



# The Straphanger Gazette



Volume 3 Issue 2

Find us on the web @<http://www.aerial-rocket-artillery.org>

Oct., Nov., Dec., 2010



**“Aerial Rocket Artillery”....when called on by those who were in danger, our units were there laying it on the line.**

We were proud of our Aerial Rocket Artillery Team then and still proud of it now. The Straphanger Gazette is a quarterly publication of the Aerial Rocket Artillery Association. Issues will be published on or about the 1st of January, April, July and October. Members who have e-mail will receive a copy as an pdf attachment. A copy can also be obtained from the “members only” section on the web site.



## *President's Corner*

Hard to believe that another quarter has passed and that we are publishing another issue of the newsletter. Since I'm wearing two hats at this time – President and Reunion Co-Chair with Ray Hatfield, I will be addressing several topics. First, we will get out the Operations Order for Reunion 2011.

## **AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION**

### **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion – Charleston, SC**

### **“OPERATION GRIFFIN”**

#### **MISSION:**

The Aerial Rocket Artillery Association will assault, subdue and occupy the city of Charleston, SC and other selected local targets. Operation will commence at/about 1500 hours on 18 May 2011 and will terminate 22 May 2011.

#### **TASK FORCE ORGANIZATION:**

Main assault force will consist of elements of D/2/42<sup>nd</sup> Arty, 3/377<sup>th</sup> Arty, 2/20<sup>th</sup> Arty, 4/77<sup>th</sup> Arty, F/77<sup>th</sup> Arty, and F/79<sup>th</sup> Arty. Direct Support will be provided by friendly local civilians. General support will be provided by camp followers (wives, girlfriends, children, grandchildren, etc). Reserve forces, if available and willing to participate, will consist of Associate/Honorary Member Groups.

#### **CONCEPT OF OPERATION:**

**Day 1, Wednesday, May 18, 2011**

Members of the above named units will infiltrate the area disguised as elderly civilians/tourists. Accompaniment by camp followers will aid in this deception. Initial assembly point will be **Best Western Downtown Inn**. Advance party will be on hand to direct units to battery parking areas, quarters and ration points. Local partisans, disguised as desk clerks, cooks, bartenders, etc. will assist in the provision of shelter, food and/or liquid refreshments. After sign in and briefing, members may participate in individual/group reconnaissance missions of local area to determine presence of local paramilitary forces (also known as police, white mice and various other names) and their patrol habits. Partaking of evening meal on the economy will be good cover for these activities. Troops may eat at various establishments to determine which provide best rations and drinks. Payment in locally accepted currency will insure that locals remain friendly. Note: Since we will be lacking organic aircraft, vehicles, weapons, uniforms, etc. reconnaissance missions will be conducted in a clandestine manner. Members may then retire to hotel to prepare for next

day's mission. Members may assemble in Hotel Lounge or Hospitality Suite for camaraderie and exchanging war stories.

**Day 2, Thursday, May 19, 2011**

Assault forces will assemble in parking lot at/about 0830 hours for movement to first objective – Patriots Point at Mt. Pleasant, SC. Upon arrival at objective, assault force will be required to subdue a VC (Visitors Center) check point. As previously stated, we lack necessary TO&E gear, therefore, in order to avoid unnecessary violence and bloodshed, it will be necessary to bribe VC personnel on duty with locally accepted currency. Assault force will then perform reconnaissance of the harbor area (Maritime Museum) and adjacent fortified area (Navy Riverine Base). Noon meal may be taken on board friendly vessel, USS Yorktown, or at local eating establishments. At/about 1530 assault force will board vessel(s) for reconnaissance of fortified position in Charleston Harbor known as Fort Sumter. Operation will terminate at/about 1815 hours and troops will retire to initial staging area. Field ration mess located at hotel will provide evening meal consisting of local fare (frogmore stew and barbeque). Mess hours are from 1900 – 2030 hours. Members may again retire to lounge area or to hospitality suite to drink and tell war stories.

**Day 2, Friday, May 20, 2011**

Assault forces will assemble at/about 0830 hours movement to Confederate Submarine Base for briefing and visual inspection of C.L. Hunley (world's first successful combat submarine). At/about 1200 hours assault force will be released from assigned missions and granted individual/group R & R Privileges (free time). Members may consult captured documents (2011 Charleston, SC Visitors Guide, maps, brochures, etc) in briefing area to determine points of interest. Upon completion of daily missions members may again retire to lounge area or to hospitality suite to drink and tell war stories.

**Day 3, Saturday, May 21, 2011**

Assault forces will assemble at/about 0830 hours for movement to Middleton Place Plantation. This will be a reconnaissance of a fully restored Pre-Civil War Plantation. At/about 1300 hours the Command and Control Group (AKA Board of Directors) will hold staff conference and at/about 1400 all regular members of the assault force will assemble for debriefing of past years activities and planning of coming years activities. All other personnel are granted R & R Privileges (free time). At/about 1800 hours assault force will assemble for movement to site of Farewell Celebration (Hangar Bay 3 and/or Fantail of USS Yorktown) (Menu TBA). Final debriefing to take place at this time/location.

**Day 4, Sunday, May 22, 2011**

Assault force will exfiltrate area and return to home base(s) to await further assignment(s). After action report (Newsletter) will be compiled and e-mailed/snail mailed to all members of Association on/about July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**LOGISTICAL ANNEX:**

**Quarters:** Best Western Downtown Inn, 140 Lockwood Drive (Blvd), Charleston, SC 29402. Rates and Promo Code - TBA.

**Rations:** Meals will be catered on Thursday and Saturday evenings. Members may partake of all other meals at places of own choosing. List of recommended eating establishments and directions will be posted in briefing area.

**Transportation:** Movement in local area will be via POV. This is due to close proximity of all areas

of interest. Alternate method of transportation is via trolley. Stop is located within walking distance of quarters (120 yards). Four routes cover all of Charleston. All day fare is \$5.00 per person. Schedules will be posted in briefing area.

