

The cover photos and history section of the 2019 VHPA Membership Directory will feature the CH-37 Mojave in Vietnam.

We believe only nine (9) US Army CH-37Bs served in Vietnam from 1963 until Apr 1966 with:

- A Flight, 1st Platoon, 19th Transportation Company
- 56th Transportation Company
- 339th Transportation Company
- 611th Transportation Company

Six (6) USMC CH-37Cs served in H&MS-16, part of MAG-16 at Marble Mountain, Da Nang from Sep 1965 until May 1967.

The Mojave document on this web page is the first 11 pages of a 128-page booklet prepared by VHPA Subscribers Scott Drew (SP5 with the 56th TC for 2 ½ years) and John Jones (an aviation researcher and writer who lives in England). The web document serves as a “taste” of what will appear in VHPA Directory.

If you flew or crewed or worked with a CH-37 in Vietnam or have a good “war story” experience with one in Vietnam, please contact Scott at 707-350-1141 (lives outside of Sacramento, CA) or swdrew@att.net.

Please don't delay contacting Scott, because the 2019 Directory material will be finalized by 15 August 2019.

While we have lots of CH-37 pictures, we could always use more. Your “I was there and remember ...” accounts are MOST VALUABLE to us.

Questions or comments about getting a history published in future VHPA Directories can be directed to Gary Roush or Mike Law at 830-730-0950 or calendar@vhpa.org.



A Flight, 1st Plt, 19th Transportation Co.
 56th Transportation Company (DS)
 611th Transportation Company (DS)
 339th Transportation Company (DS)
 1963 --- 1966



Foreward by Scott J Drew



" 'Bad News' is depicted by the pregnant young gal...but really named for the condition of that aircraft when we got it. The tail boom was tweaked and had to be replaced. How that happened I don't know, maybe in transit to Viet Nam on the ship. We had a hard time locating one and finally found one that the Marine Corps had somewhere. So "Bad News", which was tail number 58-1004 was not flyable for quite a long time.



"Slave Driver" was aptly named after both its normal pilot a CWO 3 Royce Raley (RIP) who hailed from Texas and resembled Clark Gable. He was a hard man to please. And the Flight Engineer on "Slave Driver" was SP/6 Carter. He was a task master and drove that entire company of CH-37 folks very hard to perform up to the task. So "Slave Driver" was named because of those two men, probably mostly Carter.

A special thank you to Willard Honjiyo, the last crew chief of 'Slave driver', for presenting 2 very nice pictures, of his aircrafts markings.

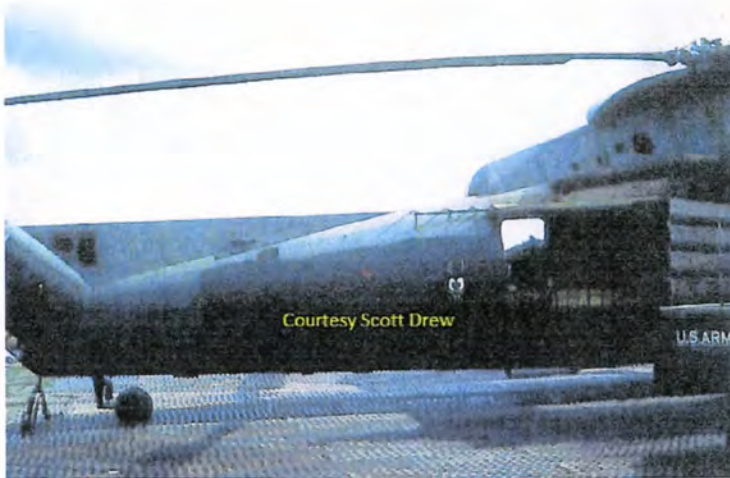
assigned to the 339th. The second 37 was blown up by VC sappers at Da Lat in the middle of the night. I don't remember where I got that one. Or which unit or when. The 3rd 37 was 611" **Ray Semora**

On December 12, 1963, a U.S. Army heavy-lift helicopter CH-37B Mojave (tail number 55-00627) from the 611st Transportation Company was attempting to recover a downed U.S. helicopter when it was hit by enemy ground fire causing the aircraft to crash and burn. The ground fire hit the cockpit area as the crew was attempting to sling load the downed helicopter in the Mekong River delta in Tuong Dinh Province, South Vietnam. Four crewmen were killed in the attack. They included aircraft commander CW2 William E. Flowers, pilot 1LT Ronny L. Woodmansee, flight engineer **SP5 Marshall J. Angell**, and gunner PFC Newman R. Nesmith. The crew chief, E4 CS Albro, survived with injuries. The other crewmen's remains were recovered except for Angell. A thorough search of the aircraft and surrounding area was conducted. It was ultimately surmised by those conducting the search that Angell was either consumed by the fire on board the aircraft or that he sank into the marshy ground surrounding the crash site. This was the only operational loss of a CH-37 during the Vietnam War.



