



# The Straphanger Gazette



Volume 4 Issue 3

Find us on the web at <http://www.araassociation.com>.

Jan.,Feb.,Mar., 2012



**“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



## President's Corner

**“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son....”**

**There is only one reason for the season.**

**MERRY CHRISTMAS —HAPPY NEW YEAR**

I hope that everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. My New Year's Wish is for a large turnout for the 2012 reunion in Portland, OR in May.

And, since we are starting a new year I would like to remind all who renew membership on an annual basis that “dues are due.” Please note that the annual dues are now \$25.00 and that there is a new membership application/renewal form in this newsletter and also on the web site ([www.araassociation.com](http://www.araassociation.com)).

I'm sure that by now everyone has received notice of the 2012 reunion. Since publication of the last newsletter we have one change to announce. We have eliminated the box lunch from the North Oregon Coast Tour. Herb said that taking a box lunch to Cannon Beach would be like taking Coke to a wine tasting. Also, the weather on the coast is not always conducive to picnicking. For those who have already signed up - we will refund your money at the reunion or upon request to our Treasurer, Larry Mobley. For those who have not yet signed up please use the revised form published on page 6.

We will have a number of business items at the General Membership meeting. There will be a briefing for Reunion 2013 and we will determine the site for Reunion 2014. I would also like to bring to everyone's attention that 2012 is an election year. Most of us who are currently serving on the Board of Directors have held office(s) for four years now, and while we have been honored to serve the Association, we believe that there are others who are equally capable of assuming control and keeping the Association on course. Job descriptions for all officers may be found in Article V of Association By-Laws. The By-Laws are posted on the Association Web Site ([www.araassociation.com](http://www.araassociation.com)). Please keep in mind that posted duties are not all inclusive. In addition to my duties as President I keep the data base, make and issue Membership Certificates, and manage the web site. Bruce Wilder, the Vice President, is also Chaplain, staff writer for the “SABER” (newsletter for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Association), handles advertising for reunions, etc. And, while the other Board Members, (the Immediate Past President, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor ) may not formally wear other hats their normal duties are time consuming. The entire Board of Directors is also involved in reunion planning and execution along with the host of the reunion.

Other business will be proposed revisions to the By-Laws of the Association. These revisions are considered necessary to define additional/specific duties of the Board of Directors that have been understood for the past eighteen (18+) months. If approved by the General Membership these revisions will be added to Article IV, Section 2.

(1) The BOD shall establish, operate, and maintain a web site for the Association and shall act as content committee and approving authority for the Web Site.

The BOD shall designate/recognize a member in good standing to be the Staff Writer representing the 2/20<sup>th</sup> Artillery and "F" Battery/79<sup>th</sup> Artillery for the "SABER" (newsletter for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division) and shall review and approve material for publication prior to submission to "SABER."

The BOD shall serve as content committee for the Association newsletter ("Straphanger") and will review and approve each issue prior to publication.

All of this having been said I will close for now so that you may move on to the rest of the newsletter.

"See you in Portland."

Jesse Hobby  
ARA 6

## **RODGER MCALISTER CITED FOR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE**

**Rodger McAlister, our current Immediate Past President, has been recognized by the Masonic Order for his many years of service and study by being elevated to the title of Knight of the Order of Saint Andrew.**

**While this award is predicated on his service to the Masonic fraternity and those members who have been in need, there has also been extensive study of the principles which govern the best of conduct toward all men and represents numerous episodes of generosity and humanitarian acts.**

**Established by Robert the Bruce in Scotland in the 14th Century as a reward for the assistance of the former Knights Templar in the Battle of Bannockburn, it spread through the Masonic fraternity all over Europe and other continents until it became consolidated in that portion of Masonry in the United States now known as the Scottish Rite. Knight of the Order of Saint Andrew represents the 29th of a possible 33 degrees within the fraternity, however, these are awards of merit rather than ranks.**

**There were only five such awards given in the state of Kentucky in 2011.**



Sir Rodger

# THE VICE PRESIDENTS THOUGHTS

Forty-six years ago a Straphanger issue, Volume VIII, was mailed in An Khe, Vietnam to all the members of the first Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) Battalion at the turn of the New Year, Monday, 3 January 66, announcing to the world the success of our unit. Its by-line was, "This was the year that was (1 Jul 65 – 1 Jan 66)," and it covered what we had accomplished in the first six months in the First Cavalry Division. Here it is for your reading.

*At the conclusion of the year 1965, the 2/20<sup>th</sup> paused briefly to reflect on its accomplishments. The accomplishments are many and varied. Principal among them was the acceptance of the experimental Aerial Artillery concept by the powers that be. Although there was never any doubt within this organization of our capabilities, our counterparts in the other branches needed a demonstration under true combat conditions. This we have provided with telling effects.*

*Where have we been and what have we done?*

*The 17<sup>th</sup> of August found the unit at sea enroute to Qui Nhon. We arrived at our destination after an uneventful journey. We were whisked away by Chinooks to what is now our base area.*

*Our immediate task was to prepare our area for living, de-moth-ball our aircraft, and ready the heliport for their arrival. A tremendous effort was required and the 2/20<sup>th</sup> was not found wanting. All hands fell-in with shovels, axes, and picks, etc. and in a relatively short time our ships began arriving from Qui Nhon ready for action. Our maintenance people at the port had done their job well. Before the dust (or mud) had settled we had fired our first missions within two days of our arrival and had reached a state of combat readiness which enable us to answer calls for support from any and all elements in the Division.*

