



The Straphanger Gazette



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October—December, 2021

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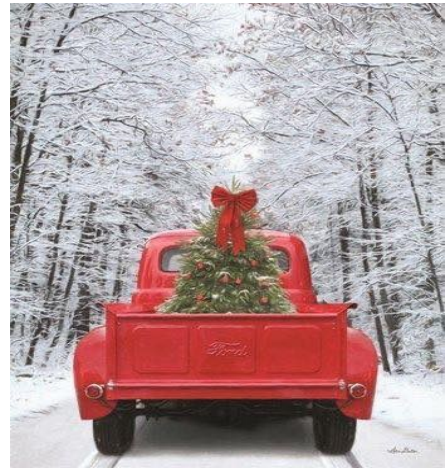


“Aerial Rocket Artillery”....when called on by those who were in danger, our units were there laying it on the line.

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 Country Christmas “God Bless Us— Everyone.”



President's Corner

Dear Members, Family Members, Readers and Guests,

Here's trusting all of you are well and that you had a Merry Christmas, Joyous Holiday Season, and Happy New Year. Please continue to take good care of yourselves and Loved Ones.

I look forward to see you at our Virginia Reunion in September. I highly encourage you to make your hotel reservations and register early. Jule Szabo has done an excellent job planning our 2022 Reunion and securing a superb Farewell Keynote Speaker. See the Reunion update in this newsletter.

Our Treasurer, Jesse Hobby, has provided a 2022 Reunion for your use in this issue of our newsletter. Please register as soon as your plans to attend are firm. The Marriott Fair Oaks Hotel, 1787 Lee Jackson Memorial Hwy, Fairfax, VA 22033. (Cut & Paste) <https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1630522625677&key=GRP&app=resvlink> You may also call the Reservations Department at 1-888-236-2427 and reference the group by name and date. (August 14-18, 2022). The last date for reservations is **August 17, 2022**

If you have notes, books, journals, mission briefings, personal accounts of missions, audio recordings, or videos of ARA operations and your experiences while in Vietnam; please send copies to the Morris Swett Library to be archived to document the history of Aerial Rocket Artillery.

Send to:

Morris Swett Library,

730 SCHIMMELPFENNIG ROAD, FORT SILL, OK 73503

Blessings to you, your families, and Loved Ones.

STAY WELL, HEALTHY, AND PROTECTED AS WE STILL HAVE CHALLENGES !!!

All the Best,

Clovis Jones, Jr.
ARA 6

Our Farewell Banquet Speaker Knows Vietnam

Erik Villard, our **guest speaker for the ARA farewell dinner**, is a graduate of Occidental College and the University of Washington. He has worked at the U.S. Army Center of Military History since 2000 as a specialist in the Vietnam War. He is the world's leading expert on the 1968 Tet Offensive and has written two books on the Vietnam War: *The 1968 TET Offensive Battles of Quang Tri City* and *Hue and US combat operations in 1967-1968*.

In his personal time, he directs the Facebook group [VietnamWarHistoryOrg](#), which has grown to nearly 25,000 members since its inception in the spring of 2014.

The Digital Military Historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Fort McNair, DC, as well as an Army historian of the Vietnam War, Erik says, "In my role as the DMH, producing websites on the Army in WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam War, I will, eventually, create 12 websites covering the entire span of Army history; and all will be found on the [www.history.army.mil](#) site for CMH. All of the enhanced pics I publish are free to be used and are designed to promote history and heritage education efforts for the US Army, the veteran community, and public learning institutions".

His passion is for teaching, enjoying public speaking, and avidly is an avid follower of trends in digital technology. This passion for US Army history has lead him to develop an online visual database of the Vietnam War using Google Earth-based 4-D GIS (Geographic Information System) technology. The Google Earth project will layer (South) Vietnam with Photoshop-enhanced military maps, custom icons, contemporary photos, and colored shapes to identify all of the units, installations, lines of communication, terrain features, engagements, administrative boundaries, and any other information that a researcher might want to view; ie. location of downed aircraft, the best bars in Saigon, *whatever*.

This promises to be an exciting and memorable evening of *déjà vu* after 50+ years have passed.

Editor's Note: On the following page you will find the sign up sheet for the Reunion. Jule and Joan Szabo have done a great job in pulling together the reunion program and the costs.

However, "be advised", inflation is taking the country by storm and things may change. After much thought and discussion, it was decided by the Board to increase the registration fee to \$45 to cover the possibility of increasing venue costs. If we come in under budget, the increase can be refunded to the member, retained for future reunions (or even buy a round of drinks).

