all these years. I finally came to the point that I want to write down as much as I can remember about it. After all of these years I can't remember exactly all of it in detail. It's funny how different soldiers can have different remembrances of Vietnam. It seems that every time we get together we all remember events a little differently. Sometimes we argue about the details. I want you to understand that I deeply admired both my fellow soldiers and my commanders. It was an honor to serve with them. However, I remember this very well and I think God has wanted me to tell this story for a long time but I have put it off. It truly was long, long ago and in a land far, far, away.

I need to start at the beginning, and give you a little background about how I first came to Vietnam and the few months after. My brother and I were in the children's home together and were adopted by the same couple. We were always close. When I graduated from high school, my brother was at Fort Rucker, Alabama training to become a helicopter pilot. I wanted to become a helicopter pilot as well, however I failed the test. In order to pass the test I needed 110 points but I only made 106. They told me I could become a crew chief if I wanted. That was agreeable to me so I enlisted as a crew chief and spent 2 ½ months at Fort Knox, Kentucky for basic training. I was then transferred to Fort Rucker, Alabama for AIT (Advanced, Intensive, Training) and crew chief school. My brother was still there at the time and I was able to visit with him for about three weeks before he was shipped off to Vietnam. When my training was completed and when it was time, I volunteered to go to Vietnam. I was flagged and not allowed to go because my brother was already there. I was sent to Fort Eustis, Virginia. Again, I volunteered to go to Vietnam and was finally granted a waiver so that I could go to be with my brother.

My brother was assigned to I CORPS, 101<sup>st</sup> ABN DIV, H. H. 1st Brigade, AVN Platoon outside of Phu Bai, Vietnam at Camp Eagle. I was flown into Camranh Bay. When I got there, instead of stationing me to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, I got orders for the 5<sup>th</sup> CORPS, 9th Infantry 162 Assault Helicopter Company, where I served in the Mekong Delta for 3 months. I hated being in that place and there was fierce fighting from May to July of 1969. I believe July is when the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry left the Delta. I watched them leave.

Something happened to me at this time which I believe was a miracle from God. I just want to briefly tell you about it. I could not get out of the Delta and I was at Dong Tam base camp. It was really a hard place to live. I flew as a Crew Chief on Slicks, troop carriers. It was a

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common practice for the men to take turns going to the PX with a list to pick up supplies for the men in the company.

At a time, when my helicopter was in the hanger bay for maintenance, it was my turn to go to the PX. When I arrived at the PX, there, on the other side of the road was a beautiful, big, green tent on a hill in a patch of well cared for green grass, with the words American Red Cross. It was just beautiful, so I decided to walk across the street to see it. I went over to the great big green tent and walked inside. When I walked in, there was nobody there.

There were giant 4'x8' panels all around the outer walls of the tent and in the center, there were many panels. They told the history of the American Red Cross and its work in the U. S. Army from the Revolutionary War to Vietnam. It was a beautiful display and very impressive. I was surprised the place was empty. I proceeded to walk through and looked at each one of the displays. As I came around the other way and just before I was ready to go out between these panels, an older man came out. (He wouldn't be older to me today, but he was then.) He had a green outfit on with no rank, but had a tag which said he was American Red Cross volunteer. To this day, I have no idea what his name is. He thanked me for coming in. I told him it was a good display and as I was walking away, he said, "I want to ask you something. Do you have any personal problems I can help you with?" My heart hit the floor. I said, "Do I!, I volunteered for Vietnam so that I could go to my brother's unit up at I CORPS with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Div., but I've been assigned to the Delta to the 162<sup>nd</sup> Air Assault Company. I've been here for 2 ½ months and there is no one to turn to."

The Red Cross representative was very polite and asked me to sit down. He said, "Please, let me write all this up." He then took out a long, yellow, legal pad and began to write down everything I told him, as well as the company I was assigned to. He then said, "I'll see what I can do with all this." I thanked him and went on to the PX and got the things on the list for the men and went back to the company. (It seems like those Christians who you want to thank for deeds they have done for you, disappear and are gone and you never see them again, kind of like angels.)

For the next few days we didn't have anything to do but work on the helicopters, so we worked 16 hours on and 8 hours off, until the helicopter was ready. The hanger was very large and held 8 Huey helicopters. We were in the hanger about 5 days later and my helicopter was in bay 8 against the wall. Then at about 1:00 in the morning someone yelled, "The first Shirt just walked in so you guys look busy." I happened to be on top of the helicopter and they said, "Oh my God, he's heading this way." He was a big man and was decked out in First Sgt. Uniform, and nobody messed with him. He turned around beside my helicopter and looked up at me and said, "Specialist Sutton." And I said, "Yes sir, 1st Sgt." He then said, "Are you ready to go to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne?" In surprise, I could have fallen off my helicopter. He said, "Here are your orders. Get out by morning." I left the helicopter and went back to my barracks and lay down till the next morning. I went through the checklist to clear the area and then left.

It was my job to find a ride to make my own way up north. I remember that I got a ride from there to Cam-Ranh Bay. At Cam-Ranh Bay, I got a flight on a C-130 up to Phu Bai. From

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Phu Bai, I was given a ride on a 2 ½ ton truck to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Div. When the truck dropped me off, they told me that Headquarters Company was over the hill. I carried my duffel bag about a half mile and came into the company area. There was several barracks there, and I walked through a little valley up toward the company area. Before I got there, between the barracks, I could hear my brother, Bruce talking his head off with a group of officers. I yelled at him, “Hey Bruce!” He turned around and yelled back, “Johnny! Where did you come from?” He was stunned. I wanted to tell him, “I came half way around the world to be with you!”

After I got to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, H. H. 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, Aviation Platoon, it wasn't very long until the company staff found out that I had been in 3 months of combat already, so the aviation commander assigned me a helicopter of my own. This company was a VIP platoon of helicopters, and they actually carried special messages to full Bird Colonels and the top Generals. They carried crypto; in fact, we had a radio console inside the helicopter for communication. There were men who came, at times, who were handcuffed to their crypto device and carried hand guns to protect it. The center console had 4 or 5 helmets to communicate with. Because we only carried VIP and went various places, I got to see more of Vietnam than I would ever if I had been on a slick or any other helicopter. So, as time passed, I got to know these pilots.

Every morning the routine was that we did not have to make company formations, but were required to get the helicopters ready. I would go down to get my helicopter ready and then, maybe a half hour later the pilots would show up with their clipboards. They would tell us our mission for the day. So, I would have the engine uncovered, take the tie down off the rotor, have the doors open, and mount the machine guns to be ready for use. The pilots would get in their seats and we would close the doors and then take off for whatever mission was assigned. (The helicopter, when on the ground belongs to the Crew Chief, but when in the air it belongs to the Pilots and they are in total control.)

We would carry VIPs and pilots, and they would tell us our destination each morning. I got to know quickly where the firebases were and places to go. It was almost like going on vacation every day except people would shoot at us once in a while. I'm sure the troops on the ground walking through the wet jungles thought Vietnam was a hellhole. When you're flying over it, Vietnam is a beautiful country.

Well, after all this background, I bring you to where my Christmas story begins. In the summer of 1969, I went down one early morning to get my helicopter ready. (Lots of times I got to fly with my brother, Bruce.) I came down to my helicopter and the doors were already opened and there was a strange man sitting inside without permission. He had a little U.S. Army green hat on. I ignored him. I untied everything and readied the helicopter. This little man just kept sitting there quietly not saying anything to me. I was a little offended that he was in my helicopter without permission.

When the pilot showed up on that day, I'm positive it was Mr. Pete Rzeminski; I asked him, “What's this man doing in my helicopter without permission?” Mr. Rzeminski explained and I remember it very clearly, “Oh, that's one of the Division priests. He's a Catholic Father who

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goes out and does Masses on firebases and for the infantry. The priests have ongoing permission to fly with us. We do it as a curtesy. They go from firebase to firebase to say Mass, so you'll see them go in and out on our helicopters." I didn't speak to this priest. Though I was a strict Protestant, I began to be drawn to him.

The Catholic priests would go out to firebases, put on their vestments, which I didn't understand what they meant, and they would celebrate the Mass and bless the troops. I wouldn't call myself religious at that time, but I began to admire these men standing up there on the firebase. They could have been picked off by snipers at any time. I remember them doing Masses at Ripcord and Bastogne and along the A Shau Valley. They would also do Masses for the infantry and they were quite moving. I've since heard that 2 priests were shot dead while serving in the field.

I finally got bold enough to start talking to this priest. As I would talk to him and was getting to know him, he told me about the things he was responsible for in the 101<sup>st</sup> ABN DIV. Among his duties, he was responsible for children's orphans' home in Hue'. The children's home was in a citadel in Hue', where the Emperor of Vietnam used to live.

The priest would go over to the home and care for the children who were all orphans. "Well," I told him, "I was out of a children's home." I began to admire this man as a good man and not necessarily just as a priest. We began to talk together of how I was adopted out of the Christian Children's Home in Danville, Kentucky. When December of 1969 came, the priest asked me if I would go with him over to the citadel, to the children's home and pass out candy to the orphans, which he did every Christmas season. I thought back to when I was at the Children's Home for 4 years as a child, and the people who cared for us, and how the people from surrounding churches would give us wonderful Christmases. I was immediately filled with emotion, and I thought that it would really be a neat thing to go with him. So since I had gotten to know and trust him, I told him that I would be glad to do it.

The priest told me to be ready and at our company church at 8:00 a. m. I am not sure exactly what date it was, but I'm sure it was on a Sunday morning. I was delighted to get to the church and there waiting for me was a US Army jeep with a driver, and in the front seat was the priest. He welcomed me and I got into the back seat. Also in the back seat were 2 huge boxes of candy, and just enough room for me to sit down. So, with these 2 great big boxes of candy, we left Camp Eagle for the Citadel and for the capital city Hue'. I had no idea of the terrible emotional storm that would be coming at me.

When we got to Hue', we drove across a bridge to the main entry of the Imperial City. The walls were gigantic and thick. I could tell it had been a beautiful place at one time. We drove through some small streets and what I would call a giant arch with doors. Obviously, it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> entryway, and we stopped. The priest and I got out, and he took 1 box of candy and I took the other and I followed him through the arches.

We went through several huge, dark hallways, and I could hear a roar in the distance. We finally came out into the sun and there in the sun was a gigantic sunken garden with steps leading down maybe 15 feet to the ground level. A stunned disbelief came over me because

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there on the grounds were hundreds of orphans standing and playing together. They looked like kids from 6 to 12 years old, both boys and girls. The next part, I remember very clearly. The priest looked at me and said to me, “John, do you think you can really handle this?” In my stupidity and sheer ignorance I said, “Yes”. The priest said, “OK, Go ahead then and pass out the candy.”

I took my box of candy down the steps to ground level and started to pass out the candy to the nearest kids and had not been detected by the other kids in the compound. For just a moment it was pure joy, handing out candy with my hands with all the smiles and giggles. They were beautiful children. Within a few seconds, the rest of the kids realized what was happening and they all rushed forward like a mob, screaming and yelling for candy. I had started a riot on my own. The bigger kids were walking and climbing over the little kids with their hands out, all screaming and hollering at me for candy. I realized I had created a terrible situation.

I then picked up the huge box of candy holding it out of reach over my head and ran to the steps. On each side of the steps were large podiums about 6 feet high which, I suppose, would once have held large flower basins that were now gone. I put the box of candy on top of one of the podiums and then climbed out of the reach of the kids onto the podium and stood up. With all the little Vietnamese kids below me screaming and crying, I began to throw candy out into the sunken gardens, as far as I could. The kids, seeing this, immediately ran the other direction picking up and grabbing the candy off the ground. After the box was empty, I threw it to them too. They immediately took the box and tore it apart to find any leftover candy.