*The 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cav has already written a chapter in blood for the annals of U. S. Military History. Many of the commas, periods, and exclamation marks, etc. were provided by the 2 /20<sup>th</sup> in this chapter. The familiar names of Tuy-Hoa, Plei-Me, Ia Drang, Chu Pong, Pleiku, 'Happy Valley,' and Phu-Cat are indelibly stamped with the brand of the 'Griffins.' As we move on to the chapters still to be written in 1966, we hope to not only hold to our present standards but to improve on them.*

*From what was an anthill, vermin infested, and scrub strewn bivouac area; we have hacked, shoveled, sweated and built what now can be called a cantonment. We now have semi-permanent messing, shower, and sanitary facilities. Many new projects are in various stages of construction. Living conditions are in a constant stage of improvement on all sides.*

*During this period we have also contributed our share of effort to the construction and improvement of the Division Barrier Line and the "Golf Course."*

Quite a history for a brand-new unit right into combat with many newly assigned personnel with no aviation combat experience. I'm proud to have been a member of the unit,

Bruce Wilder

## FINAL FLIGHT

### LTC (Ret) John Berrien Whitehead, III



John Berrien Whitehead III, age 69, resident of Columbus, GA passed away at his residence on Wednesday, August 10, 2011. Memorial services were held at the Chapel of Striffler-Hamby Mortuary, 4071 Macon Road, Columbus, GA on Sunday, August 14, 2011 and his remains were interred in Arlington National Cemetery on 1 December 2011. The son of the late John Berrien Whitehead, Jr., he was born April 28, 1942 in Douglas, GA. He served in the U.S. Army and retired after 20 years of honorable service. During his military tenure, he served two tours of Vietnam. He was a helicopter pilot in the First Cavalry Division and as Scout Platoon Leader for D/229th was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for a heroic act of valor. (See the following account).

In addition he was awarded the Silver Star; Distinguished Flying Cross; Bronze Star; Legion of Merit; and Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Air Medal; the Vietnam Service Medal; and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

LTC Whitehead is survived by his wife, Anne Whitehead of Columbus; two daughters, Courtney W. Hudson and Caroline Whitehead; three sons, Mike Whitehead, Jeff Whitehead, and David Whitehead; six grandchildren, and other relatives and friends. A true American hero, he will be dearly remembered and sorely missed.

## ROBERT RUSHING

Robert Rushing, 63, of Victoria, TX passed away Monday, Dec, 5, 2011. He was born May 19, 1948, in Houston, TX. Robert valiantly served in the US Army as a member of A 2/20th ARA, 1st Cavalry Division, rising to the rank of SGT. and completing two tours (1967-1969 ) which made him both an Armed Falcon and a Blue Max. After returning from war, he fell in love, married Gloria Torres, and happily spoiled his three girls while working as an engineer for the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific Railroad, eventually retiring in 2008 after 40 years. He remained active in his community as a Life member of the Aerial Rocket Artillery Association, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars; even serving as Quartermaster of his local post in Houston.

He is survived by his wife, Gloria Torres; his 3 daughters: Amy Pragana of Hopewell Junction , NY, Annette Wooden of Medfield, MA, and Monique Lynch of Savannah, GA; 4 grandsons who were a great source of pride, as well as his nieces and nephews whom he loved as his very own children.

He fought bravely for his country and loved his family without question, for that and more, he will surely be missed.

Burial, with full military honors, was held on Friday, Dec 9, 2011, 9:30 a.m. at Houston National Cemetery,.

## Setting the World's Record for Passengers on an OH-6

War is a strange companion and creates situations which we cannot predict. It is unlikely that The Good Samaritan woke up one morning and said to Mrs. Samaritan, "I think today I shall do something which will make me famous". Rather, when confronted with a situation, he simply did what was needed out of a sense of duty and compassion. So it is and should be with all who serve as soldiers.

On the afternoon of 5 April 1972 a force of three NVA divisions assaulted Loc Ninh enroute to the provincial capital of An Loc. Larry MacKay, Commander of F/79th ARA distinguished himself and the ARA with a valiant defense against enemy armor at the gates of Loc Ninh—but that is another story.

In spite of extraordinary valor and determination by its defenders, notably Capt. Mark Smith (AKA Zippo) who was captured after sustaining 23 wounds, Loc Ninh fell on 8 April. 1972. The NVA who had come streaming out of their inaccessible refuges in Cambodia had captured huge stores of US-made heavy weapons and artillery from the ARVN units and brought them all to bear on the troops and the supporting aircraft at Loc Ninh. This left American advisors, like Cpt. Smith, and ARVN troops to escape and evade their way to An Loc. Rescue and extraction of these valiant men became a logistical and tactical problem. Hunter/Killers teams from F/9th offered to go get them or at least lay down rocket fire on the way in and haul them out on their skids if necessary. As is so often the case, disposition of assets is decided by high ranking people in air-conditioned bunkers 100 miles from the actual battle. Fortunately, FAC's would often re-direct heavy assets to targets of greater opportunity. In this case, the Air Force had opted to drop a load of a debilitating riot gas on the area, intended to deter the enemy and hold down on casualties. By the time all the paperwork and allocation of assets was over and the gas dropped, it did not work anyway.

*0830 hours – CG: S-3 will rescue personnel from Nui Ba Dinh. DCO-A, D/229, 75<sup>th</sup> Rangers will rescue Cornish 67 from Cat Lo Bridge. CO 1/21, F/9 Cav will move 2,000 ARVN from Bu Dop to Song Be.*

The Commanding General 3d Brigade(Separate) BG Hamlet issued succinct and specific orders for the rescue:

This 0830 log entry is as poignant as it is significant. In the real world, unlike in the movies, soldiers and missions within like units are normally either somewhat or completely interchangeable, and there is not a case of "There's only one man who could pull this off."