**SIGNAL ANNEX:** Primary means of communication will be via landline and cell phone. Request that everyone provide cell phone number when registering for reunion. We do not want to lose anyone due to communication failure.

**Phone numbers of hotel: 1-843-722-4000/1-800-377-2121. Promo Code - TBA.**

**Phone numbers of C&C Group: Initial contacts will be Jesse Hobby 229-378-2281 (home), 229-378-0661 (cell), and Ray Hatfield 843-884-3961 (home) 828-385-6246 (cell). Remainder of C & C Group - TBA.**

**Phone numbers of personnel in assault force: TBA**

For Everyone's Eyes.

Jesse Hobby, ARA 6

The Operations Order is a humorous attempt to promote the upcoming reunion. As stated in the last newsletter we expected to have the reunion website up and running by the first of October and to have the schedule of events posted in the October Newsletter. There is some final coordination to be made this month and Ray and I will be also presenting the reunion package to the Board of Directors second weekend of October. After approval by the BOD we will run a special edition of the newsletter for the reunion and have full activation of the website on/about 1 November 2010.

P.S. If anyone wants to know what frogmore stew is please call me.

Now I'll move on to another subject for the benefit of all who were not at this year's reunion. Since it concerns our financial status I feel that everyone should be informed.

At the General Membership meeting the question was raised as to whether or not the Association was running out of money. At that time I told those present that it was not and would not in the foreseeable future if managed properly. I brought up that we have funds that should be designated as "Life Membership Reserve," that is monies paid by members for Life Membership. Members present at Bozeman voted to establish the Life Membership Reserve with monies left in the Association Bank Account following reunion 2008 (for year groups 1997 – 2007) and the monies paid in by Life Membership Groups 2010, 2009 and 2008.

Our Treasurer, Larry Mobley, and I have done an in depth analysis of our finances and have determined that these funds, of which there are approximately \$9400.00, should be put on a drawdown schedule (adjusted for each year group) and should last until the year 2022 based on the current number of Life Members. The amount to be drawn down each year will be combined with monies paid by those members who choose to renew on an annual basis and the combined total will provide the operating funds for a given year. "ASSUMING" that we maintain at least fifty (50) members who renew on an annual basis and that these monies are properly managed by this and succeeding Boards of Directors, we can maintain an operating budget of approximately \$2000.00 per year until 2018. After that the amount of funds to operate the Association will begin to decline. It stands to reason that increasing membership (Life Membership or Annual Renewal) is the key to long term survival of the Association. The alternative may be to increase annual dues to build cash reserves. These will be items for discussion at the General Membership Meeting in Charleston in 2011.

It should be noted that there are no records showing how Life Membership Funds were handled prior to 2008. It is assumed that they were drawn down in some manner since the monies remaining after Reunion 2008 approximately equaled what should have been the balance on hand for Life Membership year groups 1997 - 2007.

## Contact information for Board of Directors

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PLEASE ADD US TO YOUR CONTACTS LIST!

Jesse Hobby

ARA 6

## Vice President's Comments

*"Things are looking good"*

In my last conversation with Jesse, I was pleased to hear that we are continuing to grow in numbers, as well as in spirit! During the reunion in Bozeman, Montana, I noticed a distinct rise in the overall morale of the Association Members who had gathered as we shared our experiences, both with and since ARA. We shared our family accomplishments, our travels, and our hopes for the future. We became a tighter family unit than ever before! I did not want to leave that mountaintop experience. Like the disciple, Peter, I wanted to capture the moment on the Mount of Transfiguration!

Now that we are planning for the next reunion, I learned that our membership is increasing at never before seen rates. Our life members are growing and our new annual renewals are climbing at an accelerated rate. This is "Good News."

As I urged all members in the Chaplain's Corner, "Staying with the Game Plan," let us all mark our calendars now for **May 18-22, 2010**, for the **2011 ARA Reunion in Charleston, SC**, where **History** was made and where **History lives**. There, we will visit Fort Sumter, tour Patriot's Point and dine on the USS Yorktown, walk through either the Gardens of the Middleton Plantation or the Boone Hall Plantation, or both, if you so choose, and just enjoy the great low country cuisine. These are exciting times and I invite all ARA veterans to get on board this trail which is leading to a place where our history as a nation was definitely impacted.

As you probably can readily determine, we are scheduling reunions recommended and approved by the general membership of the Association where a member has volunteered to host. We have landed at Tampa, Orlando, Fort Rucker, Midland, TX, Bozeman, and now Charleston, SC (2011), and then Portland, Oregon (2012), and possibly Hershey, PA in 2013. Come join a unified group of your friends and see for yourself what a difference being a member can make.

Plan now, pay later. Hope to see you in Charleston!

Bruce Wilder

Vice President

**NOTICE: Association membership is on a calendar year basis. If you have not re-up'd by 1/31/11 you have "expired". Send your dues in now and beat the rush!**

## A PAGE FROM OUR HISTORY

The “Griffin” was the longest serving symbol of the Aerial Rocket Artillery but how many know how he originally came into being? He is a legendary creature having the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. The eagle is considered the “King of the Air” and the lion is the “King of the Beasts.”

The “Griffin” is also depicted on the Coat of Arms of the 377<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment. The eagle alludes to the organization having served with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne (Screaming Eagles) Division during World War II and the lion to England, where it underwent training and from whence it launched the invasion of Normandy, France, impaled on the trident, and arrowhead and orange flames (orange is the color of the Netherlands). The red and blue shield, suggested by the coat of arms of Bastogne, and has been “surrounded by” a green mound, and a white parachute with the cannon attached is symbolic of the airborne functions of the organization.