At this point, I am not clear, but I think I remember the priest bringing the second box of candy to me on the podium and handed it to me to throw out to them. This is when I began to get mentally upset. Nothing like this had ever happened at the Christian Children's Home in Danville, Kentucky. It was obvious that all these children were orphans because of the war. Even though I believed in our cause, looking at these children I felt, “How stupid this war is”. Mentally shaken by all this, I sat down on the podium for a long time. The children finally settled back down. I thought that I would get down and walk among the little children, they were so beautiful. They knew I didn't have any more candy. When I got down, I instantly noticed they would not come near me; nor did they trust me. I decided to walk across this large compound. The children were back to playing with each other and ignoring me.

I thought I was getting better, but the worst was yet to come for me. I noticed in the center of the compound, was a wall standing by itself. Making another big mistake, I walked up to the wall from behind to go around it. As I went around the wall, I realized that it was a large steel cage, like a jail with a steel door on it. As I went by it, the cage was to my left. There were 3 older children locked inside. When I looked at them, I instantly realized that they were severely mentally challenged. This image has been in my head to this day. One of them, a girl, was standing in the corner by herself. One was a smaller boy standing back against the wall and another big boy who was on the ground crawling with his face down pushing his head along the surface of the ground. In the other corner one of them had pooped. I didn't

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see anyone around to take care of them and I was truly gripped with sorrow for these Vietnamese children.

As bad as it was, I wanted to run from that place. I was at the other end of the compound by this time and to get out of there, I immediately ran to the nearest steps. Mentally, I was wrenched, but it wasn't over. I tried to go through corridors to get back to the entryway and to the jeep, but the palace was so large, I got lost. I finally came down another dark corridor and I heard a second great roar down that corridor. The sound was like something from a nightmare.

As I walked down the corridor toward this roar I saw grid covered windows like lattice. I picked up one of the lattice windows and peeked in to see what the roar was. What I saw was overwhelming. There were 7 or 8 long tables put together making up maybe 50 feet each. On top of these tables were small little beds with a baby in each one. There were hundreds of orphaned babies screaming and crying. Working along the tables were 8 to 10 Nuns dressed in black. 6 or 8 of them were Vietnamese women and 2 were European, much taller. They were going from baby to baby, caring for them in the different isles. I remember thinking, "How can they withstand this?"

My mind began to race. I finally found the entrance and immediately got back into the jeep. As I was sitting there, the last thing I remember was a black French Renault automobile pulling up. The door opened and out came who I supposed, was a European Catholic priest wearing a black cassock with a white collar. He stared at me intently for a long time. It was almost like Jesus looking at me. From this point on everything drifted away from me mentally. I don't remember leaving the Citadel. I don't remember leaving Hue'. I don't remember coming back to Camp Eagle. I don't remember coming back to my company area. I don't even remember the priest coming back to camp with us, even though I know he did. I do remember waking up 4 or 5 hours later in my bed in the barracks. It was as if I had been knocked out. What I did remember was the image of all those orphans of war.

At this Christmas time, I feel that all of us Christians, believers in Christ, should be doing something for others, not only because the judgment is coming, but because we should love each other enough to help others who can't help themselves. This is a true and honest story as best as I can remember. By John W Sutton. Typed by Stephanie Sutton. Edited by Deacon Mike Vandiver

My fellow soldiers, the story goes like this. I have obtained so much information that I had lost and have regained because of all of you. I wanted you to hear it. It really starts with Pete Rzeminski wanting to get together in Naples, Florida. Pete and I had agreed to meet for lunch and then he asked if Terry Hunt (who I'd almost forgotten over the years) could join us. We had a wonderful time of reminiscing and visiting together, thanks to Pete.

We got together with Terry and his wife several times. While together, I expressed to him my deep regret over the fact that I could not find any information about my helicopter crash; not even the tail number. Terry looked at me and then asked me for the date of the crash and wrote it down. That evening I got an email from the pilots association giving me the tail

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number, the crew member's names and a brief explanation of what happened at the crash, I could have fallen on the floor! Thank you Terry (Mr. giggles). The email also stated that I could get in touch with army records, and they would send me the full report, which they did. I was overwhelmed with joy. It was 61 pages long.

While at Naples, we asked Dan Shideler to come over, and I asked him to bring his Vietnam stuff. He told me he had not looked at it in 43 years. I had told my family, but could never prove, I was given the Bronze Star by the 101st Airborne, and it was not on my DD214. Dan set down at my table and said to me "John, you might want this", and pulled out a copy of my orders for the Bronze Star which he had kept for all those years. Again, I could have fallen on the floor! I can't express enough my deep thanks to Dan. I owe him big time.

Next, I found Captain Dan Cumbow. You remember him? He always made us laugh in hard times. While in our conversation, he wanted to know if I ever got my air medal with V device for my helicopter crash that he had written up at the time. I told him that I had not and that it was also not on my DD214. Captain Dan told me that as decoration and awards officer, he would write it up again because he was also one of the investigating officers at my helicopter crash. I put together both my Bronze Star orders and the letter from Captain Dan Cumbow and sent it to U S Army Board of Review in Washington DC to change my DD214. Captain Dan, I'm very grateful to you.

Hi Team, Great news: After all of these years, John Sutton is going to be awarded the Soldier's Medal for his action in rescuing Richard Von Hatton from a burning helicopter in Vietnam in the fall of 1969. The ceremony for presentation of The Soldier's Medal will be held on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 11:30 a.m. **with a reception immediately following.** The ceremony will take place, at the 181st Intelligence Wing, Terre Haute; Located at the Terre Haute International Airport. Since this is an Intel unit, no one will be admitted unless they are on the list that John Sutton will provide to the 181<sup>st</sup> Intelligence Wing (Air National Guard). Anyone who wants to attend must contact John Sutton to include their name on the list. The Air Guard commander has stated that no one will be admitted who is not on the list, with no exceptions. So anyone who would like to attend and witness this honor to our fellow soldier, please email or call John Sutton, and let him know that you are coming so that your name can be added to the list. John Sutton, ferggie300@gmail.com, Mobile: 812 875-3600. Indiana Congressman Bucshon's office, and Major General Martin Umbarger's office have agreed to time and place, so it is now official, and John has asked me to share this information. (Pete Rzeminski)

Finally, my brother Bruce (CW2), who I got to spend 9 months in Vietnam with, was able to get copies of the original pictures of my crashed helicopter that our company had taken. Bruce also brought home to me my 101st Airborne coin that had been made for me, but I left before they had given it to me. Our coins have become very valuable. Thanks, my brother, Bruce.

I am thankful to you guys. I looked up to you all in Vietnam. You were all older than me (ha ha!) I just wanted a historical record for my family. I want to salute you all for helping me out. I don't deserve it. God bless, John

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**Ernest Thibault:** I was flying a UH-1, south of Los Banos, where Highway 1 curved back through Hai Van Pass in I Corps. As we were flying west of the highway, we flew over the jungle and soon flew over several bunkers and started receiving some fire. We flew out of the area and reported back to Camp Eagle what we had found. The next day [4 October 1968; OH-6A 67-16220], I was sent back in an OH-6A with Captain Ron Goodman, an artilleryman. I again spotted the area with signs of bunkers and we called in for an artillery strike. We were told that the tubes were facing in a different direction, on another fire mission, and that we would have to wait. After we were told that the tubes were available, we started receiving incoming enemy .51 cal and AK-47 fire. I recall seeing all of the front panel lights come on, and then I was sitting on the ground. I looked up and saw the helicopter up in the trees. I noticed that my helmet was lying in the bubble of the helicopter above me, and I saw that it had some blood on it.

Ron had helped me crawl out of the chopper and down unto the ground. Ron Goodman had a broken left leg. I said "Ron, you are bleeding." He said, "No, that's your blood." I had a compound fracture of my ankle.

We were lying next to a large log, and we crawled under it, as the air force started shooting in our area. Several of the rounds hit the log, and we would have been hit by our own side, if we hadn't been under the thick log. We later could hear the bad guys talking near us. The next day, at dark, we got to a stream where we could get something to eat and drink, while we hid in the nearby rocks. The next morning, a pink team flew overhead, and I stood out and waved to him; the OH-6A turned around. The C&C (Command & Control) UH-1 dropped down to spot our location.

Later, I heard a sound and a black face appeared through the jungle foliage. I knew the Vietnamese didn't have blacks, so I didn't shoot him. We had been discovered by the infantry team to help us get out. A medivac dropped a basket down, and we were lifted up to the UH-1. We were medivac'd to Phu Bai, where Major Miller, and some of the guys were waiting for us to come in (see page 143). We were on the ground three days and two nights. We were eventually evacuated to Camp Zama, Japan.

**Joseph Thomas:** I got there sometime at the end of April 70. Transitioned into the OH-6 had the "runs" for 11 days. Call sign was Griffin 25. Later changed to Deadbone 25. I left the platoon I think in either Sept. or Oct. to the Black Widows; fun times. I liked the smallness of the platoon. Keep in touch. I will try to help with the history as much as possible. Can't remember a lot of the names; Pete Ross, Capt Dorville ( I think) [Note - Served in the Black Widows; was a WO1 Ronald Dorville], Fitsgerld, Paul Stainke, Cpt. Brock, Capt Joe Chittwood, Willis (Willie the Mormon), Coreman (KIA), Zappa, Webster. Lloyd Enos. Priest down at the big Catholic Church - Father McPartland. Ron Zappa was a warrant (big ugly sucker, we ran into a tree together (The tree won). I can't remember [Raymond] Willis's first name. We called him "Willie the Mormon. "He and Raymond Corman were hit by the same rocket (122mm). Willis was wounded and Corman was KIA. Dorville was a Captain. He was a short timer when I got there. I ran into an Ed Holguin at the 2015 VHPA reunion.

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**Chet Uszynski** (Captain): An interesting project that you have undertaken. I can barely remember people or places from last year let alone 43 years ago. In my case, I joined the unit in July 1969 in Chu Lai. My previous unit was C Btry 4/77th ARA at Camp Evans. I was shot down on April 24, 1969. While I was studying my map, my copilot James A. Brown was flying our UH-1C. The next thing I remember was walking in the jungle away from the aircraft. My crew chief grabbed me, and led me to a log and sat me down. The next thing I remember was being hoisted up into a medevac helicopter. Then I was waking up in a bed with, my commander and other people standing next to the bed. I asked "what happened?" Someone said "you crashed in the jungle". I asked where Jim Brown was, and they said he was in another section. Turned out he was dead.

In a few days, I was moved to a hospital in DaNang. I stayed there for a few days, then I was moved to the 6th convalescent center in Cam Ranh Bay. I crashed on April 24th, 1969, and I was released back to my unit on June 24th, 1969. The unit had switched from C model Hueys to cobras, and they didn't have any transition spots available. So I asked for a transfer, and I was assigned to the aviation platoon.

I was, in fact, The Aviation Platoon Leader apparently replacing Major Miller. My tour ended in March 1970. My first tour was with B Co 227th Avn Company, 1st Cav Division in 1967. Coincidentally two months ago I received an e-mail from one of the pilots in that unit who I had not seen or spoken to since 1967. He also sent a picture of me, him and another pilot which jogged my memory bank a little.

After my tour with HHC, I returned to Ft. Rucker where I was an Instructor Pilot, Flight Commander in the Rotary Wing Aviation course flying OH-13 and OH-58 helicopters. In 1970, Captain Dan Cumbow, Captain Don Ledbetter and I met up at Ft. Rucker and socialized there with our families for about two years. I got out of the Army in July 1972. From Aug '72 to Sep '73 I was In the Ohio National Guard flying UH1-H and OH-58 helicopters. After getting out of the Army, Ledbetter and I went to work for Bell Helicopter in Isfahan, Iran. In Jan '76 until Feb '79 I worked for Bell Helicopter International in Isfahan, Iran as a Primary Flight Instructor flying a Bell 206B, and then as the Chief of Flight Support (Airport Manager). After Bell lost the contract in Iran, I went to work for Bell in marketing in Ft. Worth, Texas.