The Commanding General assessed the major missions for his brigade that morning, and without any of the dramatics one learns to expect from the less informed, he designated which missions would be performed by which units and leaders. Once the missions were tasked to the particular units, it became the luck of the draw as to which particular pilots had already been assigned to be flying that day, and who would be assigned in what order. No planning the night before, no preparing the roster for a special mission. The missions were assigned to the units, and they were carried out with the personnel and equipment on hand.

So it was that John Whitehead's unit was tasked to rescue advisors, and his job became to get them out. Had that mission fallen to the other Cavalry Troop, it would probably have been their Scout Platoon Leader, Joe Harris, who would have attempted the rescue. Would he or anyone else have succeeded as well as John Whitehead, or would he have died near the Cat Lo bridge instead of in the rubber plantation near Bu Dop?

The die was cast as the assignments were divided, and the progress of the missions was logged:

*1045 hours—DCO-A: Bay run on ground at Cat Lo Bridge, putting CBU around advisor's position checking with LOH after CBU.*

*1055 hours—DCO-A: LOH received ground to air fire vicinity of XT7297, unknown damage AH-1G also hit from D/229.*

*1110 hours- DCO-A 3 advisors at Cat Lo Bridge rescued by A/229 and 75th Rangers. Critically wounded update to follow.*

USAF A-37's had passed low over the rubber trees to the west and dispensed a CS type agent which also caused nausea and a burning sensation. It did not deter the NVA. CPT John Whitehead, accompanied by his gunner SGT Ray Waite, flew his OH-6A into withering fire and was immediately mobbed by desperate ARVN soldiers. 1LT Dave Ripley was trailing CPT Whitehead in another OH-6A but he was alone. Some of the hangers-on were shot away by NVA in the tree line but ultimately CPT Whitehead pulled pitch and lurched, bounced and struggled into the air. Because of the prior gas drop the pilots and crews were forced to wear, as always, ill-fitting protective gear with which they were painfully inexperienced.

Miraculously, CPT Whitehead had 3 US advisors (LTC Walter Ginger, CPT Marvin Zumwalt and SFC Floyd Winlan) and 4 ARVN soldiers aboard. All these were with TF 52, which was from the 18th ARVN and OPCON to the 5th ARVN.

One panicked ARVN lay across his arms, the left seat was empty (although Whitehead says God was in it). On the floor in the back lay SFC Winlan, wounded, with three ARVN stacked on top of him. SGT Waite was on the right side held in by a monkey strap and holding LTC Ginger who was sort of on the skids. That made for nine people being hauled out of a firefight in a four passenger aircraft. Demonstrating great skill, CPT Whitehead wisely limped to the first safe place he could find, Chon Thonh, touched down and transferred his passengers to a larger aircraft and transportation to medical facilities.

According to 1LT Ripley, who had three people on board and several standing on the skids, noted that they were unsure if they had gotten the three advisors off the ground, and seeing how badly their ships were shot up were concerned about having to make another trip. As the wounded were being transferred by personnel at Chon Thonh, a Vietnamese soldier ran up to Whitehead, fell on his knees and kept bowing down in a sign of thanks. CPT Whitehead was embarrassed. Just another day in the life of a scout pilot. Like so many before and after, you do what you must do. That is why we are soldiers. DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY and THE MISSION, THE UNIT, AND THEN THE MAN.

BG Hamlet recommended CPT Whitehead for the CMH but it was downgraded to the DSC. In 1998 an unsuccessful effort was made to have it upgraded to the CMH. SGT Waite was also awarded the DSC, and 1LT Ripley was given the Silver Star. COL Casey, Deputy Commander of the 3d Brigade remarked that if Whitehead had landed before journalists he would have been assured of the CMH.

# ARA PORTLAND RENDEZVOUS

**15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ARA REUNION, PORTLAND, OR May 23 – 27, 2012**

## Reunion Registration Form

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN NLT APRIL 24, 2012

<b>INFORMATION</b>	
Name/Membership #	
Wife/Guest Name(s)	
Additional Guests	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Telephone #/Email	
Special Assistance?	

<b>Please list name(s) as you would like for them to appear on NAME TAG(S)</b>	<b>Where From</b>
Member	
Spouse/Guest	
Unit(s)	
Dates	

<b>REGISTRATION/EVENT FEES PER PERSON</b>	<b>PRICE</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>	<b># IN PARTY</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Registration Fee	\$30.00	Per Adult Over Age 15		
Oregon Coast Tour	\$40.00	Per Adult Over Age 15		
Columbia River Gorge Tour	\$48.00	Includes lunch		
Farewell Banquet	\$55.00	Per Adult Over Age 15		
Total for Reunion				