Note the dates of September 14-18 as a correction of previous publications.





ARA – REUNION – FAIRFAX VIRGINIA

23rd ARA REUNION, SEPTEMBER 14 – 18, 2022

Reunion Registration Form

Send form and check(s) made payable to **ARA ASSOCIATION** to:

ARA ASSOCIATION
c/o Jesse L. Hobby
145 Oakdale Road. SE
Cairo, GA 39828-3803

Information	
Name/Membership #	
Wife/Guest name(s)	
Additional Guest(s)	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Any special assistance/ needs required	

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

Please get your registrations in by August 15, 2022 so that we may finalize all plans and secure set prices for events.
Registration forms will be numbered upon receipt in order to secure seats on bus.

REGISTRATION/ EVENT FEES	Details	Price	# In party	Total
Registration Fee	Per member in party over 18	\$45.00		
Annual Membership Dues	If not already paid for 2022	\$25.00		
Wednesday – Welcome Dinner	Per member in party	47.00		
Thursday – Vietnam Memorial & U.S. Army Museum Tour	Per member in party – (includes bus & lunch)	35.00		
Friday – Smithsonian Udvar-Hazy Center Tour	Per member in party (includes bus & lunch)	30.00		
Saturday – Final Banquet	Per member in party	60.00		
Total for Reunion	-----			

Artillery, Birddogs, Medivac and The ARA

This is an excerpt from a soon-to-be-published book titled "Red Marker History" by Gary N. Willis. It is about 'Medivac Meadows', an operation in Cambodia by the ARA of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1970.

Contributed by Brian Russ

Medivac Meadows¹

The Vietnamese 6th Airborne Infantry Battalion moved with the 1st Brigade from Song Be during early May, reinforcing the three battalions already engaged in the Fishhook. The battalion headquartered at Fire Support Base (FSB) Oklahoma while its troopers maneuvered in the region. FSB Oklahoma was about ten miles inside Cambodia off Highway 7 on the eastern edge of the Memot Rubber Plantation.² The fire base was the operational home of a Vietnamese Artillery Battalion of 105 mm howitzers and the long range 8-inch howitzers of A Battery of the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, the "Proud Americans."

On 23 May, a task force of the 61st and 63rd Companies of the 6th Battalion encountered NVA troops during a ground sweep about eight miles southeast of FSB Oklahoma. After a brief fight, the NVA withdrew to the west side of a clearing oriented southeast to northwest, and the Airborne retired to the east. The battalion senior advisor, Red Hat Captain Jesse Myers overhead in a command-and-control helicopter called for artillery fire from FSB Oklahoma and asked Red Marker Control to divert some airstrikes to the enemy's possible routes of withdrawal.

The artillery fire mission required extra caution. Only eighty meters separated the NVA on the west side of the clearing from the Airborne troopers on the east side. The standard safe distance from an 8-inch round with its 200 pounds of explosive was 100 meters for unsheltered personnel. A miscalculation could prove fatal. The howitzers' alignment, elevation, and propellant charge had to be just right. The fire control center made its calculations and then double checked them. Then A Battery Commander, Captain Lee Hayden, double checked the "double check" by hand.³ Myers watched the first shots land on target and gave the okay to fire for effect.

A Red Marker FAC arrived on scene and orbited to the east awaiting a set of fighters scrambled from Bien Hoa. Myers briefed the FAC and shut down the artillery when the fighters arrived. They bombed and napalmed the western tree line as darkness fell. The Airborne dug in for the night. Overnight, FSB Oklahoma stood ready if needed, but only sporadic small arms fire came from the opposite side of the clearing.

At dawn on the 24th, the NVA attacked in strength. The Airborne drove them back while suffering several killed and eight wounded seriously. Myers again called on the artillery at FSB Oklahoma and requested Red Markers direct some airstrikes on the NVA positions. Red Marker 16, Lieutenant Blair, already in the air, diverted to the site to control immediate airstrikes. After the two Airborne companies secured the area, the Red Hats on the ground, Staff Sergeants Louis Clason and Michael Philhower, requested Medevac. Myers relayed the request to Brigade HQ and asked for gunship cover. The request went out to the 1st Air Cavalry's Medevac and Blue Max gunships units at about 1100 hours.⁴

