

Open Invitation: VHPA Writers 2025
Tom Morrissey, CW3, 117th AHC

We actually did it. We were there. Get it on paper. The VHPA Writers Group. We will meet again, no pun intended. We have two gatherings scheduled for the 2025 Reunion and I know that I am looking forward to our time together. With the advent of AI, ChatGPT, CoPilot and seemingly limitless other forms of Artificial Intelligence, we need to think even more seriously about getting our recollections (imagined or otherwise) on paper and into the archive. It could mean something to someone someday. Maybe not.

So, I decided this morning to ask CoPilot to “write three sentences describing a combat assault in Vietnam War from the helicopter pilot's point of view.” Within less than a second, it spit out this:

“The whirl of the rotor blades filled my ears as we descended into the hot zone, my heart pounding in sync with the chopper's rhythm. Below, the dense jungle came alive with muzzle flashes and explosions, the ground a chaotic tapestry of warfare. I gripped the controls tightly, navigating the smoke and chaos to deliver troops and supplies, knowing every second counted for the men on the ground.”

Houston, we have a problem. And, in the first place, I don't recall “gripping” the cyclic. More a gentle touch as I recall... anyway, we are being “troped” and it bothers me immensely. I don't know about you, but I'll be 77 when I next see you. I've been revisiting some old books by Tim O'Brian, Bob Mason Michael Herr and others. The ones written by hand. Makes me feel a bit melancholic while they strike deep chords within me. Maybe a bit like I'm facing a creative log-jam. I mean, we have so much more to say, to pass along to future generations than some artificial intelligence app spewing generic garbage like that don't we?

You have to love Kurt Vonnegut Jr. who once said: “We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.” (Or what we allow AI to pretend we are). What we write doesn't need to be accurate. Who gives a crap if the names dates and places are all correct? (Well, historians do/should... I guess.) Just write it down. Dictate it. If you need your batteries recharged, replaced or even installed for the first time, you need to come to one or both of our events. Visual artists and musicians invited as well. Who knows, “We may never meet again.”

We plan to also have space in the vendors area where books etc can be displayed and sold. While we are a motley crew, nothing's been stolen yet! For information, email me: PilotAuthor@gmail.com

So, bring your work, ideas, your thoughts (even thoughts you haven't had yet) and show up. The party is for those who attend, which reminds me: I want to welcome Tracy Smith Mathis, author/speaker. She is an ambassador with the Military Writers Society. An organization we should all be familiar with. She plans to join us in our conversation. We have no agenda, just an opportunity to make friends and find that all important motivation that we often find missing. I know I put mine around here somewhere...

“And so it goes...” — Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five