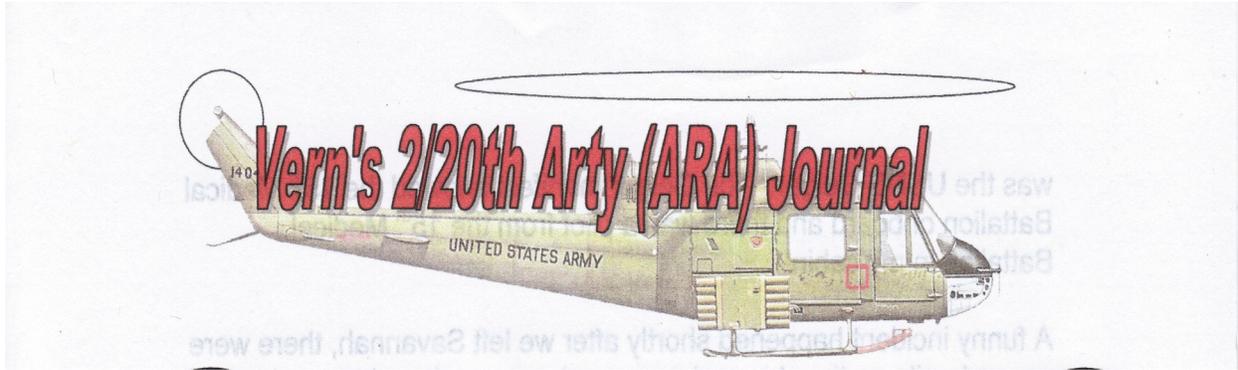
What day will you be arriving? \_\_\_\_\_ Departing? \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact host if you are bringing children under age 15 so that we can get number and ages and coordinate with caterer for the cost of their meals. Can be paid at time of check in.

Contact information for host: Herb Hirst ([hirst@g.com](mailto:hirst@g.com)). Telephone # 503-647-4600

Mail completed form and check payable to **ARA ASSOCIATION** to:

ARA ASSOCIATION  
C/O Larry Mobley  
779 County Road 106  
Ozark, AL 36360



*Editor's Note: We continue sharing the journal of Vern Estes from his tour in Vietnam. 1965-66. Once again we ask that anyone who has journals, records, or pictures which reflect the life and times of one of the most unique military units in the history of warfare share them with this publication and the association historian, George Govignon. We are history and history is lost when not recorded.*

The 1/9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron had a mule named "Maggie" as the unit mascot. The story of Maggie is interesting in that while on maneuvers with the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Division in the Carolinas all the Troop Commanders decided to play a joke on LTC Stockton. They rented a mule from a local farmer for Stockton's birthday. Much to their surprise Stockton liked the mule so much that they bought the mule. Maggie stood *\*retreat* with the unit on Fridays; she was equipped with two M-60 machine guns and had a red aircraft rotating beacon strapped onto her back.

*\*A military retreat ceremony serves a twofold purpose; it signals the end of the official duty day and pays respect to the flag.*

Stockton decided to ship her on board the USNS Boxer (aircraft carrier) with the unit aircraft to Vietnam. Stockton was in a rage when the mule arrived at the Squadron area with USN painted on her right hind quarter. Maggie did not survive the tour; one night a 179<sup>th</sup> Cav trooper on perimeter guard heard a noise, issued a challenge, and of course "Maggie" did not respond nor did she know the password, so he shot and killed her. No one knows the rest of the story.

Two fire teams (4 ships) were placed on standby during the la Drang operation near two 105 howitzer batteries. During standby in a combat situation one pilot was strapped in the seat and the aircraft was setup for a quick start. A quick start was designed to complete all of the checklist items so that the aircraft could be started and launched in less than a minute.



Vern Estes

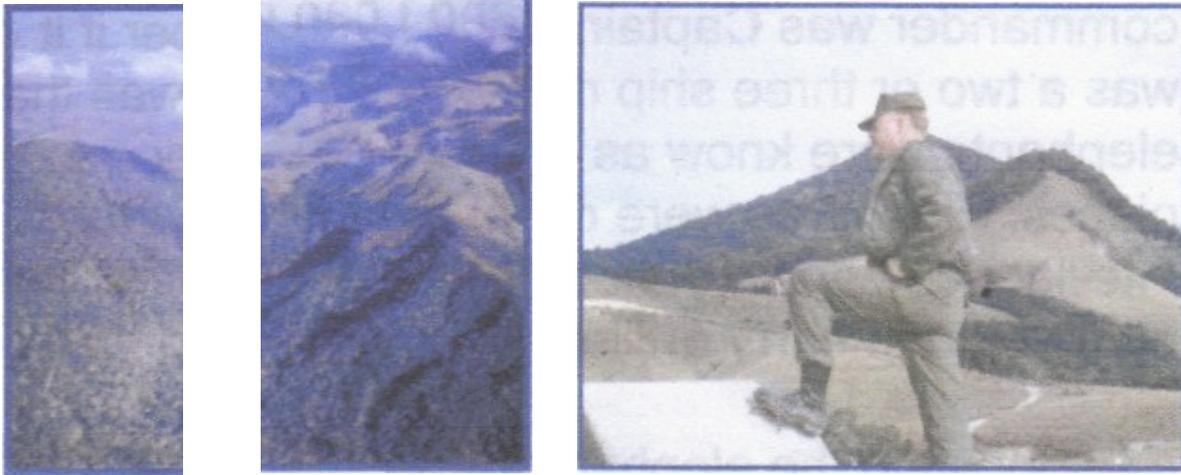
I was one of the alert pilots and every time a howitzer fired, my torque meter would jump to 20 pounds of torque. This area was where troops killed in action (KIA) were dropped to be transported back to Camp Radcliff by CH-47 helicopters ... there were several stacks of body bags near our location.

Sometime in 1966 we were sent on a mission to seek out and kill several elephants in the area southeast of An Khe. The mission commander was Captain Gene Woods and I can not remember if it was a two or three ship mission. The reason for the mission was that elephants were known as heavy equipment movers i.e., artillery pieces. Elephants were considered legitimate military targets. Our intelligence people stated that in fact the elephants we were after had been used to carry artillery. After locating the elephants we engaged them with 2.75 folding fin rockets, which were classified as an area weapon. In my opinion that was a bad choice of weapons for the mission. I do not remember any elephants being killed. I do remember that a bull elephant was standing on his hind legs trumpeting at Gene Woods's aircraft. The last I saw of the elephant (a female) that I was trying to kill was her and her calf running into the jungle canopy with my last two rockets following ... no I did not kill them but, thought, would a big game hunter like Hemmingway have used this approach when hunting elephants? ... Nah! I don't think so.