'Slave Driver' in the foreground.





Although local ground forces and escorts ships, managed to restrict the bad guys to pot shots. They only had to get lucky once, to cause a a major loss of life. The highest of the war for CH37's, is quoted below from remembrances and the official report at the time. "As far as I know, 3 CH-37s were lost.. 1 in 1963 assigned to 611th. After recovering a downed Mohawk, it was apparently hit in the cockpit and the aircraft crashed. One of the surviving gunners said he saw white smoke pouring from the cockpit. There were 3 fatalities; AC, P and CC. The first part was told to me when I was assigned to the 611th before being re-



As mentioned in the previous posting, 'Cherry boy' had to go, so the search for a new nickname began. The lineage for 'Slave Driver' and 'Bad News' are known and I will relate those shortly, but 'Wooly Booger' is lost to time. Scotts 1st thoughts were:

"Not sure where the name "Wooly Booger" came from, but there was a popular song going around from the group "Sam The Sham and The Pharos" that were singing a song called "Wooly Bully". Some of the bars down on Tu Do Street in Saigon would play the latest music to get the guys into their bars, and that album was quite popular at the time." (1965) But because the name is an obscure reference to a sort of taxidermy, it could be a crew member who was a hunter had the song going around in his head and certainly the, artwork seems to match. Via Google: At some point in the history of Taxidermy a taxidermist was mounting deer heads and realized that he was throwing away way to many deer butts. This theoretical situation gave birth to what is commonly known in Taxidermy circles as the "Wooly Booger", also known as the "Assquatch". The Assquatch is what is created when a Taxidermist uses the ass end of an animal in order to create a human-like monster face. Pictured is 57-1658, with a new flat matt OD paint scheme, to replace the previous high visibility markings. Also featured, this ships Crew Chief

John Druchala.



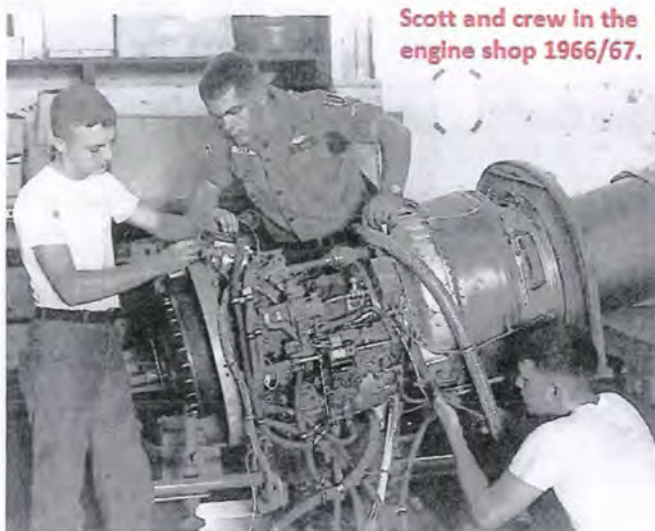


More great recollections and Images from Scott.

"The Company was preparing to head out to Viet Nam, so I helped pack up all of our stuff and on 14 October, 1964 the entire company flew out of McChord Air Force Base on three (3) then new C-141 Starlifter aircraft. A fuel stop in Hawaii, then landing at the Bien Hoa Airbase in the Republic of Viet Nam. That was the check in location at that time in the war. After some indoctrination on how to take care of ourselves in the war zone, the offices selected about 1/3 of the Company personnel to stay with the Company, and the rest were farmed out to other similar companies so that our rotation dates home would all be different. Scott stayed with the company and set up shop at Tan Son Nhut Airport. The 56th was one of 3 units fitted out with CH37's, the others being the 611th and 339th.