Don and I eventually flew Helicopters offshore in the Gulf of Mexico for a few years. We then lost track of each other. I could not find a flying slot in the National Guard or Army Reserve as a Captain, so I joined the Oklahoma National Guard as a Warrant, flying UH-1H.

I served 8 years on active duty and 17 in the Ohio, Oklahoma, and Texas National Guard, flying Huey's and Eventually CH-47D Chinooks. I retired from the Texas Guard in 1996. In the late 80's or early 90's I ran into Parrish at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, a National Guard training camp. He was a Lt. Col in the Pennsylvania Guard. I was a lowly Warrant Officer in the Texas Guard. He didn't seem to remember who I was, but I remembered him. Meanwhile, I had gone to work for Petroleum Helicopters flying offshore in the Gulf of Mexico and Angola, Africa. I flew Bell 206B, 206L-1, 206L-3, 407, 212, and 412 aircraft as well as the Eurocopter AstarB2. I retired from Petroleum Helicopters in 2010.

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Well that is more information about me than I am sure that you wanted, but unfortunately I don't remember much about our unit or its operations out of Chu Lai or Camp Eagle. I do remember seeing Bob Hope at around Christmas 1969. I have attended 3 reunions of the Vietnam Helicopter Association and I don't remember seeing many people at those reunions that I knew in Vietnam. I will be attending this one in San Francisco (2013), but it will be my last one unless they have another one in Ft. Worth.

In any case, thanks for the update on some of the people from that unit.

I never knew and guess I never will, who winched me out of the jungle on April 24, 1969, to begin the rest of my life; not a day that is easy to forget. Two months in various hospitals in-country before I was reassigned to your unit. As for my time with our unit, as I mentioned before, I don't remember much about it. I do remember one Medivac of one of our crews that crashed near Camp Eagle while doing practice autorotations - (unauthorized). They had engine failure while attempting a power recovery and had nowhere to go (land). Does this incident ring a bell? Chet Uszynski

**William M. Walsh:** I got this article about me from the archives of Stars and Stripes. Although it doesn't say I went inside, I did go in with Tom Weinman. They got his name wrong. (Imagine that). Never ever heard of any other helicopter pilot going inside a tunnel he found. But I was quite happy it was empty by then.

### **Persistent 101st Pilot Bags an Enemy Bunker**

Article in Pacific Stars & Stripes Thursday, Oct, 14, 1971, page 23

By PFC. T. V. McCarren Camp Eagle, Vietnam (Special)

— This is the story of the helicopter pilot who wouldn't give up.

On a late afternoon recently, WO William Walsh was certain that he saw a Viet Cong scurry into a bunker as he approached the bunker's position in his light observation helicopter. He also thought he saw a ladder in the weeds and numerous pieces of wet clothing drying on nearby bushes.

Walsh quickly circled the area again but failed to see the bunker or anything else in the growing darkness. It had all seemed to disappear. He returned to his unit, Aviation Platoon, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Div.

Early the next morning the warrant officer led a "pink team" to the area and though they searched long and hard, not a trace was found of the, elusive bunker or its occupant. Later the same morning a ground search of the area was made but there was still no sign of the enemy or his position.

Walsh, certain that he had indeed seen a bunker, and paying no attention to the friendly jokes directed his way by his fellow pilots, volunteered to lead another ground patrol in the suspected sector.

In the early afternoon of the same day Walsh and members of D Co, 1st Battalion, 327th Inf, again began to look for the warrant officer's "figment of imagination."

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Carefully narrowing the suspected area down to a small patch of ground, the Screaming Eagles covered the suspected steep slope foot by foot.

It was then, when a member of D Co. slipped trying to scramble up the steep hill, that the hidden bunker was discovered. The trooper's feet had dislodged dirt hiding the outline of the bunker's entrance. The entrance, 18 inches wide and 12 inches high, was supported by a wooden frame.

"When I saw it from the air it looked much larger," Walsh said. "I can hardly believe I really saw it, seeing now how big it really is."

Any would-be occupants were asked to surrender and when no answer was forthcoming a smoke grenade was tossed into the entrance. "In a closed area a smoke grenade is very effective. It will make a man give away his presence without harming him," said an infantry sergeant.

When the smoke cleared from the entrance Spec. 4 Tom Wyman [Weinman], Walsh's crew chief, volunteered to search the bunker. Once inside Wyman [accompanied by WO Walsh] discovered the size of the interior had nothing to do with its small entrance. "Besides the equipment we found there was enough room to sleep two to three people," he commented. A stove, 30 to 40 pounds of rice and other foods, 100 rounds of AK47 ammunition, several knives, clothing and other utensils were found.

The items were collected and returned to the rear and the bunker destroyed. All because of the helicopter pilot who wouldn't give up.

**Ronnie C. Webster:** I was transferred from B Co 101st Aviation Battalion in December 1969. I might have been there a little before you [Rzeminski, December 1969] left. At that time the unit call sign was Griffin. Sometime in 1970 the call sign was changed to Deadbone. I left country in Sept 70. I am interested in those that served in the unit, but I didn't remember many names. There was a crew member huey crew chief we called tiny [Daniel Shideler]. He actually was quite large. Also, while flying low bird on a white team, my gunner, Tim [Daniel Shideler] don't remember the rest, got hit real bad in the Ashau Valley. Never heard any more from him after dropping him off at the hospital at Camp Eagle. I also served as the check pilot for the huey.

When I arrived with Kingsmen September 1969, about half of the unit was just coming back from Chu Lai (Operation Lamar Plain). I missed all of the action that occurred down there. But on October 25, 1969, while with Kingsmen (B Co 101st Assault Helicopter Battalion), I was flying peter pilot on a CCN (Command and Control North) mission into Laos; had a ranger team surround by a regiment of NVA. We were chalk 3. My platoon leader Captain Dwight Jackson Thornton was chalk 4. Anyway, the first two birds in only got one or two out, as they took heavy fire and hits. It was getting dark and clouds were low that we were dodging. Somehow, Thornton got in front of us, so he told us to drop back and take the chalk 4 position. On final they were hit with a RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade); Thornton and [WO1 Milbert] Hamilton were both KIA. What was amazing was that the crew chief and door

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gunner were thrown out and fell into the brush. They survived. It was from that mission that I determined that I probably was not going to get out of country alive, so I never worried about it the rest of the tour; which probably helped when I started flying white team loh's.

I was flying a white team mission in the Ashau valley. I was flying low bird and was dropping grenades into bunkers on a ridge line. Anyway, about the eighth bunker we hit the ammo dump and the secondary explosion blew us probably about 100 yards sideways My door gunner [Daniel Shideler] got shrapnel all through the front of his legs and was screaming so bad that he scared the hell out of me. Anyway, it was amazing that the bird was still flying. I got him to the hospital at eagle. I can't remember his name. I think it was Tim [Daniel Shideler]. Do you have any records on who he might be? I also received shrapnel and have a purple heart for the mission.

The units that we supported were 1/327 (Above The Rest), 2/502 (Strike Force) and 2/237 (No Slack).

Also, I believe I remember [WO Herbert] Francis. He stood on the bar at the o club, dropped his pants, acted like he was taking a sh\*t, and dropped a Baby Ruth (candy bar), which he picked up and ate. Does that sound like him? Also, in 1970 the O-Club took a direct hit by a 122 (RPG) and was demolished.

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### **Changing the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division's aviation call signs from Griffin and Little Griffin to Deadbone in 1970.**

HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate) had the call sign *Eagle* until the 1st Brigade was joined by the rest of the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam in November 1967. Afterward, Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade used the call signs *Griffin* for the UH-1's and *Little Griffin* call sign for the OH-6A's (loach). The *Griffin* call sign was used approximately from mid-1968 to early 1970. C Company, 4th Battalion, 77th Artillery (Aerial Rocket) had been using *Griffin* since 1967; therefore the Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade was required to change its call sign, and they permitted the pilots/Warrant Officers to select *Deadbone* as their call sign. The approving authority (Headquarters, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade) didn't realize that the platoon had slipped one by them.

The Griffin patch was created by WO John Hayes. It had a red center and a white ring around the red (First Brigade colors). It had only a loach (OH-6A) on it to signify the Scout Teams he lead. WO Pete Rzeminski took a copy of Hayes' patch and had the huey (UH-1) added.

*Cavalier* is an American magazine that was launched by Fawcett Publications in 1952 and has continued for decades, eventually evolving into a Playboy-style men's magazine. Vaughn Bodé's long-running comic-strip feature *Deadbone* was published in *Cavalier* continuously (with the exception of April 1975) from May 1969 through August 1975.

Bodé's comic strip *Deadbone* is about the adventures of the inhabitants of a solitary mountain a billion years in the past.

The Bodé style was extravagant and powerful. Every picture in his comics seemed to be a vignette by itself, composed to stand alone, but accidentally brought together to form these weird stories.



Griffin Patch



Original Bodé Cartoon

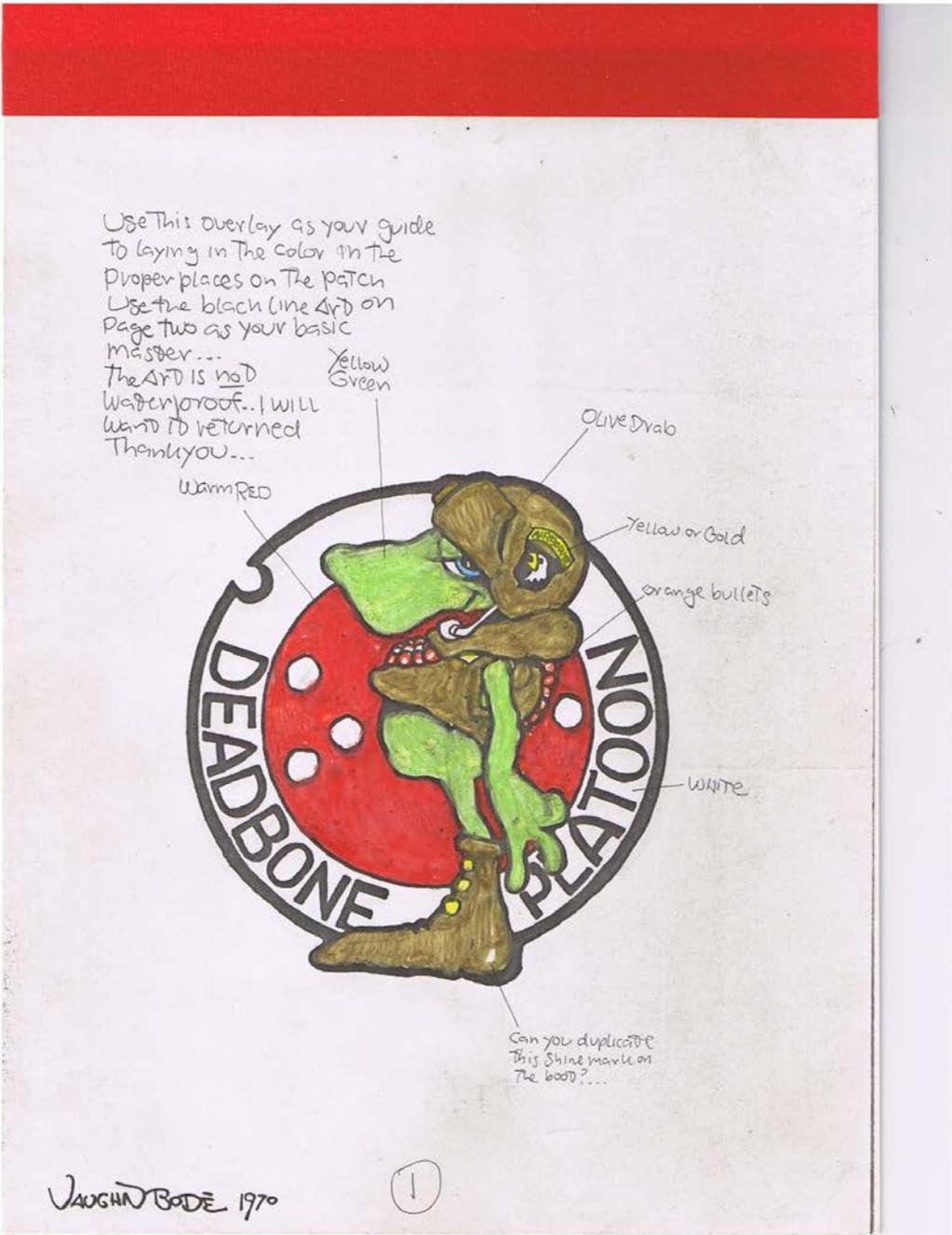


Patch Created by Aviation Platoon

And what characters the comic strip had! "The world of *Deadbone* is explored with a constantly shifting parade of weird lizards, sexy broads, soldiers, fascists and sages all in funny, strange, sexy or even enlightening situations. They made a mockery of everything, and that without a trace of political correctness, finger pointing or taboos in any of them."