I was told by Clay Fuller that an elephant was killed and the crew landed and removed a tusk and brought it back to the Battery area. There were apparently more elephant hunting missions than the one in which I was involved .

George Govinion reminded me about the flare test we conducted. His account follows ... We had a mission to test flares that were developed for the Korean War. After the first drop we realized that the fuses were screwed up. The flares would ignite at various levels; some even ignited within seconds after we dropped them from the aircraft. Our night vision was non existent for a few minutes when this happened. Some of them didn't ignite until they reached the ground. George stated that the VC probably constructed bleachers on the mountainside to observe the show we put on.

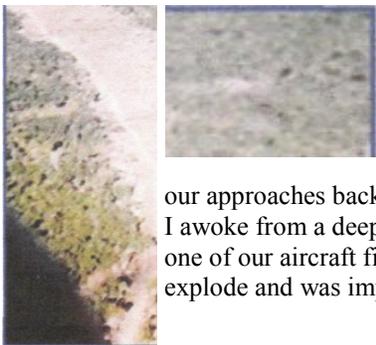


**Mang Yang Pass. The view is wonderful until you count the carnage. Madame Diem had tried to plant hundreds of trees to beautify the pass but the war destroyed them as it had her husband.**

In January 1966 a fire team was deployed to Mang Yang Pass; located on highway QL-19 between An Khe and Pleiku. Our landing area was free of trees and we did not have extra security supporting us. However, there were other units based near our IZ. Our mission was to provide convoy security in the pass. We launched on two occasions and engaged VC in the jungle just northwest of our location. I never observed any Viet Cong (VC) troops being hit by my rockets, however, this was the first time I visually confirmed killing 10 VC trees. The pass was considered the last battle (1954) between the Viet Minh and the French in the first Indochina War. The area had a French grave yard with about 1000 troops buried there. I was glad that we did not stay on alert during the night.



During our mission the remains of a CH-54 accident (6 January 1966) was being recovered. The aircraft accident happened because the crew had left about 100 feet of cargo line trailing behind the aircraft. The line tangled in the tail rotor causing one of the main rotor blades to separate from the aircraft. This was the first accident of a CH-54 aircraft.



The unit was tasked with providing night patrols around the Division base camp. The camp was surrounded by a 12 mile long 100 meter wide cleared area called the "green line." The area was cleared to give base security forces a clear field of fire in case of attack. These missions could become problematic in that sometimes the weather would reduce the visibility very quickly. Since our approaches back to the heliport were visual, things could become a bit tense at times. One night I awoke from a deep sleep to a terrible sound near our Battery area. I was to find out later that it was one of our aircraft firing on a probe against the outer perimeter. I had never heard our rockets explode and was impressed at how they sounded and was glad that I was not on the receiving end.



Operation Masher/White Wing began. Our unit staged at Bong Son near an airport. We operated there until the operation ended in March 1966. Our unit supported a mission which involved Navy, Air Force and Army units. The mission was to support a two battalion combat assault on an area north of Bong Son near highway QL-1. The Battleship "Missouri" was firing 16 inch guns (2700 pounds shells) on other targets and the Air Force was firing on the mountains west of our route of flight at the same time. We had to request a hold fire as we transitioned the firing line of the navy ship. If I was not hallucinating I swore that I could hear the navy shells as they passed near our flight path.

One fire mission required us to overfly a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camp. Some of

the camps had VC sympathizers and on occasion they would fire at aircraft flying near the camps. As we flew over the camp we started taking fire. My gas mask was shot off the back of my seat and one round came through the bottom of the helicopter and severed the wiring bundle for our rockets, eliminating our ability to fire.

One of our aircraft returning from a fire mission with CW3 Bob Maxwell onboard, after hearing our radio call he said all their ordinance had been expended. However, that he would fire into the camp using his scrounged 45cal "Grease Gun". The grease gun had an effective range of about 165 feet so his rounds were only falling metal by the time they reached the camp. We thanked Bob for his aerial support and returned to base.

The CIDG concept was established in 1961 by the CIA to provide irregular military units from ethnic minority populations. The mission was to be the defense force for remote villages. They were originally made up of Montagnards (Mountain people); who did not like the North or South Vietnamese. In 1963 the military decided that the concept was not being used properly and the program was turned over to the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) which changed the mission of the CIDG allowing them to fight in roles other than village defense. In 1970 most of them became South Vietnamese Rangers. The program ended in late 1970.

Another group of fighters that received little credit for their part in the Vietnam War was the "NUNG". They live in the central highlands of Vietnam and have ancestral roots in China. They were fiercely anti-communist and were some of the toughest fighters in the war. The US Special Forces used them in their Mike Force (ready reaction force) units; also, as bodyguards. They were very reliable fighters and served the US Army well.

In February 1966 we were based near C Battery's location. During a maintenance check a rocket was inadvertently launched and a crew chief was standing in front of the launcher; the rocket hit him near his chest area. He later died at the Aid station. As I remember we had approximately 3 such incidents while I was assigned to the ARA.