The 11<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Division is activated at Fort Benning, Georgia to develop, and put into practice the concept of airmobility. In February of that year “D” Battery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 42<sup>nd</sup> Artillery is activated and designated as an Aerial Rocket Artillery Battery (Provisional). It is short lived and is quickly followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (ARA), 377<sup>th</sup> Artillery and the “Griffin,” now detached from the coat of arms and depicted as the symbol of the Aerial Rocket Artillery, appears on aircraft and pocket patches. His trident is replaced by a lightning bolt to symbolize artillery and his red and blue shield is deleted. Fast forward again to June/ July 1965 and the 3/377 is deactivated and is re-flagged as 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (ARA), 20<sup>th</sup> Artillery, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and deploys to the Republic of Vietnam in August. The “Griffin” now has a 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Patch in place of the red and blue shield. He will serve with the 2/20<sup>th</sup> until mid-1968 when the unit adopts the “Blue Max” as its symbol.

And now, fast forward to 1963 – Fort Benning, Georgia to formulate, airmobility. In February of that year “D” Battery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 42<sup>nd</sup> Artillery is activated and designated as an Aerial Rocket Artillery Battery (Provisional). It is short lived and is quickly followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (ARA), 377<sup>th</sup> Artillery and the “Griffin,” now detached from the coat of arms and depicted as the symbol of the Aerial Rocket Artillery, appears on aircraft and pocket patches. His trident is replaced by a lightning bolt to symbolize artillery and his red and blue shield is deleted. Fast forward again to June/ July 1965 and the 3/377 is deactivated and is re-flagged as 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (ARA), 20<sup>th</sup> Artillery, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and deploys to the Republic of Vietnam in August. The “Griffin” now has a 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Patch in place of the red and blue shield. He will serve with the 2/20<sup>th</sup> until mid-1968 when the unit adopts the “Blue Max” as its symbol.



At about this time the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (ARA), 77<sup>th</sup> Artillery, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was activated and “C” Battery adopted the “Griffin” as their symbol, giving him a 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Patch. He continued to serve with “C” Battery until the 101<sup>st</sup> departed RVN. It is not known if he continued to serve until deactivation of 4/77<sup>th</sup> sometime in 1977.



It is interesting to note that the “Griffin” made a full circle, having served with the 377<sup>th</sup> Artillery, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in World War II, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (ARA), 377<sup>th</sup> Artillery, 11<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Division and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (ARA), 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division before returning to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to serve with the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (ARA), 77<sup>th</sup> Artillery.

**Additional note:** Despite extensive research no examples of the “Griffin” patches worn by 3/377/11AAD could be found. If anyone has a patch or a picture of it the Historical Committee would greatly appreciate a copy.

George Govignon  
 Historical Committee Chairman  
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## MEMORIES OF ANOTHER TIME AND PLACE

### A Battery Pilots in Mess Tent – Late 1965



Left – front to rear – Dennis Cox (DAT),  
Jesse Hobby, Eugene Capner, Chuck Eldreth.

Right – front to rear Robert Arnold  
(KIA 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour), William Goodspeed  
(KIA 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour), Robert L. Roth

Photo by Ray Hatfield 3/A/2/20<sup>th</sup> 65-66



A Battery personnel erecting GP Medium shortly  
after arrival at An Khe (Sept 1965)

### ARA at Phan Thiet – early 1967

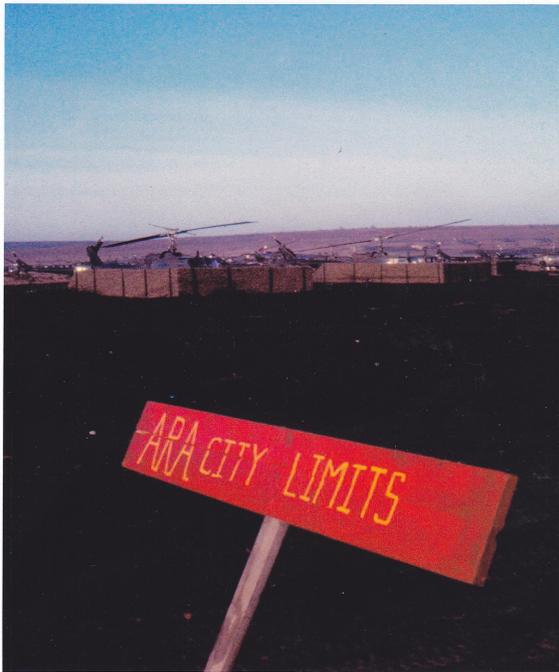


Photo by Cecil Hengeveld

*Editor's Plea: Please send us your pictures and your  
stories. This is not the 2/20th newsletter!*



WO Cecil Hengeveld at LZ English 1967

### Awards Ceremony – An Khe



Left – LTCOL Morris Brady 3<sup>rd</sup> from right – CPT  
Schmidt Far Right – WO Ray Hatfield  
Don't know who the others are or who took picture

# Ladies of the Association

My husband reminded me that it was time for another article for the "Straphanger." Time really flies when you're having fun – also when you're taking care of the house, yard, cars, grandchildren, and getting ready for another reunion, but those are other stories.

Jesse has an old, out of print book entitled "Indian Fighting Army" which covers the actions of the Army on the frontier from the end of the Civil War (1865) to the last Indian uprising (1905). There was one chapter entitled "They Also Served" and this was a short account of the wives of soldiers during the same period. I thought it would be interesting to compare and contrast their lives to our lives as we followed our husbands throughout their careers.

Most of the U.S. Army was stationed on the western frontier during the "Indian Wars" and you followed your husband or endured years of separation. When ordered to some distant Army Post, the husband went first and the wives and children followed some time later, usually when quarters became available. Getting there was a real challenge, since the most modern modes of transportation were railroads and steamboats. At some point it became stagecoach and/or army wagon/ambulance. Accommodations along the way could range from "relatively nice" hotels in the east to "sleazy" western hotels with rooms above the bar or saloon to tents and cots or simply a bedroll on the ground. Meals were of dubious quality and often consisted of Army fare (whatever the troops were eating).