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**Original Vaughn Bode - Deadbone Drawing**



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### Aircraft Unit Flew in Vietnam - September 1965 thru January 1972



Bell OH-13 Sioux



Hughes OH-23 Raven

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de Havilland L-20 Beaver



Bell UH-1B, Iroquois – aka the Huey

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 January 2019



Bell UH-1D & H, Huey – Iroquois



Hughes OH-6A Cayuse

Out of 7,013 Hueys in Vietnam, 3,305 were destroyed in Vietnam, most shot down and many others succumbing to crashes. In contrast, of the nearly 1,100 Cobras delivered to the Army, 300 were lost.

Out of 1,419 Loaches built, 842 were destroyed in Vietnam, most shot down and many others succumbing to crashes resulting from low-level flying.

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**Radio Frequencies From WO Rzeminski's Flight Notebook: I Corps – North of DaNang, Vietnam 1968-69 [Flying out of Camp Eagle]**

Location	Frequency
Dust off	47.40
Eagle Med Evac	33.60
Sally/Evans GCA	301.30
Phu Bai NDB Ch 69	51.50
Sally FM	48.50
Enfield Cobra (Swift)	37.50
Pistol Pete (Air Boat)/ Monster	34.25
Birmingham POL	31.50
Whip GCA	275.80
Whip Control	64.60
Beach Control	32.50
Eagle Med Evac	61.40
Sally	39.95
Pike Control	36.45
Sally Tower	368.40
FB Fist/ Thor/ Nuts	36.75
FB Lash	47.20
Blinker Lite	44.25
CMD Thomas	44.60
GLA	36.40

**Radio Frequencies From WO Rzeminski's Flight Notebook: I Corps – South of DaNang, Vietnam 1969 [Flying out of Tam Ky– Operation Lamar Plain]**

Location	Frequency
Kiet Tower	225.10
Kiet Tower	41.80
Rattler Control	59.15
East	257.80
Red Hawk	37.80
Salvation Arty	41.10
Salvation Arty	328.40

Tam Ky/ Tail Pipe Echo	46.85
Tam Ky/ Tail Pipe Echo	225.10
Tam Ky/ Tail Pipe Echo	136.55
Tam Ky N/ Indian Control	35.25
Limpy Sharks 27	65.65
Limpy Sharks 27	235.20
Hill 88	43.00
Admin Control	40.60
Spoon 81 (Arty)	59.50
Chi Lai East	257.80
Minute Man Control	45.10
Chu Lai Dust off	46.90
27 Med	45.70
Violent Chisel	262.90
123 Avn	67.50
Gate Way Plague 69 POL /Hawk Hill	58.25
Baldy (POL)	41.80
Professional Control (A)	228.90
Professional Control	61.65
Bilk	41.10
Bilk II (VHF)	273.00
Bilk II (UHF)	124.00
Bilk II (Alt-UHF)	339.10
ARA	338.10
B/2/17 Banchee	231.10
B/2/17 Banchee	37.20
B/101/Air Kingsmen	260.70
B/101/Air Kingsmen	55.90
B/101/Air Kingsmen	279.20

Limpy Sharks	2/505
Globe Trotter	505 Bn Cdr
Soupy Slipper	C Co/505
Turkey Forge	A Co/505
Feast 14	Pink Team 77&76
Mules 38	3/187
1st Bde CMD 101st	44.45
1/237 CMD 101st	
2/327 CMD 101st	43.30
	57.90

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2/502 CMD 101st	54.00
1/501 CMD 101st	44.60
1/46 Inf (Grundy Teams)	65.85
17 Avn Bd 10th Bn	
281 AHC	Nha Trang
42 AHC	Nihn Hoa
92 AHC	Dong Ba Thin
155 HHC	Bam Me Thuot
Helper 38	45.45

<b>From WO Rzeminski's Flight Notebook - Lift off 07:30, 6 June 1969</b>	
South	BT1901

### 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) Order of Battle during the Vietnam War

#### Infantry Battalions

Symbols date back to 101st WWII. 101st Helmets were stenciled with playing card symbols to differentiate regiments. 327 was a club, 501 a diamond, 502 a heart, and 506 a spade. ♣♠♦♥

- 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade]
- 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [1<sup>st</sup> Brigade]
- 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [1<sup>st</sup> Brigade]
- 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade]
- 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade]
- 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade]
- 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [1<sup>st</sup> Brigade]
- 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade]

Professional	
PZ Freq (Pathfinder)	35.75
LZ Freq (Pathfinder)	36.45
Bde Cdr	44.45
6-Jun-1969	10:00hrs Combat Assault
10:00hrs	Combat Assault (CA)
11:00hrs	Extraction - CA
Refuel then proceed to Professional	

- 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade]
- 3rd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment (Airmobile) [1<sup>st</sup> Brigade]

#### Division Artillery

- 2nd Battalion, 11th Artillery Regiment (155mm)
- 1st Battalion, 39th Artillery Regiment (155mm)
- 4th Battalion, 77th Artillery Regiment (Aerial Rocket)
- 2nd Battalion, 319th Artillery Regiment (105mm)
- 2nd Battalion, 320th Artillery Regiment (105mm)
- 1st Battalion, 321st Artillery Regiment (105mm)
- Battery A, 377th Artillery Regiment (Aerial Rocket)

#### Aviation Units

- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade(UH-1 & OH-6)
- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 2nd Brigade(UH-1 & OH-6)
- Aviation Platoon, HHC, 3rd Brigade(UH-1 & OH-6)

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#### 101st Aviation Group

- 101st Aviation Battalion (UH-1 & AH-1)
- 158th Aviation Battalion (UH-1 & AH-1)
- 159th Aviation Battalion (CH-47)
- 163rd Aviation Company (UH-1& OH-6)
- 478th Aviation Company (CH-54)

#### Division Reconnaissance

- 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment (Armored/ later converted to Air)
- Company F, 58th Infantry (Long Range Recon)
- Company L, 75th Infantry (Ranger)

#### Division Support Units

- 326th Engineer Battalion
- 5th Transportation Battalion (Aircraft Maintenance)
- 326th Medical Battalion
- 426th Supply & Service Battalion
- 501st Signal Battalion
- 101st Administrative Company
- 801st Maintenance Battalion
- 4th Military Police Company
- 265th Army Security Agency Company
- 101st Military Intelligence Company
- 10th Chemical Platoon
- 20th Chemical Detachment
- 36th Chemical Detachment
- 22nd Military History Detachment
- 25th Public Information Detachment
- 34th Public Information Detachment
- 45th Public Information Detachment

#### Temporarily Assigned

- 1st Squadron, 1st Armored Cavalry Regiment (Armored)

- 3rd Squadron, 5th Armored Cavalry Regiment (Armored)
- 11th Infantry Brigade

#### **101st Airmobile Division (Airmobile) Permanent Change of Station Dates of units assigned to Vietnam**

1st Brigade (Separate) 29 July 65 – 18 Nov 67

- Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division 29 Jul 65 - 19 Jan 72
- 1/327th Infantry (Airborne) Departed 20 Jan 72
- 2/327th Infantry (Airborne) Departed 21 April 72 (Briefly assigned to 1st Cavalry Division)
- 2/502nd Infantry (Airborne) Departed 19 Jan 72
- Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (Provisional) Dec 65 - Aug 67
- 2/320th Artillery (Airborne) Departed 9 Dec 71
- 5th Battalion 27th Artillery, OPCON to 1st Brigade (Separate) Nov 65 - Jun 67
- Troop A, 2/17th Cavalry (Airborne)(OPCON to Tiger Force 327th Infantry) (aka; 4th Provisional Rifle Company while assigned to 1st Brigade Separate) July 65 - Feb 72
- 101st Support Battalion (Provisional) Departed 19 Dec 67
- Support Battalion (Airborne)(Provisional)Jul 65 - Nov 67
- A Co 101st Administration Company Jul 65 - 17 Jan 72
- B Co 801st Maintenance Battalion
- C Co 501st Supply Battalion
- E Co Provisional
- 101st Replacement Company

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, H: 708-361-1330, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 November 2016

- A Co 326 Engineer Battalion (Airborne)(aka; 5th Provisional Rifle Company while assigned 1st Brigade Separate) Departed 17 Jan 72
- D Co 326th Medical Battalion (Airborne) Departed 23 Dec 67
- B Co 501st Signal Battalion (Airborne) Departed 12 Jan 72
- 20th Chemical Detachment
- 181st Military Intelligence Detachment
- Detachment 3, 3rd Radio Research Unit (406th ASA Detachment) Nov 65 - Jul 66
- 406th Army Security Agency Detachment (406th Radio Research Detachment)deactivated 20 Nov,1968
- 7th Radio Research Unit (redesignated 101st Radio Research Company Sep 66)
- 101st Military Police Company Nov 67 - Dec 71
- 3/187th Infantry (Airborne) Departed 10 Dec 71
- 1/501st Infantry (Airborne) Departed 4 Feb 72
- 2/501st Infantry (Airborne) Departed 1 July 72 (Briefly assigned to US Army Support Command)
- 1/502nd Infantry (Airborne) Departed 8 Feb 72
- 1/506th Infantry (Airborne) Departed 21 Dec 71
- 2/506th Infantry (Airborne) Departed 14 Dec 71
- 3/506th Infantry (Airborne) 23 Oct 67 - 15 May 71
- L Company, 75th Rangers 1 Feb 69 - 20 Dec 71 (assets from F Co 58th Infantry)
- Co F 58th Infantry (LRP) 10 Jan 68 - 1 Feb 69

Division composition as of 19 Nov, 67 (most units arrived mid Dec 67 during Operation Eagle Thrust)

- Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 101st Airborne Division 19 Nov 67 - 10 Mar 72
- Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division 18 Nov 67 - 14 Feb 72
- Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division 18 Nov 67 - 21 Dec 71
- Headquarters & Headquarters Company, and Band, 101st Airborne Division Support Command 18 Nov 67 - 17 Jan 72
- Headquarters & Headquarters Battery, 101st Airborne Division Artillery 18 Nov 67 - 17 Jan 72
- 2nd Squadron 17th Cavalry, Troops, HHT, A-C, D & F Dec 67 - 8 Feb 72 (except A Troop)
- 42nd Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) Sep 66 - 26 Dec 71
- 47th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) 27 May 68 - 21 Jul 71
- 58th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) 17 Feb 68 - 1 Oct 71
- 557th Infantry Platoon (Combat Tracker) 15 Feb 68 - 21 Jul 71
- 101st Aviation Group 25, Jun 69 - 19 Jan 72
- 101st Aviation Battalion (Airmobile) Departed 5 Feb 72 (Co A-B Dec 67, Co C-D Dec 68)
- 158th Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter) Co A-D, 23 Feb 69 - 24 Dec 71
- 159th Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter) Co A-C, 1 Jul 68 - Feb 72