During our deployment at Bong Son on February 14th 1966 Captain Jim Foreman and Lt George Govinon were flying missions most of the day. They had been flying about six hours when bad weather moved into the area. The ceilings dropped to around 300 feet above the ground. Jim and George were the trail aircraft in a two ship formation when they received rounds in the bottom of the aircraft; Jim was hit in the right elbow and before he

was pulled to the back of the aircraft by the door gunner for first aid, he observed that almost all of the instruments and radios were non-operational.

One or more rounds severed the wiring bundle causing the loss of most of the instruments and communications equipment. One of the engine instruments lost was the engine RPM gauge; George had to rely on the Rotor Tachometer to determine their power status. I was flying that day but was not part of Jim's flight.

We shut down at the refueling/rearming point and checked with Lt Govignon to see if we could help Jim; they had already taken him to the aid station. Before our next flight our crew chief discovered that one of our main rotor blades had been hit near the blade root.

I think the rotor was hit during the mission earlier that morning. Our fire team encountered several VC along a river; to keep them in sight we were flying at or below tree top altitudes in a staggered trail formation. While we were trying to engage them we spotted a South Vietnamese armored Infantry column on the opposite side of the river; they looked at the fleeing VC and did nothing but watch us chase them. Just another example of who was doing the bulk of the fighting.

On a two day mission in support of ground troops in contact with a large VC force near the Song Lai Giang River. On the first day our troops were on the east side of the river. During the night the US troops and VC had crossed the river and exchanged locations from the previous day. Our procedure was to call for colored smoke



from the friendly position; however, we had not developed the more sane procedure of having the ground troops pop a smoke grenade and then we would identify the color.

The ground commander popped a white smoke grenade and announced the color however, two columns of smoke appeared, and based on our last firing position we fired a pair of rockets (which we called ranging rounds) to determine where they would impact. The ground unit immediately called and said that we were shooting into their current position We adjusted



fire and fired on the area where the second column of smoke had appeared. The ground commander called and said to salvo our ordinance into the area where we had just fired. Thankfully none of our troops were injured.

During one of our missions we were escorting lift ships into the Kim Son (Crow's Foot) area, which is southwest of Bong Son. The troops were being placed on several mountain tops which proved to be an effective tactic; the VC had to fight uphill and sustained heavy casualties. US Artillery units were stationed on the south side of the valley floor and other US troops were being inserted across the valley; somehow the artillery fired into our troops. There were just a few rounds fired before the artillery unit was told to cease fire. I do not remember how many casualties there were.



There was a small white church east of our base. It looked great except for the VC flag flying from the steeple. It stayed there for days until a brave soul from another unit hovered over the church and stole the flag ... hey its combat anything for a laugh or a tall tale.

During a lull in the fighting we were standing by when a Vietnamese barber showed up with a cane chair and a white (almost) bed sheet; He set up shop just outside of the concertina wire and starting giving haircuts. I was getting a haircut and suddenly he is shaving my forehead; now having a Vietnamese with a straight razor near my face did not appeal to me in any way.

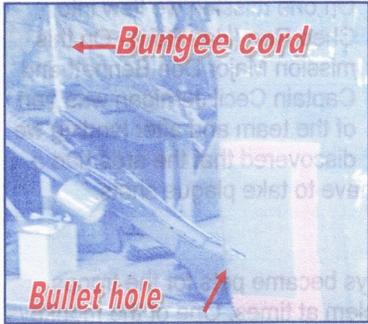
I am not sure of the date but sometime during or after the Bong Son mission our unit received a mission for two fire teams (a total of four aircraft) to a Special Forces Camp at Tuy Hoa south of Qui Nhon. Jim Foreman remembered that himself, Cpt Larry Zittrain and CW3 Bob Maxwell were some of the pilots on the mission. After arriving on site we were briefed as to our mission then we launched one fire team to the valley west of Tuy Hoa. There was an US Air Force observation O-1 Birdog airplane acquiring targets for us.

During one mission the observer spotted about 25 VC running across an open field and we engaged them until they disappeared into and behind buildings. It was a strange sight to observe two rockets going through an open door in one of the buildings; arriving about two seconds after the fleeing VC entered the same building.



My aircraft received a round through the right side. Before going on with the story I will clarify an operational weakness that we had with our door guns. They were mounted on a bungee cord which allowed the gunner to fire without any limitations. This resulted in the gunners being able to fire into our main rotor blades, skids and inside the aircraft.

We worked out a procedure that if the aircraft was to be banked we would tell our crew what was going to happen and which direction we would turn. This worked well most of the time; however, in the heat of battle bad things happen. Now back to the bullet hole; it was the gunner that almost shot me.



We had been engaged all day and at sundown we laagered (a secure location) at the Special Forces Camp. Our mission commander checked with the Special Forces commander and was assured that we would not be launched during the night. Based on this information all the crews went into town to eat at a French restaurant that someone had been to on a previous mission. Since we were assured that we would not be flying that night everyone had a glass or two of wine while watching the small lizards falling from the ceiling of the restaurant. After drinking the wine we were feeling just fine; however, a few minutes later we got a call from the Special Forces Camp to return and launch. It was pitch black and the area had very few lights to use as reference points but we flew for almost an hour without seeing any VC on the ground.

It should be noted that our aircraft lights were either half taped (lights could be observed when flying above the aircraft, but could not be seen from the ground) or turned off. Our night standard operating procedure (SOP) was to flash our lights momentarily every few minutes so that other crews could see the helicopter.

On one mission we flew into Cheo Reo (Hau Bon). On this mission Major Don Bennett and Captain Cecil Jernigan was part of the team and after landing we discovered that the area had a plague problem and that we would have to take plague shots.