Upon arrival at the husband's duty station, after weeks or even months of travel, the wife found that quarters were assigned by rank and in true Army fashion the lower your rank, the more inadequate your quarters. Most of the time it was one room and a kitchen and was sparsely furnished with whatever the Post Quartermaster could provide. (It is interesting to note that you could also be "ranked" out of your quarters when a more senior person arrived on the post.) One was also provided medical attendance, fuel (for stoves, lanterns, fireplace, etc.), fodder for two horses, and transportation "as necessary for the service." Bathing was done in a galvanized tub and outhouses served for the other functions. Rations from the commissary, mostly staples, were lacking in quality, quantity, and variety and consisted mostly of canned and dried goods. Fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, eggs, etc. were scarce and the issued meats were tough and stringy. Game from the prairie or forests and streams often rounded out the menu.

Wives, like husbands, endured the blistering heat of Arizona or Texas in the summer or the sub-zero temperatures of Montana in the winter. Loneliness and boredom were also the order of the day, as the troops could be absent for months at a time on campaign. Education for children was sparse at best and most were sent back East as they got older. Danger was always present and wives were taught to handle firearms for self defense, whether against Indians or wild animals. It was not un-

usual for the women to be issued weapons for defense of an undermanned post during hostilities. In this time of almost constant conflict the likelihood of becoming a widow was always a very real possibility. The annihilation of Custer and a third of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry at the Little Big Horn in 1876 widowed 26 women at Fort Abraham Lincoln.

And now I think about what we, as Army Wives, "endured" in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Most of the time we could accompany our husbands to a new duty station, travelling by car or airplane or, in some cases, train or ship. Our time in transit was usually a few days instead of weeks or months. We sometimes moved our own household goods but most of the time the government did it for us. When we arrived we were assigned quarters by rank, "Field Grade, Company Grade, NCO, Enlisted" but for the most part they were adequate and standard. Depending on where, we were they were air conditioned and/or heated. We had modern commissaries where we could purchase a wide variety of products both foreign and domestic. Post exchanges were available as well as any number of shopping centers in the local area. Modern medical facilities took care of our families. Our children could attend school on or off post, depending on location. We could take vacations to wherever we wanted to go (or could afford) via modern modes of transportation. Danger for us was pretty much non-existent. The worst situations involved hardship tours where we could not accompany our husbands. This included multiple tours to Vietnam and during this time the likelihood of becoming a widow also stared us in the face.

Although more than a century separated us from those wives of the "Old Army" we had a lot in common. We followed our husbands to the far flung outposts of the world as they "followed the guidon" in service to our country. Why we did this is best summarized in the words of Martha Summerhayes in the aforementioned book – "I really was a soldier's wife and I must go back to it all. To the Army with its glitter and misery, to the post with all its discomforts, to the soldiers, to the drills, to the bugle calls, to the monotony, to the heat of southern Arizona, to the uniform and the stalwart officers and men who wore it. I felt the call and I must go. I had cast my lot with a soldier and where he was, was home to me." We chose to cast our lot with soldiers and where they were we made a home. We were and always will be "Soldiers Wives."

We would welcome articles from other wives. If you have something you want to share please contact me.

Gloria Hobby  
"Falconess 6"  
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## From the VP's Assistant . . .

There is simply no way to do justice to that reunion in Bozeman with mere words. You just had to be there! What an amazing time... what an amazingly beautiful part of our country... what a terrific job Gary and Licia did putting together such a terrific reunion. A huge thank you from this ARA lady (and I hope I speak for all of us), for all you did in preparation, research, planning and arranging yet another memorable reunion. And now it's on to Charleston, Ladies. It's going to be marvelous as well so y'all come, ya hear!! I don't know about you, Girls, but these reunions are becoming a major highlight of my year! After so many memories they'd rather not revisit of deployments, separations, battles they wish they'd never had to fight, it is such a joy to see our men sharing the funny stories, the memorable moments, the enduring friendships. I do hope many, many more of you will encourage your partners to attend the reunions if there is any way possible. We all know time heals, but the love of family and friends helps so much. And yes, we are not just friends, we are family. So.. SEE YOU IN CHARLESTON! And in the meantime, may the rest of 2010 be very good to you all. Let's stay connected whether by e-mail, snail-mail or phone.  
P.S. Be sure your guys let you read the "Straphanger", Ladies,  
Patti Wilder

## 1<sup>ST</sup> CAV ARA SAVED THE DAY

By Jim Ford, 1<sup>st</sup> Cav, 1966

It was early October 1966 and units of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav were involved in Operation Thayer, a search and destroy operation in an area just north of the coastal city of Qui Nhon in South Vietnam. One of those units was A Battery, 2/20 Artillery (ARA), my unit, and I was the Battery Operations Officer. Our C Model Hueys with 48 2.75 inch rockets had been very busy supporting the ground troops during the operation. From the time the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division arrived in country in October 1965, this area was one where there was always a lot of VC activity and one where the Cav had seen a lot of action. Periodically, units of the division would move into the area, do S&D missions and leave. Then a few weeks or months later other units would return and do it all over again. During Operation Thayer, there had been considerable contact with the enemy and intelligence gathered from captured prisoners indicated that the equivalent of a VC division was operating within the area. While interrogating the most recent captives, three of them indicated that a heavy mortar attack against the LZ was to take place this particular night. They confirmed that their unit had been practicing for the night operation for several days. Come nightfall, all personnel at the LZ were on high alert and our battery was on standby with instructions that, if a mortar attack occurred, the aircraft were to get airborne and destroy the enemy weapons and personnel. Not a big deal. We did that all of the time. The problem this particular night was that

the monsoon season had started and it was raining extremely hard with zero visibility. We were concerned that even if the aircraft could get airborne, they would probably not be able to see anything.

At any rate, assuming there would be an attack, crews were in their aircraft with the aircraft "hot" so they could be airborne within the tactical time of two minutes and they were prepared to empty their rocket pods on the bad guys. Of course, the problem this particular night was that there was a raging monsoon in progress.

In the operations tent, while operating by flashlight, we kept abreast of the general situation by monitoring three tactical radios. While we sat and waited there was extensive field artillery firing from a howitzer battery within the LZ. Ordinarily, the artillery didn't bother us but that night with each "boom" we would all jump – not sure if it was outgoing or incoming. Then, periodic sounds of machine guns firing on the perimeter would make us wonder if the enemy had begun an attack.