A Medevac helicopter piloted by "The Wild Deuce" (official call sign Medevac 2), First Lieutenant Stephen F. Modica, and a pair of Cobra gunships, Precise Sword 12 and 12A, received the requests for the evacuation mission. Modica was en route from Phuoc Vinh to Katum when he got the call. Red Hat Sergeant First Class Louis Richard Rocco, happened to be on board hitching a ride to Katum. Rocco, a qualified medic and advisor to the Airborne's Medical Battalion, sometimes volunteered to fly on Medevac flights. When Rocco heard Medevac 2 was headed to pick up wounded paratroopers, he asked to stay on board and help. Modica landed at Katum, offloaded some supplies, and picked up a steel chest protector for Rocco. The Wild Deuce departed Katum toward the task force location, rendezvousing along the way with the Blue Max gunships, Precise Sword 12 and 12A. Meanwhile, another Red Marker relieved Blair, who returned to Quan Loi for fuel. Myers again shut down the artillery while the Red Marker FAC directed more bombs into the western tree line. In the early afternoon as the airstrike finished, the trio of helicopters neared the clearing. Myers briefed them on the situation and suggested a run in from the south. Precise Sword 12 deployed low to protect the Medevac, and Precise Sword 12 A remained as high bird to cover them both.

The Cobra gunships responded immediately. They returned fire with 2.75-inch high explosive and flechette rockets and 40 mm grenade launchers, hoping to suppress the enemy fire long enough for Medevac 2 to get the wounded on board and get to safety.

1 The description of the following event is based on a number of sources, which contained sometimes conflicting detail: magazine article by then Captain Stephen F. Modica, "U.S. Army Aviation Digest," June 1975; letter written by Red Hat Major Jesse W. Myers in response to that article; emails among various surviving participants including Jerry Granberg and Ralph Jones (artillerymen) and Patrick Martin (Medevac crew chief), Major (R) Jesse Myers; Cobra pilots George Alexander and Paul Garrity, and other sources as individually footnoted.

2 Grid Coordinates XU425098, per the History of the "Proud Americans" at https://proudamericans.homestead.com/VIETNAM_1963-1971-1.pdf

3 Emails July 2021, former Lieutenant Jerry Granberg, second in command, A Battery, 2nd of the 32nd Field Artillery.

4 Medevac Platoon, 15th Medical Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Division, and Aerial Rocket Artillery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Division.

All Hell Broke Loose

The Wild Deuce came in low and fast with Precise Sword 12 to his left. They approached from the south just above the treetops. Modica wanted to give any North Vietnamese gunners only the briefest glimpse of the Medevac helicopter before setting down, loading wounded, and speeding away. Red Hat Clason, advisor to the Vietnamese 63rd Airborne Infantry Company, stepped out in the clearing and watched the green colored smoke spew from the smoke grenade he'd popped to guide The Wild Deuce. Behind the tree line, Philhower, advisor to 61st Company commander Captain Nhiem, manned the FM radio. Everyone heard the distinctive whup-whup-whup of the Huey's blades well before it entered the clearing. Lieutenant Hwang, commander of the 63rd had stretcher bearers waiting in the tree line with seriously wounded troopers. Hwang and Clason waited tensely, hoping they could load the men without any trouble. Modica brought the ship into the clearing, lined up on Clason, and expertly flared for touchdown.

Just then, all hell broke loose. AK-47 and .51 caliber machine gun fire ripped into the cabin from the southwestern tree line.

The Medevac's door gunners opened up with their M-60 machine guns. Rocco fired his M-16 out the left door into the trees. Modica felt two enemy slugs glance off his "chicken plate" steel chest protector. At the same time, a third round shattered his left knee. The Medevac pancaked into the clearing. Copilot Lieutenant Leroy (Lee) G. Caurbarreaux swiveled his head to give Modica some shit for such a bad landing before realizing Steve was hit. Lee immediately grabbed the controls. "I've got the ship!" he shouted over the intercom. As he pulled pitch and poured on full power, Caurbarreaux jabbed the UHF key, shouting now to the two Cobra gunships, "Precise Swords One Two and One Two Alpha, we are outta here! Cover us!" Sergeant Clason hot-footed it out of the clearing as Medevac 2 spooled up and climbed toward safety. But safety was a long way off. Coming in hot and low approaching the clearing made the bird harder to hit. Liftoff was a different matter. The UH-1H helicopter took time to get back up to speed and out of the clearing. The NVA gunners got a clear view of the slow-moving Huey and unleashed everything they had. The entire western tree line lit up. From the left seat, Modica saw the RPM going way past normal maximum and knew they were in trouble. He switched to Guard channel and broadcast, "The Wild Deuce is going down! XU5101! MAYDAY! MAYDAY! XU5101!"⁵