Several Monkeys became pets for the troops and that was a problem at times. One of the monkeys was chained to the top of a GP medium tent in the 1/9th Cav aircraft maintenance area which was next to our flight line. The monkey would harass the dogs by throwing things at them. However, one day the monkey



escaped and was caught by the dogs; end of story.

Shortly after the monkey incident I left the 1st Cavalry and was assigned to the 120th AHC in Saigon.



There is a subject that I have never heard anyone talk about. Soon after the Division arrived at An Khe, as usual the ladies of the night arrived and problems began. To counter this problem someone in the Division command group decided to establish a special area for soldiers, fondly referred to as "Disneyland East or Sin City". It was developed for the express purpose of controlling certain diseases. I remember a rumor that the Commanding General stated; he hoped the ladies back home never found out about the camp.

-30-

Editors Note: *Sin City was still flourishing in May of 1967 when your fearless Flight Surgeon arrived at An Khe and was required to take his turn checking and treating the "Ladies" of the various establishments for said diseases. Being a pure professional, he took no pleasure in the duty. However, the logic of the establishment of the locale was valid. The rate of "Clap" was kept low and the NCO's did not have to search the bushes for their troops. Unfortunately. The ladies back home did find out when some trooper wrote home to mother and spilled the beans. Congress was informed and in the uproar Sin City became a memory.—at least in An Khe. Blind eyes were turned and ministrations were given in Tam Ky—home of the Americal Division.*

## News You Can Use

### **VA Urges All Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange Be Screened for Prostate Cancer**

(Washington, D.C.) “Veterans exposed to Agent Orange are at least twice as likely to develop prostate cancer; their recurrence rates are higher; and recurring cancers are more aggressive,” noted Dr. Thomas Berger, Executive Director of VVA’s Veterans Health Council, before today’s Congressional Men’s Health Caucus Prostate Cancer Task Force. Berger urged his fellow Vietnam veterans to get screened, noting “it’s worth the fight.”

Said Berger, “Some three million veterans served in Southeast Asia, and no one knows for sure how many of these veterans were exposed to Agent Orange.” In 1996 the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences concluded there is “limited evidence of a positive association between prostate cancer and exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam, including Agent Orange.” As a result of IOM’s findings, Jesse Brown, then-Secretary of the Veterans Administration (VA), issued the final rule, recognizing prostate cancer as a service-connected, presumptive disease associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other phenoxy herbicides during military service, allowing such exposed veterans to become eligible for VA disability compensation and health care.

In 2008, University of California-Davis Cancer Center physicians released results of research showing Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange have greatly increased risks of prostate cancer and even greater risks of getting the most aggressive form of the disease as compared to those who were not exposed. The research was also the first to use a large population of men in their 60s and the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. More than 13,000 Vietnam veterans enrolled in the VA Northern California Health Care System were stratified into two groups, exposed or not exposed to Agent Orange between 1962 and 1971. Based on medical evaluations conducted between 1998 and 2006, the study revealed that:

1. Twice as many Agent Orange-exposed men were identified with prostate cancer than non-exposed;

2. Agent Orange-exposed men were diagnosed two-and-a-half years younger than non-exposed;
3. Agent Orange-exposed men were nearly four times more likely to present with metastatic disease than non-exposed.

Further buttressing this link, in 2009, a study of 1,495 veterans in five cities who underwent radical prostatectomy to remove their cancerous prostates .showed 206 exposed to Agent Orange had a near 50 percent increased risk of their cancer recurring, despite the cancer seeming nonaggressive at the time of surgery. And the cancer came back with a vengeance. The time it took the prostate-specific antigen, or PSA, level to double – an indicator of aggressiveness – was eight months versus more than 18 months in non-exposed veterans.

**Press release from Vietnam Veterans of America December 7, 2011**

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# Ladies of the Association

We have not had a pet for years but still have a cat door to remind us of the last one. We enjoy being with friends who have pets and you know you are more than guests when the pets **accept you** as family. The Wilders have a dog that will climb into the car to greet us as soon as we arrive and our oldest granddaughter has a dog who thinks that we are grandparents. I know that many of you have pets and when I got this from a cousin I thought I would pass it on as a bit of humor.

**FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE PETS,  
THIS IS A TRUE STORY**

**FOR THOSE WHO DON'T, IT'S ALSO A  
TRUE STORY**

The following was found posted very low on a refrigerator door.

**Dear Cats and Dogs:** The dishes on the floor with the paw prints are yours and contain your food. The other dishes are mine and contain my food. Placing a paw print in the middle of my plate does not mean that it is suddenly your food, nor do I find that aesthetically pleasing in the slightest.

The stairway was not designed by NASCAR and is not a racetrack. Racing me to the top of the stairs is not the object. Tripping me doesn't help because I fall faster than you can run.

I cannot buy anything bigger than a king sized bed. I am very sorry about this. Do not think I will continue sleeping on the couch to ensure your comfort. Dogs and cats can actually curl up in a ball when they sleep. It is not necessary to sleep perpendicular to each other, stretched out to the fullest extent possible. I also know that sticking tails straight out and having tongues hanging out the other end to maximize space that you are taking up, is nothing but sarcasm.

For the last time, **there is no secret exit from the bathroom**. If, by some miracle, I beat you there and manage to get the door shut, it is not necessary to claw, whine, meow, and try to turn the knob or get your paw under the edge in an attempt to open the door. I must exit through the same door I entered. Also, I have been using the bathroom for years – canine/ feline attendance is not required.