Hours into the wait, the heavy rain had continued and the sound of it striking the operations tent produced a steady roar that made it hard to hear the radios. Finally, one of the radio operators transmitted that they had radar reports that approximately 45 people carrying objects were moving around to the north of the LZ. According to the radio operator, radar could plot the activity which was good. Also, outposts on the perimeter could hear the intruders. So, we now, at least, knew that somebody was out there.

Once the Fire Direction Center had developed target information, they transmitted a fire mission to our operations and we, in turn, sent it on to the aircraft. The aircraft engines were started but, after seeing they had zero visibility, the Platoon leader aborted the mission. So, the wait continued. Finally, the rain slowed a bit and one of the aircraft commanders volunteered to give it a try. They were able to get airborne, make a run on the target, dump a load of rockets and get back on the ground – all within ten minutes. A second and then a third aircraft did the same thing.

At the conclusion of the three missions, we were informed that radar reported no further activity in the area. That was confirmed by the outposts. We still had to sit and wait. The aircraft were re-armed and the crews continued to stand by at their aircraft.

At roughly 0600 the next morning, the rain had stopped, daylight was on its way and we had not been attacked. We all wondered if, in fact, there was to be an attack or were the enemy captives either wrong or misleading our intelligence people.

With daylight, infantry patrols were dispatched to the area and later in the day we received reports that the patrols had discovered mortar positions, unfinished foxholes, blood trails and some enemy wounded. So, obviously an attack had been in the making but, thanks to our brave ARA helicopter crew members, it never happened.

*Note: The author of this article wrote an account of the above events for his hometown newspaper that night in 1966 when the events were actually occurring. His article was printed in the Napa (CA) Register on October 24, 1966. That newspaper article was used as a resource for the above.*

## Remembering one of our own.

The Editor is indebted to Lacey Polk for sharing the “official” information surrounding the fatal crash of CPT Winston Terry Robinson, C/2/20 ARA 1st CAV Div, on September 6, 1967. This is how I remember it.

I had arrived in country in May and was delighted that my aviators were so competent and careful. One of a Flight Surgeon’s greatest fears is that he will have to be a party to the passing of one of his own. Pronouncement and announcement of death in a pilot or crewmember is one of the downsides of an otherwise fairly neat occupation. CPT Robinson was the first and only fatality of my tour. He was 24 years and eight months old, from Rector, AR, an Infantry officer, and left behind a wife and, I believe, two children.

As is so often the case, one incident is compounded by another until the situation becomes a tragedy. CPT Robinson had started his tour 10/21/66 and was “short”. He was not scheduled to fly that day but was asked by a buddy to take the mission. It was to have been a routine (if there is such a thing) insertion.

Armed Venom pulled pitch that day in UH—1B 64-14028 from the Golfcourse and headed into Binh Dinh Province, I Corps. He was A/C with WO1 Gregory Grant in the left seat. SP4 Paul Leslie Clark was the Crewchief. The mission was in support of B Troop 1/9 Cav and Saber Six led the assault with the ARA birds high. The assault leader was followed by the Blue Lift Section (slicks carrying their organic infantry platoon) and a gun team. Saber Six marked the LZ with two rockets and CPT Robinson’s “planes with the boxes on the sides” went in on the right to prep the LZ approaching on a flat run. Suddenly CPT Robinson lost his tail rotor assembly and drive shaft as they separated from the aircraft. He, being an excellent pilot, began a flat spiral turn in a nose low attitude and commenced autorotation. He descended straight down and skillfully created his own LZ among the trees, still firing off rockets as he went down, and bounced hard. The aircraft burst into flames on impact but WO Grant’s foot was caught in the pedals and he could not exit. CPT Robinson removed his helmet and leaned over to help extricate WO Grant. It appears SP4 Clark was knocked out in the crash and would have needed rescue. Three men from B Troop, 1LT Pryor L. Wheat, Sp4 James Vernon Hembree and SP4 J.D. Singleton went to be of assistance. The fire was intense and the left rocket pod exploded. CPT Robinson’s head was driven forward into the rocket sight causing instant fatal head injuries. WO Grant was thrown out of the aircraft about 100 feet into the undergrowth and miraculously suffered only a lumbar fracture. Search of the area produced only three fingers and a foot in a boot of SP4 Clark. I have no personal knowledge of the remains of the brave infantrymen.

CPT Robinson’s only visible injury was a small hole in his forehead. As Shakespeare might say, “Not so deep as a well, nor as wide as a church door, but t’is enough, t’will serve.”

And thus the chain of incidents unfolded. An unscheduled flight, what appears to be a failure of assembly of the 45° gear box, or hostile fire, superb flying skills thwarted by the nature of the helicopter’s flammable skin, an unfortunate entrapment of the pilot, the presence of highly explosive rockets and, in the urgency of helping a buddy, forgetting the Flight Surgeon’s safety mantra. (Flight Surgeons have phrases they keep repeating over and over -”Keep your eyes and ears open, take the anti-malaria medicine regularly and on time, see me before you are grounded by your problem, keep your zipper up and never take off your helmet until you are in the truck going home.” If CPT Robinson had kept his helmet on he might be alive today. Now he is on The Wall - Panel: 26E-line 016. I visit his panel every time I am in Washington or I visit a travelling Wall.

He was an excellent pilot and leader. His tragic loss made us all less than we had been. Already awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for an earlier feat of bravery, CPT Robinson was recognized posthumously with a second DFC, an Air Medal and the Purple Heart Medal.