"The helicopter is a Sikorsky S-56 that the Army labeled the CH-37, A,B, and C models were built and flown by both the Army & the Marines. Our 3 tail numbers were. (57-1658 (Cherry boy /Wooly Booger, 57-1659 Slave Driver, and 58-1004 Bad News) Here an early shot of 57-1658 "Cherry Boy" slinging a UH-1 hulk down to Vung Tau. The Old Man didn't like that nose art so it was changed to "Wooly Booger" a bit later"



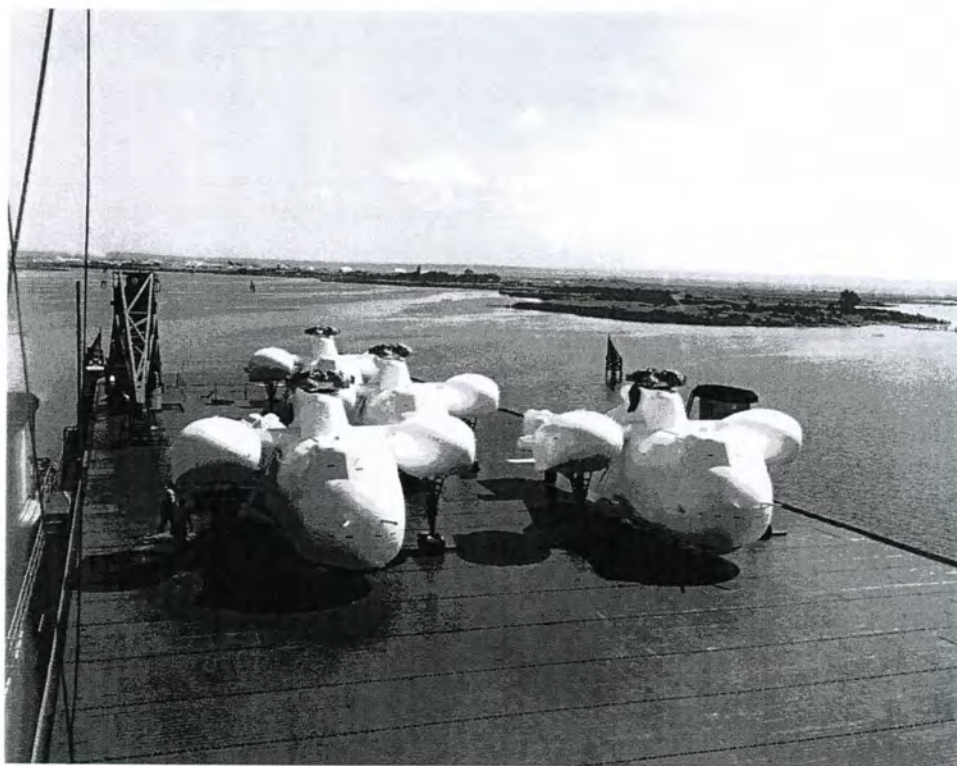
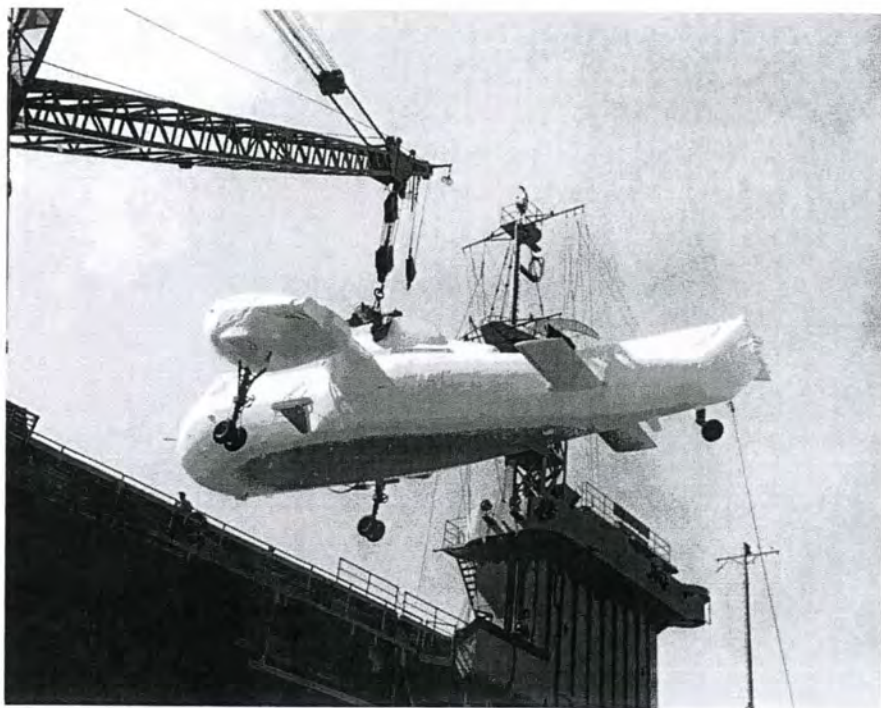


Scott and crew in the engine shop 1966/67.