The proper order for kissing is: Kiss me first, then go smell the other dog's or cat's butt. I cannot stress this enough. Finally, in fairness, dear pets, I have posted the following message on the front door:

**TO ALL NON-PET OWNERS WHO VISIT AND COMPLAIN** – (1) They live here and you don't. (2) If you don't want their hair on your clothes, stay off the

furniture. That's why they call it "fur"niture. (3) I like my pets much better than I like most people. (4) To you, they are animals. To me they are adopted sons/daughters who are short, hairy, walk on all fours and don't speak clearly.

Remember, dogs and cats are better than kids because they: (1) eat less, (2) don't ask for money all the time, (3) are easier to train, (4) normally come when called, (5) never ask to drive the car, (6) don't hang out with drug-using people, (7) don't drink or smoke, (8) don't want to wear your clothes, (9) don't have to buy the latest fashions, (10) don't need a gazillion dollars for college and (11) **if they get pregnant, you can sell the children**.

Now, having passed on this bit of humor, I hope that you all had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New year and hope to see you in Portland in May.

Gloria J. Hobby  
Falconess 6  
229-378-2281  
gloriahobby@yahoo.com



## Chaplain's Corner

Seems like it was only yesterday that we were greeting one another with the joy of the birth of a Savior. Many have developed a set procedure for celebrating. Some families always get together at a certain location. They meet at parents' homes or rotate among the siblings' homes. Some will not be able to do that again this year. Being service related we all know the difficulties of being apart due to remote assignments. The house is not the same, someone is absent, someone may be in harm's way and we have anxious moments; on the other side of that equation in the area of service is a group of people doing their best to make it a cheerful setting. In 1965 at An Khe we were blessed with a special Christmas gift from one of the wives back home.

Joanne Woodruff, wife of Al Woodruff, C Battery, 2/20 ARA, did the most wonderful thing by sending us a mannequin dressed to the nine as Saint Barbara. She found an aviator friend who was flying an Army aircraft to Vietnam and requested he bring Saint Barbara to us. The Officers' Club was the place to be that evening. Barbara was standing in the club looking her best. To many of us she was the only American (mannequin) woman we had seen since leaving Hawaii in September while in route. A lot of pictures were taken that evening. I know that I still have mine.

Barbara was the talk of ARA for many years and continues to use a lot of ink when we start a history of our time in Vietnam. Thanks, again, to Joanne for making that Christmas special for all of us.

I ran across one of our early Straphangers designed by Al Woodruff, sent from An Khe on Monday, 20 Dec 65, with a Christmas message from our battalion commander and I include it as published for your reading today:

*As we live here in a country foreign to us in its ways and customs, we think of our families back home – wives, parents, children – with whom we would certainly wish to be during this Christmas Season. But it cannot be so, for we have tasks before us. One which, if successful as we believe it will be, will insure that our families can continue to enjoy the freedoms we have grown to cherish. So at this joyous season, let us be thankful that we have the opportunity to do this job and although separated physically from our loved ones, we shall be together in thought as we appreciate our own fellowship within the battalion.*

*I wish each and every one of you a Happy, Joyful, and Holy Christmas with the fervent hope that we can all rejoin our families for the Christmases to come..*

*Signed: Nelson A Mahone Jr  
Lt Colonel Nelson A. Mahone, Jr.*

Colonel Mahone's message remains true for us today as it did in 1965. And now, may the peace that passes all human understanding be with each of you as we remember all our veterans and service members everywhere.

Peace,  
Bruce Wilder, Chaplain



### C Btry ARA

Photo from Rob Eggleston who was the Flight Operations Specialist in C/2/42 and A/3/377, both were 11th AAD ARA units (63 - 65) - Appari Heliport at Fort Benning, GA in 1963. Substitute CPT Don Bennett for CPT Horton and CPT Chuck Mercer for CPT Goodspeed. CPT Lew Henderson had already been promoted to Major and went on to command C/2/42, which was the first ARA Battery, then to command "A" Btry in 3/377 which was the first ARA Battalion, finally commanded 4/77, the ARA Battalion of the 101st ABN after Bartholomew was killed. Don Bennett was Platoon Leader in C/2/42, then Hq Btry Commander in 3/377, then Platoon Leader in B/2/20. Rob Eggleston went to flight school, became a Warrant Officer then was direct commissioned and retired as a Major.

			Sgt Work				Pfc Snyder			
Sp5 Usinski	Sgt Wilson	Ssg Shoemaker		Pfc Gelmetti	Sp5 McElroy	Pfc Sheppard	Sp4 Eggleston		Sp4 Flores	Sfc Madrid
			Pfc Nagi	Sgt Pender			Sp4 Whitlock		Sp4 Crum	Sp5 Alman
		CWO Gay	Cpt Mach Goodspeed	Cpt Niebrugge	Cpt Henderson	Cpt Horton	Cpt Ginter	1Lt D'Ares		



## AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

### Membership Application

This form may be used for Applying for New Membership or for Renewing Existing Membership. Please circle that which is appropriate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
(At time of service in ARA)

Membership Number \_\_\_\_\_  
(If known)

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

Service Number \_\_\_\_\_

#### List all ARA Units that you served in.

<u>Battery/Battalion</u>	<u>Dates of Service</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>
_____	From mo/yr to mo/yr	_____
_____	From mo/yr to mo/yr	_____

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street or PO Box

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Work (if okay) 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.**

Annual dues are **\$25.00** regardless of when submitting.

Life membership (if paid in full) is **\$250.00**. Life membership may also 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**  
Check # \_\_\_\_\_  
Check Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Amount \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Rcvd \_\_\_\_\_

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