On 27 December 1966, Lieutenant Robinson was serving as aircraft commander of an aerial rocket artillery helicopter, participating in defense of Landing Zone Bird. Upon receiving a request for assistance from the besieged landing zone, Lieutenant Robinson volunteered to fly his aircraft into the battle area. Arriving over the battle site, he faced constant exposure to relentless enemy fire, to better observe and maintain contact with the platoon leader. He voluntarily flew low-level rocket attacks against automatic weapon positions. Flying so low, on one occasion, the back blast from his rockets set trees on fire. In route to English Air Field for refueling and rearming, his platoon monitored a request from the Hoi An district headquarters, being probed by Viet Cong. While his platoon leader investigated the report, Lieutenant Robinson voluntarily stayed close behind at low-level to suppress enemy attack. Under intense automatic weapons fire, he skillfully positioned his door gunners to return maximum fire power. He continued to fly all night, lending excellent cover for his platoon leader's aircraft. These heroic actions earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Winston T. Robinson, from Rector, Arkansas, was a distinguished military graduate from Arkansas State University, 30 May 1964 with a B.S. degree in accounting and a Second Lieutenant's commission in the U.S. Army. After extensive training, he qualified to fly the "Huey" helicopter and deployed to Vietnam in October 1966. Through illustrious service, he quickly rose in rank. On September 6, 1967, Captain Robinson was killed in Vietnam (six weeks before his tour of duty would have ended) when his aircraft was caught in hostile ground fire. The tail rotor on his helicopter was shot off, causing him to lose control of the aircraft. Captain Robinson sacrificed himself. He maneuvered clear of troop-carrying-copters, veered into a thirty-foot arc toward the ground, and continued firing on the enemy. He suffered fatal head injuries when he crash landed. He was posthumously awarded the Air Medal, the Bronze Star, and the Distinguished Flying Cross.



## And Now, A Night to Remember: The Christmastide Battle for LZ Bird

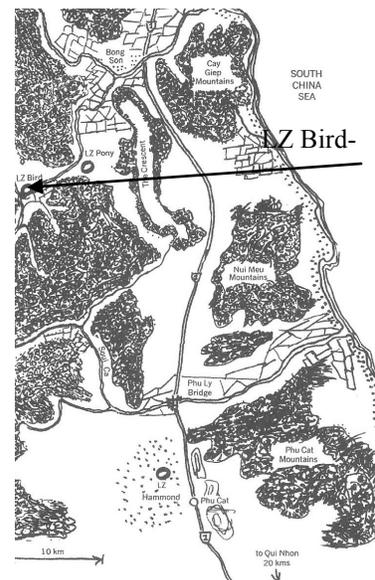
*Editor's Note: When I arrived in RVN in May of 1967 one of the first events I heard of was the near loss of LZ Bird. This is the story of the courage and determination of the US infantrymen and the ARA pilots and crew. One of those ARA pilots was, then LT Winston Robinson, remembered above.*

.Contributed by Dave Borgeson A 2/20 1966-67—1968-71 and adapted from Al Hemingway in VFW Magazine (August 2004). Map from "Bird" by S.L.A. Marshall.

LZ Bird has been called "a freak of geography fashioned by the vagaries of a meandering river," 250 meters long, 80 meters wide and bordered on the west and south by the Kim Son River. It was one of several forward artillery bases providing support for the 1st Cavalry Division. A dozen howitzers spotted the LZ. On the northern perimeter were the 155mm guns of C/6/16 Arty and to the south were the 105mm guns of B/2/19Arty and scattered in between were 22 infantrymen of C/1/12 Inf, many of whom were new and untried—a total of about 170 men.

**CPT BORGESON** recalls: The area of operation for A/2/20 ARA primarily ranged from LZ Hammond in the south to Bong Son in the north. We had been experiencing torrential rains from a typhoon, but on December 26<sup>th</sup> the weather improved. I was ordered to fly a recon mission to check out the local area. Since the Christmas Truce was in effect, we were just supposed to observe. The Bong Son River was flooded in many areas and the rice paddies were like lakes. We approached LZ Bird to refuel. As we descended for landing, we passed over 10 to 15 Vietnamese carrying large sacks of rice across the Kim Son River. We were asked by the local forces to engage these men, but we were told by our commanders not to violate the truce so we did not fire. After refueling we returned to LZ Hammond. On the evening of December 26<sup>th</sup>, I was scheduled to fly mortar patrol. I was the aircraft commander. W.O. Charles Long was the pilot and Sp4 James Seawright was our crew chief. The weather turned bad again. The rain was heavy and the clouds were low. We took off just after midnight.

**ON THE GROUND:** Just before Christmas, 1966, both sides called a truce to hostilities. On December 27, at 1 AM the 7th, 8th and 9th Battalions of the 22nd NVA Regiment attacked with a force of a 1000 men. The sound of incoming mortars, 57mm RR's and heavy machine gun fire filled the night air. Within minutes the enemy had breached the wire and overrun the LZ. Sp4 John McGinn Jr. saw hundreds of NVA, mostly in single file, coming toward their position on the northeast side. The Americans were sitting ducks. Sp4 Gary Peasley and Sp4 Donald



The zone of operations during the fight at Landing Zone Bird. LZ Pony is to east, closer to South China Sea. LZ Hammond is to south, off main north-south highway.

Woods raked the NVA attackers with M60 fire. As they stood their ground, SSG Delbert Jennings, the weapons platoon sergeant, and SSG Colmar Johnson mustered a group of GI's to form a secondary perimeter.

**CPT BORGESON:** We received a call from operations that LZ Bird was under attack. W.O Long nosed the "B" model over and we took off as fast as possible. I dialed in the frequency for the infantry unit. I raised a young radio operator. I could hear the machine guns and mortar fire in the background. I asked which direction was the attack. He said that their position was overrun. I told him that we were still 15 minutes away.