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, H: 708-361-1330, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 November 2016

- 163rd Aviation Company (General Support) 1 Jul 68 - 18 Jan 72
  - 188th Assault Helicopter Company (7 Jul 68 changed to C Company, 101st Aviation Battalion)
  - 478th Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) 15 Sep 65 - 12 Oct 72 (not all inclusive with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division)
  - 2nd Battalion 11th Artillery (155) 10 Jun 68 - 1 Jan 72 (time with 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in Vietnam since Dec 66)
  - 1st Battalion 39th Artillery (155)\* 10 Oct 69 - 21 Dec 71 (under operational control of 101st Airborne Division and XXIV Corps)\*Kentucky National Guard
  - 4th Battalion 77th Artillery (Aerial Rocket) 17 Oct 68 - 4 Jan 72
  - 2nd Battalion 319th Artillery (105) Departed 20 Dec 71
  - 2nd Battalion 320th Artillery (105) Departed 16 Feb 72
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  - Battery A, 377th Artillery (Aerial Rocket) Departed 12 Jan 72
  - 101st Transportation Company (Provisional), March 1968 - ?
  - 5th Transportation Battalion Jul 68 - 18 Jan 72
  - 326th Medical Battalion, Co A-D Departed 23 Dec 71
  - 326th Engineer Battalion, Co A-D Departed 23 Dec 71
  - 426th Supply and Service Battalion 1 Jul 68 - 30 Jan 72
  - 501st Signal Battalion Departed 12 Jan 72
  - 801st Maintenance Battalion Departed 30 Jan 72
  - 101st Radio Research Co (USASA Security Company) 10 Sep 66 - 1 Apr 72
  - 265th Radio Research Co (Airborne), Nov 67 - Apr 72
  - 10th Chemical Platoon
  - 20th Chemical Detachment
  - 36th Chemical Detachment
  - 22nd Military History Detachment
  - 101st Military Intelligence Co Departed 17 Jan 72
  - 25th Public Information Detachment
  - 34th Public Information Detachment
  - 45th Public Information Detachment
  - 101st MP Co 28 Dec - 16 Jan 72
- Units on Temporary Assignment:
- 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry (Armored) Sep 69 - Jan 70 and Jul 71 - 8 Nov 71 (except D Troop Feb 72)
  - D Troop, 1st Squad, 1st Cavalry Regiment (attached to 2/17 Cavalry) Jul 68 - Mar 69
  - 221st Medical Detachment (aka:"Leg Medics"), 44th Medical Brigade, 1st Brigade, Aug 66 to Apr 67
  - 39th Transportation Battalion, 1st Logistical Support Command, Camp Eagle 69-72
  - 27th Combat Engineer Battalion, 45th Engineer Group 70-72

Mini-History: Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Vietnam July 1965 – January 1972); Compiled by Peter J. Rzeminski, 13417 Medina Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462, C: 708-421-5744, H: 708-361-1330, pjr@pjr.net; as of 1 November 2016

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Apr. 28, 2014

Pete,

Here are the PCS orders for the Unit's re-assignment from Vietnam to Fort Campbell.

The OIC was Captain Richard H. Neil. He was the Platoon Leader and retained that position at Fort Campbell. He also was assigned to the Unit in 1968-1969 as a Warrant Officer. The VHPA lists his Unit assignments as 1st BDE 1st CAV which is incorrect. Sadly, the VHPA reports his

passing in 2010.

1LT Wade was one of our pilots

SFC Moore was the Platoon Sgt.

SP6 Rock was the Maintenance Supervisor

Others on the Escort List I recognize as crewmembers are:

SP5 Cooke

SP5 Mackey

SP4 Cook

SP4 Stark

SP4 Winn

Hope this helps,

Tom Holtz

CPT WEL

T05

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)  
APO San Francisco 96383

AVDG-AG

9 January 1972

LETTER ORDERS NUMBER 1-54

SUBJECT: Unit Movement Order - Permanent Change of Station

TC 035. Following PERMANENT CHANGE OF STATION directed.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company 1st Brigade 101st Airborne Division  
(Airmobile) (MTOE 67-042TPO3 P00269)

Relieved from: United States Army Vietnam

Assigned to: Fort Campbell, Kentucky 3d U.S. Army

Availability date: 19 January 1972

Reporting date: 20 January 1972

Movement data: Unit will depart Phu Bai RVN for Da Nang RVN on 17 January 1972  
Unit will depart Da Nang RVN for Fort Campbell, Kentucky on  
flight Z2D6, 1000 hours, 19 January 1972

Auth strength: 26 OFF 18 WO 186 EM

Movement strength: 1 OFF 1 WO 27 EM

Structure strength: 26 OFF 18 WO 186 EM

Accounting classification: PCS MDC: 8CO2 and 8CE2

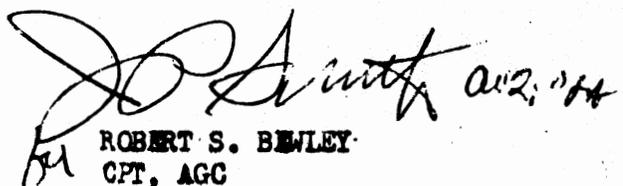
Files/Records: Morning reports and unit records will be transported to Fort  
Campbell, Kentucky as baggage with the Equipment Escort.

Morning reports: Final morning report will be submitted IAW AR 680-1

Authority: USARPAC MSG, GPOP-FD 090021Z Dec 71, subj: Final Movement Directive.  
USARPAC 28-71

Special Instructions: OIC will report to the S-3, 510th Replacement Company  
and the NCOIC USARV Pax Movement Team. OIC will in-  
struct the Division Liaison NCO, Da Nang RVN, to in-  
form the ACofS, G-3 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)  
of the time of departure from Da Nang. Each individual  
is authorized to carry 66 pounds of baggage not to  
exceed 5 cube, measuring 84x12x8 inches maximum. Prior  
to embarking, the OIC will coordinate with the OIC  
Passenger Service at the aerial port to verify that  
unit baggage has been loaded aboard aircraft. Roster  
of the Equipment Escort is attached.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

  
ROBERT S. BEWLEY  
CPT, AGC  
Asst AG

DISTRIBUTION:

50-Ea indiv conc

20-AVDGpAGP-RC

5-AVDG-AGP-M

5-AVDG-AGP-R

30-AVDG-FA

5-CG, Ft Campbell, KY

30-G3, DORM

5-CG, USARV ATTN: URCC APO 96384

5-CG, USARV ATTN: AVHAG-DU APO 96384

10-HQ, DA TAGO ATTN: AGDS Wash DC 20310

2-CG, USARV ATTN: DCS P&A APO 96375

NAME

WADE, KERMIT W.	1LT	8C02
GATZ, THOMAS P.	CW2	8C02
MOORE, MEREDITH C.	SFC	8CE2
ROCK, JOHN R.	SP6	8CE2
DIAZ, JUAN C.	SGT	8CE2
GREEN, THOMAS A.	SGT	8CE2
GRING, PAUL M.	SGT	8CE2
MERCHANT, THEODORE D.	SGT	8CE2
RENDON, ALBERTO	SGT	8CE2
YEIDA, DENTON B.	SGT	8CE2
AGREDANO, FAUSTO A.	SP5	8CE2
CASARETTO, MICHAEL	SP5	8CE2
COOKE, LARRY N.	SP5	8CE2
KEELEY, DARALD E.	SP5	8CE2
MACKEY, FRANK E.	SP5	8CE2
ARNOLD, THOMAS	SP4	8CE2
BATES, ROBERT L.	SP4	8CE2
COOK, TROY K.	SP4	8CE2
GLASS, TERRY L.	SP4	8CE2
HOWARD, DENNIS F.	SP4	8CE2
JULIAO-RIVAS, SAMUEL	SP4	8CE2
LUCAS, CHARLES	SP4	8CE2
MARTIN, CHARLES	SP4	8CE2
REARDON, DANIEL J.	SP4	8CE2
STARK, MICHAEL L.	SP4	8CE2
STRECK, VIRGIL H.	SP4	8CE2
TURNER, JAMES A.	SP4	8CE2
VANDERWOUDE, JAMES A.	3 SP4	8CE2
WINN, STEVE W.	SP4	8CE2



CWO-3

CWO-2

PMOS DROS REMARKS

STEINKE, PAUL <sup>(26)</sup> 062 B 17 SEP <sup>(AC)</sup> UN-1

BASS 100 B JUN 71 UN-1

COOREMAN 100 B JUN 71 UN-1

SAPPAN, GUY <sup>(25)</sup> 100 B APR 71 UN-1

WO-1

CRNA, JOSEPH M. <sup>(19)</sup> 100 B N SEP <sup>(AC)</sup> UN-1

ENOS, LOYD W. <sup>(27)</sup> 100 B 13 JAN 71 LON / UN-1 <sup>(AC)</sup>

NELSON, JOHN <sup>(33)</sup> 100 B 16 FEB 71 UN-1 / LON

ROSS PETER M. <sup>(23)</sup> 100 B 3 AUG UN-1 / LON

CHADWELL REX <sup>(15)</sup> 100 B 25 JULY <sup>(AC)</sup> UN-1 / LON

FITZGERALD 100 B JUNE 71 UN-1

MC CALL, RAY <sup>(22)</sup> 100 B 31 DEC <sup>(AC)</sup> UN-1 / LON

WILLIS, RAYMOND <sup>(21)</sup> 100 B 29 APR 71 UN-1

MARTIN, RICHARD <sup>(11)</sup> 100 B / UN-1

WEBSTER, RONNIE C. <sup>(31)</sup> 100 B 16 SEP LON / UN-1 <sup>(IP)</sup>

NICHOLS, JAY A. <sup>(24)</sup> 100 B UN-1 / LON

THOMAS, JOSEPH <sup>(25)</sup> 100 B UN-1 / LON

# PLATOON ROSTER (EM)

E-7

E-6

WEEKS, C

	Pmos	DROS	DOR
	67 NP4	12 JUL	12 AUG 68

E-5

JERGENS, J.

AUSTIN, P.

MORGAN, W.

LINDSAY, P.

BASS, J.

RAMOS, H.

GATNER, D.

	67V20	15 APR 69	
	67N20	25 JUL	20 JAN 70
	67W20	21 MAY 71	29 MAY 69
	67N/20	25 NOV	28 DEC 69
	67V20	17 NOV	20 JAN 70
	67V20	16 SEP	28 DEC 69
	67V20		
	76W20	13 OCT	7 SEP 69
	67W20		
	71P20	21 SEP	20 JAN 70
	75J20		

PMOS

DROS

DOI2

E-4

DUNNING, W.	45 M 20	31 AUG	27 APR 70
FOGEL, G.	67 N 20	14 MAY 71	17 APR 70
MARSING, A.	67 N 20	3 MAY 71	2 FEB 70
LOEFFLER, R.	67 N 20	22 FEB 71	APR 70
<del>...</del>	<del>67 N 20</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>
CARLEY, P.	67 N 20	17 DEC	30 JAN 70
<del>...</del>	<del>45 M 20</del>	<del>25 SEP</del>	<del>16 APR 69</del>
<del>...</del>	<del>67 N 20</del>	<del>15 FEB 71</del>	<del>15 JAN 69</del>
LYDIC	67 N 20	12 MAR 71	28 DEC 69
<del>...</del>	<del>67 N 20</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>17 JAN 69</del>
THOMAS, J.	93 H 20	12 SEP	18 DEC 69
* BRANNING	67 N 20	18 JAN 71	APR 70

E-3

	PMOS	DROS	DOR
MONTGOMERY, J.	67 N 20	12 MAR 71	4 MAY 70
FLEET, J.	67 N 20	22 JAN 71	31 MAR 70
NELSON, J.	67 N 20	31 JAN 71	1 FEB 70
GERG, HORN, R.	67 V 20	22 JAN 71	23 JAN 70
SCHWEPPE, R.	67 N 20	14 JUN 71	14 MAY 70
FLORENCE, T.	67 A 10	6 MAY 71	7 MAY 70

E-3

PMOS

DROS

DOR

MONTGOMERY, J.