At about 50 feet in the air, gunfire and aerodynamic stress ripped the tail boom from the ship. The Huey spun out of control, crashing to the ground on its right side. Smoke billowed from the chopper as the fuel tanks burst into flame. In his C&C chopper, Myers watched in horror as the Medevac seemed to land, then shot almost straight up and fell to the ground on its side thrashing briefly like a wounded insect. He thought at first it had fallen on Clason. In fact, Clason was not hurt, unlike the Medevac crew. Sergeant Gary L. Taylor, right side door gunner, died on impact, crushed by the aircraft. Medic SP5 Terry T. Burdette was badly burned and suffered multiple fractures. Crew chief and left door gunner, Sergeant Patrick Martin, was thrown clear and knocked unconscious. Rocco was also thrown clear, breaking a wrist and hip. Modica's leg was shattered, and Caurbarreaux had multiple cuts and bruises. Precise Sword 12 immediately came to a hover in front of the burning wreck. First Lieutenant George Alexander swiveled the minigun under the Cobra's chin, spraying the tree line. Warrant Officer Brian Russ, piloting from the back seat, rotated the gunship left and right releasing salvo after salvo of high explosive rockets into the enemy position. Their ship sustained 29 hits including several that destroyed the cockpit canopy. One round blew the mic off Russ's helmet, but the airmen held their position.

Meanwhile, Precise Sword 12A strafed the tree line with rockets, minigun, and 40 mm grenade launcher. Warrant Officer 2 Paul Garrity and his copilot Warrant Officer James Moran took several hits, although the enemy focused most of its attention on the lower gunship. When the Medevac hit the ground, Philhower dropped the radio handset and sprinted toward the clearing, leaving Myers in the dark. Even without radio communication, Myers knew the paratroopers would try to get any survivors out of the downed bird. Lieutenant Hwang immediately sent a skirmish line of 63rd Company troopers forward to provide covering fire while Clason and Philhower approached the wreck. Myers informed FSB Oklahoma about the crisis in the clearing and asked for more artillery fire. The 8-inchers stepped up their fire on the western tree line, keeping the NVA's head down. The enemy did not venture into the clearing. Precise Sword 12 and 12A kept up covering fire as the two Red Hat Staff Sergeants pulled survivors from the wreckage and helped them to the friendly tree line. The gunships coordinated two attempts by other helicopters to pick up the downed crewmen before running out of ammo and low on fuel. Lieutenant Alexander briefed another gunship section that appeared on scene so they could try a third attempt. Precise Swords then flew to Quan Loi and jumped into replacement aircraft and returned to the Meadow. Clason and Philhower were awarded the Silver Star for their actions. Vice President Agnew presented the awards at a ceremony shortly afterwards. Sergeant First Class Rocco was recognized several years later for rescuing survivors from the chopper and administering first aid before he became immobilized from his injuries.⁶ He was awarded the Medal of Honor presented by President Gerald Ford in February 1974. The Medevac pilot and crew also received awards for bravery. Modica received a Silver Star and Caurbarreaux, Taylor (posthumously), Burdette, and Martin each a Distinguished Flying Cross.⁷ Those were not the only awards conferred, for this engagement was far from over.

Jesse Myers knew what needed to happen next. The two Airborne companies had run into a buzz saw. But they had given better than they had gotten in return. They had a good defensive position and overwhelming artillery and air support. The only thing they did not have was mobility. A good tactic would have been to pull back and bring in a B-52 ArcLight mission to pound the enemy. But with the number of wounded and injured, the paratroopers could not easily withdraw. They would not abandon their wounded, and they could not easily move them. They needed to hold their position until after a successful evacuation of casualties.

Failed Rescue Attempts

Modica's Mayday call on Guard attracted numerous helicopters wanting to immediately pick up the wounded crew and Vietnamese troopers. The Medevac Platoon made three attempts that afternoon. The first ship was driven off by intense ground fire. It limped back to Quan Loi where a wounded crewman got medical attention. Some of the enemy ground fire now came from the north and south sides of the clearing. The NVA apparently were attempting to flank the two companies or at least be in position to score more hits on helicopters they knew would be coming. Myers adjusted the artillery to compensate.