**ON THE GROUND:** Meanwhile 1st LT's John Piper and Charles Campanella emerged from their tent to see 40-50 NVA breaching the southeast corner of the perimeter. They headed for the gun parapets to defend them and got safely to the FDC. There they were joined by the battery commander, CPT Leonard Schlenker, 1st LT Michael Livengood, 1st Lt John Reike, SSG Carroll Crain and radio operator Sp4 Clint Houston. Houston put two tracer rounds in one NVA while LT. Livengood fired his M79 at others who were leaving the trench and headed for other gun positions. As Schlenker and his group were leapfrogging toward No. 1 gun pit, Jennings's and Johnson's men were fighting for their lives. Jennings killed about a dozen NVA and then another three who were attempting to destroy one of the 155mm howitzers. Jennings, who would ultimately be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for this night, saw that some of the defenders were unaware of the enemy force to their rear. He raced through the fire-swept area to warn the men, turn their fire and lead them into the secondary perimeter. He led a group of volunteers well beyond friendly lines to an area where eight seriously wounded men lay, surrounded by booby traps and covered with enemy sniper fire. Miraculously, they recovered the eight men.

**CPT BORGESON:** In 10 minutes I called back. The radio operator answered, but I heard a mortar round impact and the radio went dead. This was their last transmission. LZ Pony had artillery firing into the area. They were firing some illumination rounds, but it was very dark and it was difficult to make out anything on the ground. We saw a fire on the ground and W.O. Long lined up for a rocket run using the fire as a guide. At the last moment, I threw the switch to disarm the rockets. I was afraid that we would kill our own men. As we swung around, the bullets started to hit our aircraft. I had several long seconds wondering where I would get hit. We were lucky. No one was hit and all the instruments were in the green. Now, we had many targets of opportunity. W.O. Long lined up for another rocket run. This time there was no hesitation. We fired and fired. As we broke to the right, an M60 started firing at us. I directed Jim Seawright to take out that gun. We didn't get him on the first pass, but on the second pass Jim was on target and the tracers stopped.

**ON THE GROUND:** For the soldiers at the gunpit the situation was desperate. Each time they looked to the rear, then moved up, Houston would have his back on Livengood's boots. The ditch was only 2 1/2 to 3 feet deep. Lt. Reike was hit in the throat and the bullet traveled to his stomach. His companions tried to stop the bleeding but there were NVA swarming all over. They gave him a .45 pistol and said they would try to keep the enemy off of him while they sought more help. Reike lay dying but Sp4 Charles Tournage arrived on the scene. The young medic did all he could for Reike and then went to get more medical supplies. He had been all over the battlefield helping the wounded and was completely naked. When the first shots were fired he had not had time to dress. In the darkness he met a NVA who mistook him for a fellow soldier. As he swerved off on an oblique Tournage got off one M79 round which arched at the right split-second and hit the NVA in the middle of the back, tearing him apart. Combat was intense, especially when confined to small pocket. McGinn and his men fired their M60's for 3-5 minutes, using 800-900 rounds before they were overrun. There was no use trying to fight them off so they played dead receiving kicks in the process. The NVA went through their pockets taking billfolds and watches. They expected to take a round in the head at any time. Fortunately, ammo was restored and LZ Pony began putting illumination rounds on the LZ. The sudden eerie light distracted the invaders and the troops were spared. One survivor recalled the melee "looked like the grand finale of a Fourth of July fireworks show."

**CPT BORGESON:** The artillery at LZ Pony asked if we could move our orbit to the south and east so they could fire fuse VT. This was concerning, but we moved our orbit and helped the artillery adjust their fire. By now we were getting low on fuel and wanted to fire the rest of our rockets before returning to LZ Hammond. We expended and departed the area. Major Ray Pollard and the rest of A battery were incoming to provide continuous support. Once we landed at LZ Bird, our aircraft was grounded due to battle damage. The rest of the battery continued the fight all night.

**ON THE GROUND:** With the distraction of the flares and the brutal pounding of the ARA the tide began to turn. Piper and SSG Robert Underwood loaded a beehive round into one of the 105 mm howitzers and, yelling a warning to get down, Piper pulled the lanyard. Instantly 8500 flechettes tore into the attackers opening a swath of death. Houston remembers, "It was so haunting. It screeched like a million bees. I saw a big hole in their ranks and then I heard screaming. Those bodies were ripped to shreds. Then they fired again with the same results. The assault was stopped dead in its tracks." As the night wore on the ARA gave continuous critical support and the

Guns-a-Go-Go's added their firepower. Houston again recalls, "The sun came up and the carnage was everywhere. We loaded our dead and wounded on the arriving choppers and lined up the NVA dead. Blood was running in ruts all along the LZ. It was so cold and wet and I will never forget the smell."

CPT BORGESON: LZ Bird was the most intense fight of my tour in Vietnam. There were 58 US troops killed and 77 wounded in the firefight and the resultant mop up. The NVA lost 266 KIA. (Of the 199 men at LZ Bird that night 28 were KIA, 67 WIA and they had claimed 211 NVA). The ARA played a major role in causing this attack to fail. Several weeks later, while recovering from a fractured pelvis received during an aircraft crash, I met someone from the 1<sup>st</sup>/12 Cavalry that had been at LZ Bird. He told me that when we flew over and started to fire, the NVA were all firing at us. This distraction allowed the infantry time to consolidate their position and start to repel the attack on the ground. It made me feel very proud that we had made a very positive contribution.

Valor was recognized. SSG Jennings was awarded the CMH, Piper and Crain received the DSC, and Shlenker, Campanella and Tournage earned the Silver Star. There were many awards given for the actions of the ARA, of which one was CPT Robinson's DFC. The crew of CPT Boreson's first responder aircraft all were awarded the DFC. Eyebrows were raised about giving the DFC to an enlisted crewchief but CPT Borgeson stood his ground and pointed out that Seawright had not only been critically effective in his suppressive fire on the enemy machine gun, but when his weapon jammed later he changed sides to the gunner's side and kept it up.

S.L.A. Marshall says in his book, "Bird," "The NVA failed to deny the defenders the use of the main trench and in the bunker-to-bunker fighting they were being out-gamed by the few men who stood in their way. The deeper the enemy advanced, the more he was becoming diffused."

Capt. Nguyen Song Phu of the 22nd NVA Regiment summed it up in agreement. "It was a disastrous defeat for our side."