67 N 20

12 MAR 71

4 MAY 70

NELSON, J.

67 N 20

31 JAN 71

1 FEB 70

BERGHORN, R.

67 N 20

22 JAN 71

23 JAN 70

SCHWEPPE, R.

67 N 20

14 JUN 71

14 MAY 70

FLORENCE, T.

67 A 10

6 MAY 71

7 MAY 70

Boss	-	W/T P/T
Beattie	-	C&C
Coorman	- KIA	Gorman
Deake	40	Baseplate -
Enos	-	Brown -
Fitzgerald Bill	-	Boston
Fitzgerald Mike <sup>00</sup>	-	Long Henry
Kraft <sup>9935</sup>		Martin -
McCall	-	Hauttenhart -
McCallie		Hudson -
Nelson	-	Clark
Nichol	-	Neil
Nowlan	- WIA	Holquin
Rampone	-	Smith
Seyssab	-	Wade
Stewart	- Grade	Gantz
Walsh		Sills
Willis	- WIA	

101ST AIRBORNE AVIATION UNITS 1968-1972 I CORPS, VIETNAM

UNIT	CALL SIGN	A/C TYPE	LOCATION	MARKINGS
<b>HHC 158TH AVN. BN.</b>	LIGHTNING (#1)	UH-1	EVANS	BLACK CIRCLE
A CO 158TH AVN. BN.	GHOST RIDERS	UH-1	EVANS	RED CIRCLE
B CO 158TH AVN. BN.	LANCERS	UH-1	EVANS	WHITE CIRCLE
C CO 158TH AVN. BN.	PHOENIX	UH-1	EVANS	BLUE CIRCLE
D CO 158TH AVN. BN.	REDSKINS	AH-1G	EVANS	YELLOW CIRCLE
<b>HHC 101ST AVN. BN.</b>	MUSTANG	UH-1	EAGLE	BLACK DIAMOND
A CO 101ST AVN. BN. (#2)	COMANCHEROS	UH-1	EAGLE	RED DIAMOND
B CO 101ST AVN. BN.	KINGSMEN	UH-1	EAGLE	WHITE DIAMOND
B CO GUNS 101ST AVN. BN.	KINGSMEN	UH-1C	EAGLE	BLUE & WHITE DIAMOND
C CO 101ST AVN. BN.	BLACK WIDOWS	UH-1	PHU BAI	BLUE DIAMOND
D CO 101ST AVN. BN.	HAWKS	AH-1G	PHU BAI	YELLOW DIAMOND
<b>A TRP. 2/17 CAV.</b>				
SCOUT PLATOON	ASSAULT 10-19	UH-1 & OH-6	QUANG TRI	RED STRIPE
GUN PLATOON	ASSAULT 20-29	AH-1G	QUANG TRI	RED STRIPE
<b>AERO RIFLE PLATOON</b>				
BLUES - GROUND ELEMENT	ASSAULT 30-39	INFANTRY	QUANG TRI	
AERIAL GUN PLATOON	ASSAULT 40-49	UH-1C	QUANG TRI	RED STRIPE
<b>B TRP. 2/17 CAV.</b>				
SCOUT PLATOON	BANSHEE 10-19	UH-1 & OH-6	EAGLE	WHITE STRIPE
GUN PLATOON	BANSHEE 20-29	AH-1G	EAGLE	WHITE STRIPE
<b>AERO RIFLE PLATOON</b>				
BLUES - GROUND ELEMENT	BANSHEE 30-39	INFANTRY	EAGLE	
AERIAL GUN PLATOON	BANSHEE 40-49	UH-1	EAGLE	WHITE STRIPE
<b>C TRP.2/17 CAV</b>			SALLY	
SCOUT PLATOON	CONDOR 10-19	UH-1 & OH-6	PHU BAI	BLUE STRIPE
GUN PLATOON	CONDOR 20-29	AH-1G	PHU BAI	BLUE STRIPE
<b>AERO RIFLE PLATOON</b>				
BLUES - GROUND ELEMENT	CONDOR 30-39	INFANTRY	PHU BAI	
AERIAL GUN PLATOON	CONDOR 40-49	UH-1	PHU BAI	BLUE STRIPE
<b>HQ TRP 2/17 CAV.</b>	SABER		EAGLE	BLACK STRIPE
A BTRY 377TH ARTY.	GUNNER	UH-1H & OH- 6	EAGLE	BLACK STRIPE
A BTRY. 4TH / 77TH ARA	DRAGON	AH-1G	PHU BAI	RED ARROW
B BTRY. 4TH / 77TH ARA	TORO	AH-1G	EAGLE	WHITE ARROW
C BTRY. 4TH / 77TH ARA	GRIFFIN	AH-1G	EVANS	BLUE ARROW

UNIT	CALL SIGN	A/C TYPE	LOCATION	MARKINGS
326 MED. BN.	EAGLE DUSTOFF	UH-1		RED CROSS
AVN PLAT, HHC 1ST BDE. (#3)	EAGLE/ GRIFFIN/ LITTLE GRIFFIN/ DEADBONE	UH-1 & OH-6A	EAGLE	WHITE CIRCLE - RED DOT
AVN PLAT, HHC 2ND BDE.	BRANDY	UH-1 & OH-6A	SALLY	BLUE CIRCLE -WHITE DOT
AVN PLAT, HHC 3RD BDE.	THUNDER	UH-1 & OH-6A	EVANS	WHITE CIRCLE BLUE DOT
163RD AVN. CO.	ROADRUNNER/ WOODSTOCK	UH-1 & OH-6A	EAGLE	WHITE DOG BONE
<b>HQS 159TH AVN. BN.</b>			PHU BAI	
A CO 159TH AVN. BN.	PACHYDERM	CH-47	PHU BAI	RED TRIANGLE
B CO 159TH AVN. BN.	VARSITY	CH-47	EAGLE	WHITE TRIANGLE
C CO 159TH AVN. BN.	PLAYTEX	CH-47	PHU BAI	BLUE TRIANGLE
478TH AVN CO (HH)	HURRICANE	CH-54	DA NANG	YELLOW TRIANGLE

Notes:

#1 - HHC Call Signs: 1969 LTC Norman Peters was *Challenger*; 1969-70 LTC Joseph Kastner was *Vampire*; HHC was *Batcave*; 1970-71 LTC George Stenhjem was *Lightning*; HHC redesignated as *Camp Watson*

#2 - A, B & C Companies each had two UH-1 slick platoons and one UH-1C gun platoon; D Company was formed from the three gun platoons. As an example, *Kingsmen* had the same call sign for both its slicks and its guns. Later the guns call sign changed to *Hawks*.

Company A, 101st Aviation BN, 101st Airborne was redesignated from an Assault Company to a Provisional Air Cavalry Troop on December 1, 1969, as F Troop, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry. Of the 20 UH-1H aircraft of the Assault Helicopter Company, 8 were retained to accomplish the cavalry missions and the remaining 12 were transferred to other units. In return 8 OH6A aircraft were transferred to the unit as aero scout aircraft and 9 UH1C aircraft were transferred to the unit as gunships. Then on March 10, 1970 the unit redesignated back to an Assault Company of the 101st AVN BN. During their assignment as F Troop, 2/17th Cav. they retained the Comanchero Call sign and the Comanchero Patch

On July 1, 1968 the 188th was deactivated, reorganized and redesignated as Charlie Company, 101st Aviation Battalion, 101st Air Cavalry Division. However, the term "Air Cavalry Division" was revoked by a Department of the Army directive issued on August 28, 1968, and there after, the official name was the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). C/101 replaced the 1st Aviation Brigade patch worn by the 188th AHC with the "SCREAMING EAGLE" patch of the 101st Airborne Division. The "Spiders" gun platoon became the 3rd platoon of the newly formed all gunship company, D/101...call sign Hawk. C/101 carried on the Black Widow legacy. In the spring of 1969 the C/101 Black Widows moved for the last time from LZ Sally to Phu Bai, located just south of Hue.

#3 - HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate) had the call sign *Eagle* until the 1st Brigade was joined by the rest of the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam in November 1967. Afterward, Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade used the call signs *Griffin* for the UH-1's and *Little Griffin* call sign for the OH-6A's. The *Griffin* call sign was used approximately from mid-1968 to early 1970. C Battery, 4th ARA had been using *Griffin* since 1967, therefore HHC, 1st Brigade was required to change their call sign, and they selected *Deadbone*.

## List of HHC 1BDE 101ABN Helicopters used in Vietnam

(UIC Code = WAB4AA)

Model	Tail Number	Purch. Date MMYY	Begin		Finish		Total Hours in Unit
			Unit YYMM	Begin Hours	Unit YYMM	Finish Hours	
UH-1B	62-01936	0263	6610	2066	6611	2107	41
OH-23G	62-03791	0363	6710	616	6803	649	33
UH-1B	62-12516	1063	6612	1401	6703	1502	101
OH-23G	63-12812	0564	6809	903	6812	903	0
OH-23G	63-12836	0664	6707	628	6805	917	289
OH-23G	63-12841	0764	6708	542	6806	658	116
OH-23G	63-12894	1064	6707	531	6812	844	313
UH-1H	64-13736	0765	6809	1378	6907	2162	784
UH-1B	64-13977	0365	6610	881	6703	1171	290
OH-23G	64-15173	0365	6709	648	6809	836	188
OH-23G	64-15192	0465	6707	254	6802	476	222
OH-23G	64-15244	0765	6707	586	6802	733	147
OH-13S	64-15357	0365	6610	666	6702	725	59
OH-13S	64-15373	0565	6610	933	6709	1270	337
OH-13S	64-15374	0565	6610	593	6709	998	405
OH-13S	64-15375	0565	6610	778	6702	1004	226
OH-13S	64-15424	1165	6610	263	6707	591	328
OH-13S	64-15425	1165	6610	296	6709	957	661
UH-1D	65-12894	0966	6710	934	6802	1015	81
UH-1D	66-01176	0167	6705	56	6709	342	286
OH-6A	66-07812	1067	6903	18	6906	285	267
OH-6A	66-07891	0168	7011	393	7110	983	590
OH-6A	66-07911	0168	7105	1488	7112	1993	505
OH-6A	66-07915	0168	7012	1416	7102	1531	115
UH-1C	66-15084	0467	6806	389	6807	424	35
UH-1C	66-15085	0467	6806	296	6807	296	0
UH-1D	66-16141	0367	6703	22	6712	542	520
UH-1H	66-16176	0367	6704	41	6802	137	96
UH-1H	66-16213	0367	6809	942	6812	1100	158
UH-1H	66-17105	1267	6808	82	6907	1015	933
OH-6A	66-17816	0468	6808	222	7002	1186	964
OH-6A	67-16001	0468	7007	812	7201	1974	1162
OH-6A	67-16050	0568	6909	299	7201	2274	1975
OH-6A	67-16188	0768	7105	1323	7112	1864	541
OH-6A	67-16197	0768	6908	229	7011	1076	847
OH-6A	67-16207	0768	6809	104	6903	407	303
OH-6A	67-16219	0868	6809	113	7112	1984	1871
OH-6A	67-16220	0868	6809	71	6809	71	0
OH-6A	67-16251	0868	6811	42	7007	1367	1325
OH-6A	67-16332	0968	7003	421	7104	1383	962
OH-6A	67-16375	1268	6901	33	6903	220	187
OH-6A	67-16460	1168	6901	49	6902	131	82
OH-6A	67-16466	1168	7003	982	7102	1831	849
OH-6A	67-16467	1168	6812	20	6907	608	588
OH-6A	67-16471	1168	6812	35	6812	35	0
OH-6A	67-16493	1168	7008	432	7011	692	260