Through a veteran friend, I was recently connected up with a Vietnam era veteran of an early war period, Aviation DS company. Scott has been very generous with his archive, which provides some valuable recollections of this units operations and some superb photographic evidence, of early aircraft markings and cloth insignia. I will release this in a measured way in the coming weeks, but 1st the story of how Scott made it to Vietnam, in his own words.

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"I graduated from Fort Bragg High School in June of 1963 and enlisted in the Army a week later. I was only 17 at the time so needed a permission slip from my parents...Can't do that any longer, need to be at least 18 now. I went to basic training at Ft. Ord, California, then around the end of August that year went to my helicopter maintenance school in Ft. Eustis, VA. I think the school was about 9 or 10 months long. Upon graduation they kept the top ten out of the class, and turned us into instructors there at the school. Viet Nam was just starting to pick up and they knew that they would need a lot of mechanics and crew chiefs so were building up their training cadre. It was fun for a while, learning how to write lesson plans, doing overhead viewgraphs for your visuals, writing tests. But after a few times teaching the turbine engine portion of the training I was getting bored. And still had about two years to go on my first enlistment. I asked a recruiter how a guy could get out of that teaching job, he said "Well son, you either finish our your enlistment, die, or you can re-enlist and pick either a duty station or an MOS change..." So after being in the Army for a year I re-enlisted for another three years and picked Viet Nam as my duty station. After all that's where all of the helicopter action was starting to be and I wanted to be part of that. Found out that there was a maintenance company getting ready to leave for Viet Nam. So in late August I drove across Country and reported in to the 56th Transportation Company (Aircraft Direct Support) at Ft. Lewis, WA."





"CH37's receiving weather proof protection, before sea bound transportation, to overseas assignments".







Foreward

"Like I have mentioned many times, if you were setting up an aircraft recovery operation today, and were looking for an aircraft to do the heavy lifting work, you certainly wouldn't select the Sikorsky S-56, which the US Army designated the CH-37 Mojave. With its two Pratt and Whitney R-2800 piston engines it certainly wouldn't be your aircraft of choice. But I'll tell you something...those aircraft had "soul". They had a life inside of them that they shared with those of us who worked on and flew in them. Doing the mission that we all knew was well above what they should be doing. But they were all we had at that time, and we made them work. It is a testament to the pilots who flew them and the mechanics and crew who maintained them that only three were lost during the Viet Nam War. No matter how you look at it, that is an amazing record for an aircraft that shouldn't have been able to do what it was asked to do. But they did that job and did it well. I have mentioned in other writings that it took somewhere around 30 hours of maintenance for each hour of flight. One of the highest aircraft maintenance to flight hour records. Compare that to the current C-17 "Globemaster III" aircraft of today that takes 4 to 5 hours of maintenance for each flight hour. Two 18 cylinder radial engines, two spark plugs per cylinder, 36 spark plugs per engine; some in really tough places to get at and change. Each engine having a 55 gallon oil tank. Yes, 55 GALLON!! Each engine consuming 20 to 30 gallons of oil for each mission flown.

The starting routine and main rotor engagement process being something that will live with all of us until we pass on...The smell of AeroShell 50W oil burning in the lower cylinders when she first fires up and starts to come to life. The sharp smell of 115/145 Aviation Fuel when you are standing behind the engines with the fire bottle. Those two fire breathing 18 cylinder engines coming to life in a large cloud of blue oil smoke, the shaking of the airframe, at first the uneven rattle of the exhaust note from the two augmentor tubes on each engine nacelle that shortly smooths out and gives you the confidence that they are ready to take you into battle. And bring you back home. When both engines are running smoothly, the cylinder head and oil temps are in the green, the pilot flips the switch to start pumping oil into each of the engines fluid clutches. And the main and tail rotor begin to turn... The pilot brings the engine RPM up to around 2000 RPM then chops the throttle. The two mechanical clutches do their positive engagement and the pilot continues to run up the engines until the main rotor is at its operating RPM. The Crew Chief on the ground taps his head with his finger tips and points both thumbs outward. The droop stops are out. And the mission begins...

Those who haven't flown a large, lumbering machine like these into battle just won't understand the attachment the crew has with them. The two fire breathing 18 cylinder engines, the fuselage panels and parts of aluminum, steel, and magnesium that form her body; the miles of electrical wiring and hydraulic lines that bring her to life. The symphony of those two fire breathing engines that say "We can do this!" And she always brings you back. Always. It is a bond that you have with her. I feel blessed that I was able to serve on these aircraft during that war. She truly was the last of her breed. We made our mark Brothers...And the aircraft that we served on certainly made her mark in Army Aviation history. I thank all who served on those aircraft". We done good boys...

SP/5 Scott J Drew 56th Transportation Company (Aircraft Direct Support)