*Editor's Note: No enemy should ever underestimate the courage, resourcefulness or determination of the American fighting force. It will get them killed.*

## Chaplain's Corner



### *"Staying with a Game Plan"*

Back in the 1950's, my father raised Beagle Hounds trained for chasing foxes. He would run them in the evenings after family dinner. One night in the fall of 1954 he invited me to go along to listen to the dogs as they chased the foxes through the mountains of east Tennessee. On many prior outings with Dad I had noticed that the foxes would do their best to outsmart and elude the Beagles. They would run the creek beds, cross multiple streams, double back on their trail for a short distance, all with the intent and ultimate purpose of confusing the dogs as to their whereabouts, causing the dogs to lose their scent and get off their trail. The foxes would even return to the point of initial contact with the dogs. This particular evening one of them even ran through the fire which we had built to knock off the night chill as the evening grew colder on the ridge just west of the Tri-Cities Airport. About two minutes later here came Dad's dozen or so Beagles hot the trail right through the same fire. Nothing was going to get them off the foxes trail.

Readers of scripture will recall the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 13:31-33, has a story about staying on one's objective. Some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." And Jesus said to them, "Go tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' Jesus was not going to let the fox, Herod, pulled him off his trail. He had his eyes set on Jerusalem and he was going there to accomplish his earthly mission. He knew his death was imminent and that it would take place in Jerusalem. Furthermore, his Game Plan called for him to stay the course, stay focused, and stay committed.

May all of us have such a focus and desire to stay the course with our Game Plan as we journey through this life. Also, may we be so empowered to rightly set our priorities and objectives with such purpose and focus that nothing of this world, not even a sly fox, will be able to get us off our trail.

Peace,  
Bruce Wilder  
Chaplain

# From the Founder's Chair

## FLORIDA-NEW ENGLAND-FLORIDA

Hello fellow Straphangers. Summer is ending. The leaves are starting to turn, and other signs that winter is just around the corner are evident.

To begin with, I want to comment on our website. While I am the webmaster; I am not the database keeper.. If you cannot get into the members area, please use your chain of command, and contact Jesse Hobby. Yes, I have the password for the members' only area, but unless the database keeper tells me that you are a paid member, I cannot give out the password. I also cannot fix any mistakes on the roster as it comes to me in a PDF.

As some of you know, I was off to Maine for a much-needed month-long vacation. On 2 August, we pulled pitch for New England on Jet Blue. On 5 August, I drove to my hometown in Massachusetts with family members for a book signing. This was a very enjoyable part of the vacation for me. I saw family and friends that I had not seen in years, for some of whom it has been over 40 years.

It was amazing to see my hometown of Williamsburg, Massachusetts again. So much has changed, and yet so much is still the same as it was when I was in school there. After the three and a half hour trip getting there, it was nice to walk around and show my family where I had attended school. The veterans' memorial has added names due to the ongoing battles in which our troops are now involved, and part of the old memorial is under repair. I am proud of my hometown for how they have honored and continue to honor our troops.

I spoke about my book, why I wrote it, and a little about my tour in Vietnam. When I spoke about a friend from school that lost his life only hours after I saw him in Vietnam, it struck a nerve for many in the room. After signing several books, a person who had been sitting with a book, got up and came forward. As he handed me something he said, "I want you to have this." When I looked at what he handed to me, a flood of emotion came over me. I was holding the newspaper clipping of the obituary of Chester {Jon} Kmit, D Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, who I saw only hours before a Vietcong took his life. I now had some closure to another chapter in my life. My talk was well received.



Back in Maine, on 24 August, I attended the dedication of a new Veterans Cemetery in Springvale, Maine. It was a pleasure to have been there for this event. The cemetery has been a work in progress for the past 10 years. Marie Clancy, 85, who sat front and center, is credited with being the driving force in making the 89-acre cemetery a wonderful



final resting place for our veterans and they named the road leading into the cemetery, Clancy Way.

When Mrs. Clancy lost her husband, she wanted to help veterans. Contacting whoever she could, she managed to get Raymond Parent, the Sanford Fire Chief and a Navy veteran aboard. Parent became a major backer and said Mrs. Clancy's persistence over the decade was largely responsible for the cemetery's creation. In 1984, she buried her husband, John Patrick Clancy, who served in the Army in World War II and Korea, in the nearby cemetery. Mrs. Clancy said, "He can look over and see the Veterans' Cemetery and his fellow veterans."

An estimated 500 people attended the dedication services. The first phase of the cemetery will accommodate about 8,000 plots and, if expanded, will hold 20,000.

No one knows when his or her last day will come, but I plan to make this my final resting place when I go on my last mission in this life.

Until next issue, "Clear Left, Sir!"  
Russ Warriner, Founders Chair

# AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

## Membership Application

This form may be used for New membership or for Renewing existing membership. Please circle that which is appropriate.

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Wife's name \_\_\_\_\_

Rank (at time of service in ARA) \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Number \_\_\_\_\_

Retired Rank (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ Service # \_\_\_\_\_

Btry & Bn in which you served \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Service - From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ Call Sign in ARA \_\_\_\_\_

mo/yr mo/yr

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Street or PO Box \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Home \_\_\_\_\_

Work (if OK) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Association membership is on an annual basis (unless member opts for life membership) running from January 1 to December 31 and is past due on January 31.**

If joining or renewing during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter (Jan - Mar) dues are \$20.00.

If joining or renewing during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter (Apr - Jun) dues are \$15.00.

If joining or renewing during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter (Jul - Sep) dues are \$10.00.

If joining or renewing during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (Oct - Dec) dues are \$5.00.

Life membership (if paid in full) is \$250.00.

Life membership may be paid in \$50.00 installments on a quarterly basis until paid in full.

Total amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ (Please indicate in remarks section of check whether this is Initial Membership, Membership Renewal, Life Membership in full, Life Membership payment # \_\_\_\_\_),

Mail completed application to: Aerial Rocket Artillery Association

C/O Larry Mobley

779 County Road 106

Ozark, AL 36360

**For Office Use Only**

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Check Date \_\_\_\_\_

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