OH-6A	67-16497	1168	6901	58	7006	1378	1320
OH-6A	67-16540	1268	7103	418	7112	1112	694
OH-6A	67-16611	0269	6905	89	7009	1145	1056
OH-6A	67-16627	0269	7103	745	7112	1629	884
OH-6A	67-16642	0269	6904	18	7002	817	799
UH-1H	67-19496	1168	6812	93	6910	985	892
UH-1H	67-19533	1168	6812	26	6908	847	821
UH-1H	68-15216	1268	6901	61	6911	858	797
UH-1H	68-15771	0769	6908	84	7008	1037	953
UH-1H	68-16065	0769	6908	51	7009	974	923
UH-1H	68-16165	0869	6909	51	7008	877	826
UH-1H	68-16186	0869	7009	767	7104	1408	641
UH-1H	68-16326	1069	6911	66	7012	1168	1102
UH-1H	68-16433	1169	6912	38	7007	578	540
UH-1H	68-16504	1169	7201	2015	7201	2015	0
OH-6A	68-17172	0569	7110	254	7111	346	92
OH-6A	68-17279	0869	7101	756	7112	1537	781
UH-1H	69-15500	0770	7008	38	7112	1265	1227
UH-1H	69-15550	0770	7009	69	7112	1313	1244
UH-1H	69-15719	0970	7011	67	7112	1146	1079
UH-1H	69-15903	1270	7102	68	7112	934	866
UH-1H	70-15754	0371	7105	133	7112	694	561
UH-1H	70-15832	0571	7107	123	7112	527	404

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Total helicopters = 69      Total number of hours = 38544

Note: This list only includes helicopters that were in this unit after September 1966. The primary source of this information is the U.S. Army Goldbook. Accuracy is estimated to be about 80% to 95%. This list does not include helicopters that were permanently "borrowed" from other units and not returned.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)  
Headquarters, First Infantry Brigade  
Aviation Platoon

28 July, 1970

Mr. Vaughn Bode  
c/o Cavalier Magazine  
Dugent Publishing Corp.  
145 East 49th Street  
New York, N. Y. 10017

Dear Mr. Bode:

Last night I was lying in bed mulling over some of your latest Deadbone creations when it occurred to me that you might be interested to hear some of the far-reaching effects of which your groovy little lizard is capable.

You see, I am Platoon Leader of a Brigade Aviation Section in the 101st Airborne Division, presently residing at lovely Camp Eagle, near Hue, Viet Nam. There are 50-70 men in this platoon, depending upon the state of the war. We fly helicopters and kill an occasional NVA or two if, and when, we can find them. Several months ago we decided we should have a more distinctive name for our platoon; one which we could use as a call sign on the radio and, more important, one which would be representative of the thinking and attitudes of platoon members. Several suggestions were discussed and a vote was taken. You'll be pleased to know that Deadbone won hands down over the only serious contender, "Flying Circus".

Since then, Deadbones' fame has spread via wireless from Da Nang to the DMZ to the Laotian border. It wasn't easy at first. We were subjected to such indignities as, "Red Bone" and "Head Bone" and, most demoralizing of all, "Dead what?"; but we overcame. The Deadbone call sign is now firmly implanted within the hearts and minds of thousands of radio listeners, probably including a few NVA.

Amongst our number we have a rather frustrated artist who has very unselfishly volunteered his talents and begun decorating our "mountain" with pictures of Deadbone and his experimental pals. He has, however, a slight proportion problem. If he gets the head right, the bodies are fat and squatty. If the bodies turn out, the heads look like they should be on something else. We humbly ask your assistance. Do you have an idea for a patch which we could

have made so that we might sew them on our uniforms to further proclaim our allegiance? Is there such a thing as a Deadbone Poster and, if so, how can we get some?

Enclosed you will find \$10.00 for a one year subscription to Cavalier. Issues should be sent to the above address in care of the Deadbone Control Officer whose duties include preservation and dissemination of the contents, especially Deadbone! Your message is coming through loud and clear. Keep up the good work.

You may print this letter or any part of it, including my name and the address of our unit.

Yours truly,

E. G. Brook  
Captain, U.S. Army  
Aviation Platoon Leader

104 Medora Place  
Syracuse, New York 13207  
September 23, 1970

Dear Capt. Brock and the Whole Deadbone Platoon:

Forgive the delay. I was in the throws of creating another three pages for Cavalier. I was, in a word, astonished by your letter of July 28th. Astonished and flattered to the point of actually trying to make arrangements to visit you in Vietnam and paint lizards on your helicopters.

I got in touch with the head of the National Cartoonists Society's Show and Tour organizer, but he said I would have to join the society first then wait six or seven months, then he would send me over. He couldn't suggest any other way (I have been asked to join the society before but I'm not so much a cartoonist as a Pictographer or Picture Writer). And I couldn't enlist. Christ, I tried to get back in the service in 1964 (you'll never believe this - for helicopter pilot) but I was instructed to go collect a disability pension instead. I was in the Army in 1958 and 1959, a very sorry MP who drew lizards on guard duty...no joke.

I had thought of trying to contact a helicopter outfit in Vietnam to see if anyone wanted to mascot my lizards...thought of it as long ago as 1968. But I got awful busy and I would be foolish indeed if I made such an offer to unsympathetic ears.

So you see, my astonishment was real when I opened your letter. I called my wife and friends and publishers in New York and raved about it (Cavalier, incidently didn't open your letter, but sent it on to me here in Syracuse).

I took the letter down to New York. The publisher was impressed enough to print not only the entire letter (minus the business of subscription) but the photograph, too! It will probably be in the December or January Cavalier along with a feature about me.

Bantam Books is printing a partial collection of the 1969 Deadbone material. It will be released nationally January 1st. I'll send a copy to you in case it doesn't get into circulation there. Bantam may have use for your letter, too.

You notice the material I'm sending? The posters are of my Junkwaffel papers, written just before I "turned on", but you can't notice the difference anyway. My head was always spaced out. Man!...would I have made a hot pilot! Oh well....  
Gheech Wizard and The Machine books I did while a student at

Syracuse University...I just graduated in June after six years.

The Poem-toons I explained, are from a book I did with a writer friend (who does some of the best, funniest damn pornography I've ever read...he and his wife. I satyrized them in Deadbone's "Bean, Gerble and Porn". He and his beautiful wife write them together). With the few samples of "Puck" I really wanted to try my hand at erotic art. It's difficult to do it with taste, but fun.

It took me four years of "studying" nude models to be able to draw the broads that appear in Deadbone.

The four patch designs: I worked my ass off on these for you, selecting four from about 20 variations. These are comprehensive patch designs only, not the finished art. If you will, I'd like you to select the one (or combination) that you want. Determine the size and color for me and any other lettering you might want on it or changes to the costume, and write back to me. You can keep the patch designs. I made a copy to work from once I get the platoons' decision. I'll do a finished, ink one on paper, with a color indication overlay sheet and send it back. With it you can make your patches, a flag, make a stencil (of a copy), print it as a letterhead or a poster or use it for target practise. Have it made into tiny decals and put them on your bullets before a mission...

Any number of things to do with them.

I would like to know more about the platoon and have some more pictures. I'm sorely tempted to do a page in Deadbone about a lizard helicopter crew trying to make it with a beautiful female prisoner while on a death-defying mission over a bamboo-infested jungle. I'll call it, oddly enough "Deadbone Platoon". I'm really rather serious about it. Goddamn it, I will do it. I've been thinking about it since I got your letter. I'm supposed to start Deadbone No. 21 tomorrow (no. 19 will be in November Cavalier, No. 20 in December). Hum...damn, that would be funny. Only I don't know which patch you will select. I'll think about it. It takes me a whole day just to think up one page and get it to writing. The pages are amazingly complex and when I'm done with a set of three, I'm pretty exhausted.

Why don't you guys dream up a way to get me over there for a visit so I can paint your helicopters, helmets and guns (rifles).

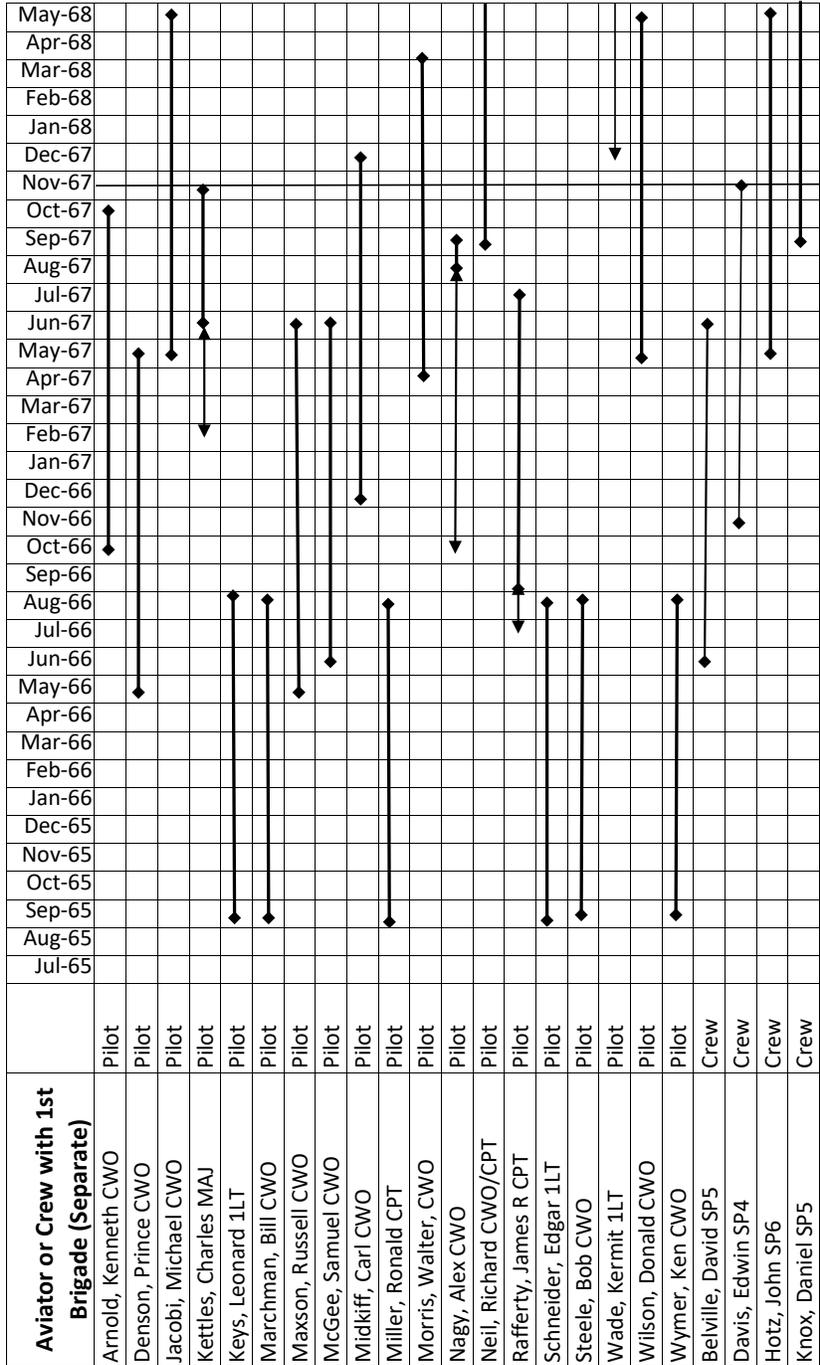
I have to split. My sexy, big-basted wife has to type this up (I wrote Tummy-touch and Tits just for her).

Write back soon, I'm anxious to know about things.

Yours,

LAUGHIN

Vietnam Tour Dates  
HHC 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division



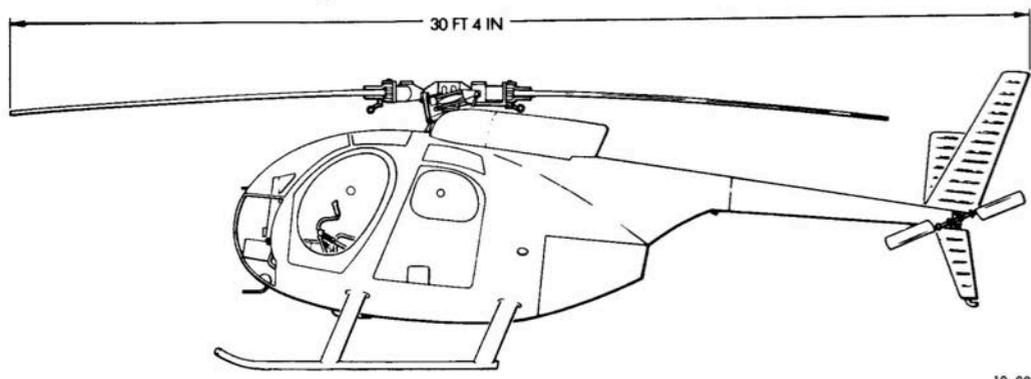
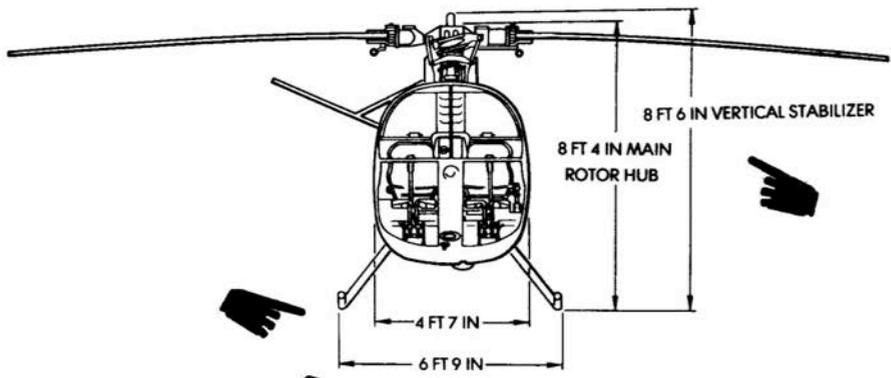
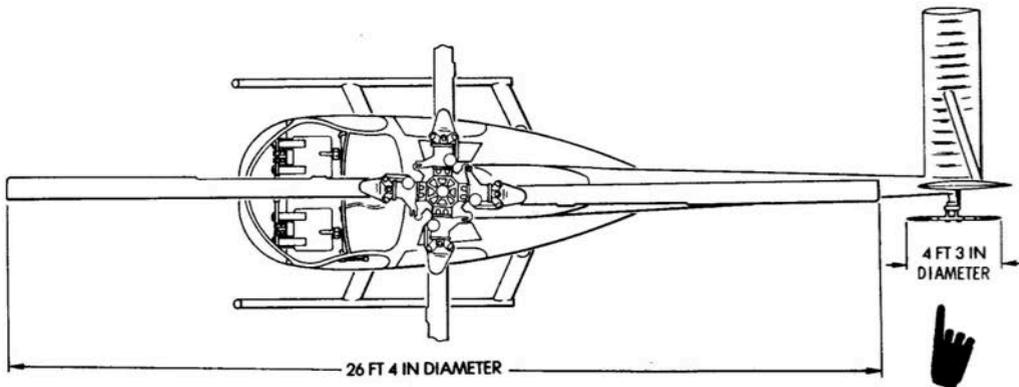
101st Airborne Division in Vietnam  
18 November 1967

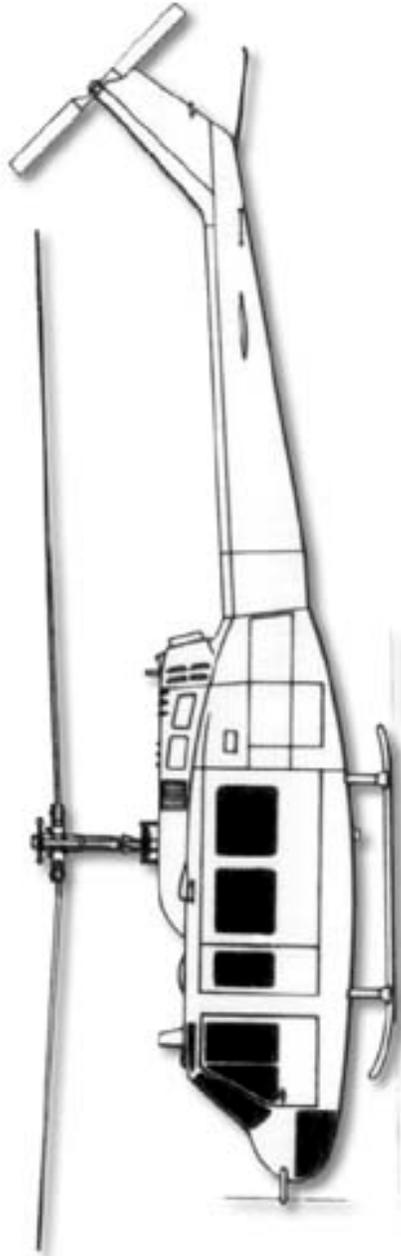
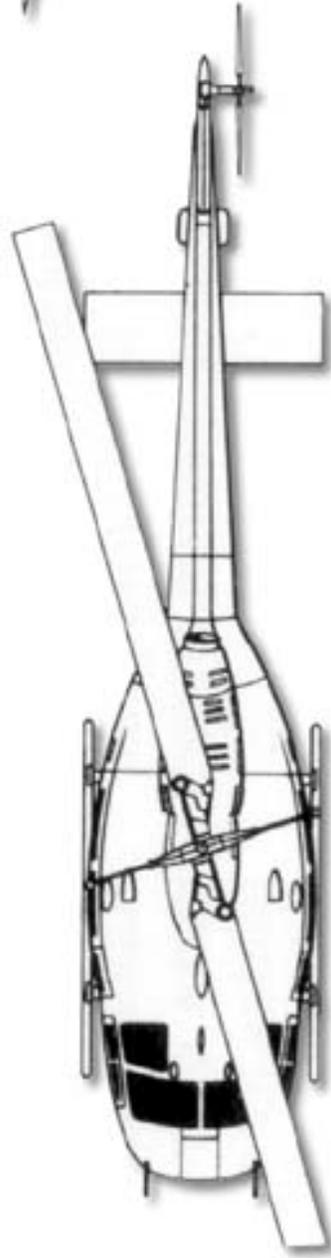
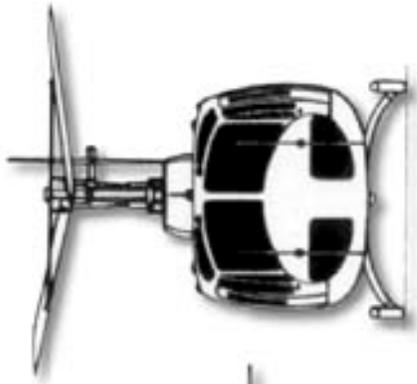
- ◆ Served with HHC, 1st Brigade (Separate) 101st Airborne Division (In Vietnam)
- Served with Aviation Platoon, HHC, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (In Vietnam)
- ↔ Served with another unit (In Vietnam)
- Killed in Action (KIA)



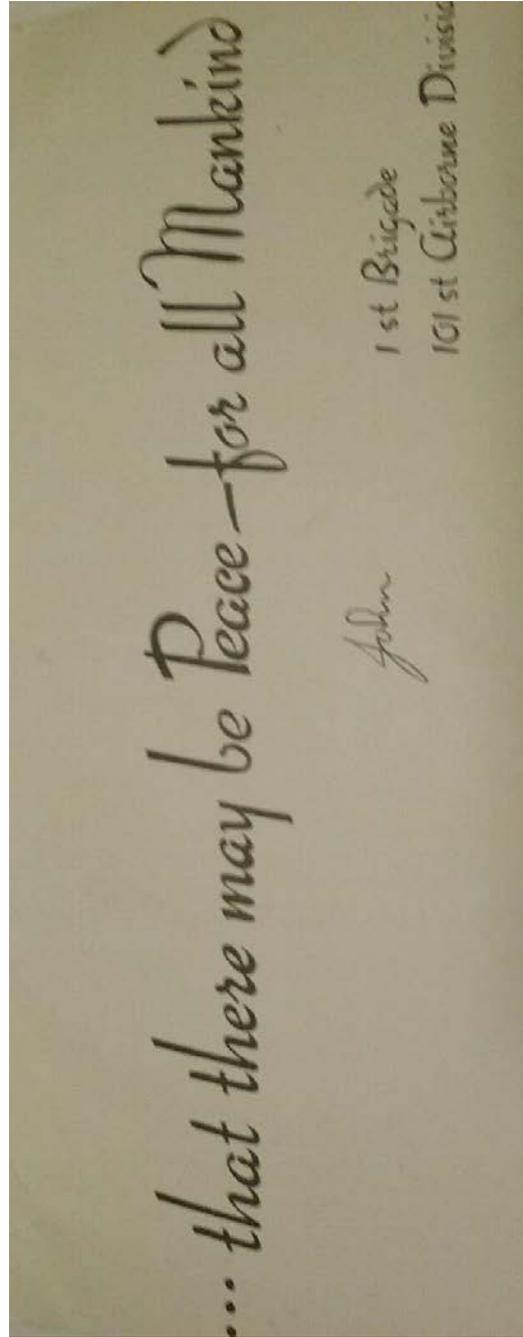
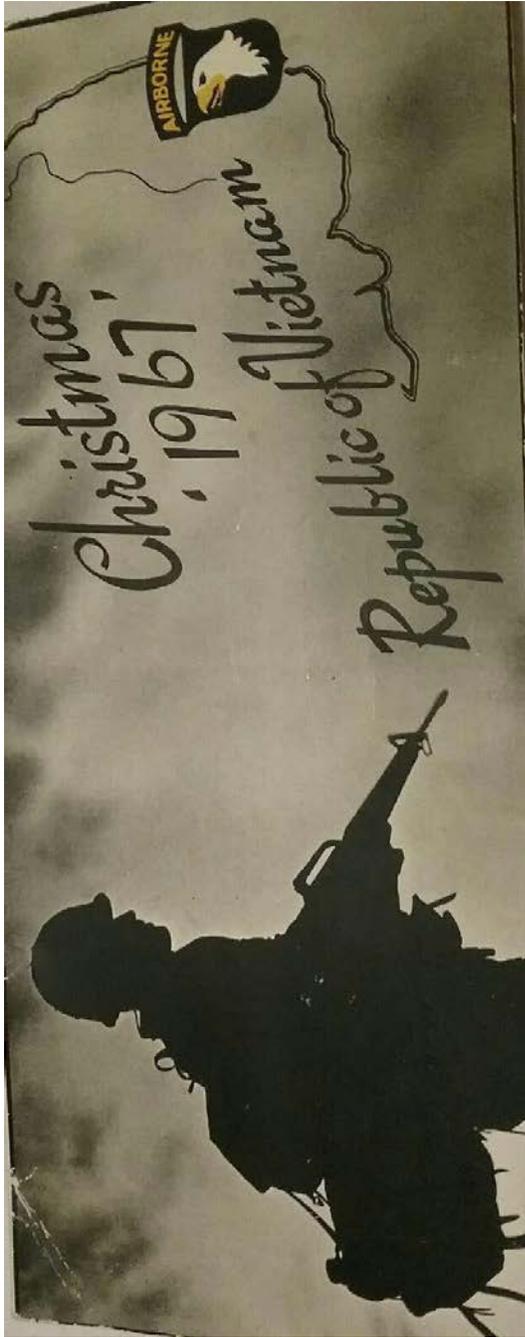








Christmas Card Given to Soldiers by the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, December 1967 – from Records of John Hotz





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