Captain Myers advised the second and third helicopters attempting a pickup to approach from the east directly over the Airborne position and land as close to the tree line as possible. However, the pilots of the next two sorties flew the same pattern that failed all day. They came in from the south parallel to the Airborne position, exposing themselves to enemy fire the length of the field. Although the NVA crippled both planes, the pilots successfully landed the damaged craft in a clearing several hundred meters from the firefight. Other helicopters in the area picked up those crews and took them to safety. But the wounded paratroopers and the injured crew of Medevac 2 would spend the night on the ground with no medical care except first aid

5 The grid coordinates Modica screamed into the mike designated a one-kilometer square of territory about five miles inside the Fishhook north of Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam. In an article Modica wrote for the magazine "Army Aviation," he incorrectly stated the coordinates as XU5606, which is right on the border of Cambodia and Vietnam rather than five miles inside. Chalk that up to the "Fog of War" and frailty of human memory. Interestingly, "5606" is the designation of the hydraulic fluid used in the Huey, which might explain why the number came to Modica's mind while writing from memory about five years later. According to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots' Association, XU507010 is the six digit grid coordinate for the downed Medevac.

6 From the Citation to accompany the Congressional Medal of Honor awarded to Warrant Officer (then Sergeant First Class) Louis Richard Rocco.

7 The Blue Max aircraft commanders, Lt. Alexander and WO2 Garrity were recommended for the Silver Star, but that paperwork was lost. To date, neither has received recognition for their skill and courage.

The Red Markers diverted more strike aircraft to Medevac Meadow, where Myers informed them of the expanded targets. For several hours, fighter aircraft bombed and strafed the enemy-held tree lines on the north, south, and west sides of the clearing. Red Marker 26, Lieutenant Lloyd L. Prevett, piloting an O-2A from Phuoc Vinh, flew 4.8 hours, his longest mission of the war. The twin engine O-2A had a rocket pod of seven rockets under each wing. During his mission, Prevett expended all fourteen smoke rockets, one at a time, marking different strike locations around the perimeter of Medevac Meadow. After running out of Willie Pete, he marked targets with smoke grenades tossed out of the pilot-side window. Prevett remembers most of the fighters he controlled were F-100's. He recalls at least one flight of A-37's and a few Vietnamese A1E's. Prevett recalls: "One interesting note is I requested a flight with wall-to-wall nape and 20 mm, figuring it would be a standard load of snake and nape. I was shocked when a flight of two F-100's showed up with just nape and 20mm. When I put them in, the nape uncovered a fortified bunker and of course, no snake to employ. Took care of that on the next flight. My hat is off to all the fighter pilots that showed up that day. They put their asses on the line to ensure each and every drop was right where it was needed. Gives me shivers today thinking about what everyone did to try and protect the guys on the ground."⁸ Lloyd did not record the number of strikes he directed, but remembers being amazed on his way back to Phuoc Vinh at the amount of grease pencil writing on the side window. He had scribbled on the plexiglass the standard info for each flight ... mission number, call sign, number of fighters in the flight, ordnance load, expected time of arrival on scene, and bomb damage assessment. Given the number of strikes Prevett controlled, it is a wonder he saw anything through that window. The O-2A could fly for more than six hours if conserving fuel with a lean mixture and cruise power setting. But directing airstrikes with the mixture rich and power often "balls to the wall" for almost five hours, Prevett's O-2 was near minimum fuel when he landed at Phuoc Vinh. The crew chief refueled and rearmed the Skymaster, cleaned the inside of the window, and the detailed record of those strike missions was lost to history. ⁸ Emails with Lloyd Prevett, Dec 2020. Radio operator Sergeant Jim Yeonopolus manned Red Marker Control outside the Airborne Tactical Operations Center at Quan Loi. He remembers the firefight became more hectic about 1500, when the FACs asked him to call up additional airstrikes. As daylight faded, the fighting became more intense. At that point, Red Hat Sergeants John A. Brubaker and James H. Collier asked Yeonopolus if he would accompany them to the Meadow and stay on the ground overnight to call in air support if needed. Jim told them he would be more effective with his full set of radios at Quan Loi. Brubaker and Collier did not make it into Medevac Meadow. They may have been on the third helicopter turned away by ground fire trying to get into the clearing. Until nightfall, Red Markers continued to direct airstrikes into the enemy positions. Red Marker 18, Lieutenant Gary Willis, controlled two more F-100 flights just before dark. According to Captain Myers, the Red Markers directed 36 tactical air sorties during two days at Medevac Meadow. One Red Marker dropped canisters of water to the Red Beret troopers who had not been resupplied for two days. Most of the containers missed the mark or burst upon landing, but some made it into the perimeter intact. ⁹ Early the next morning, the Medevac crew chief and copilot retrieved a few glass bottles of saline solution that survived the wreck and fire. ¹⁰ Overnight, the artillery support from Oklahoma became even more important. The NVA assaulted the Airborne position three times during the night. The Proud Americans at Oklahoma responded each time with precise artillery fire, sometimes extremely close to the eastern tree line. Many of those gunners had not slept much during the last 48 hours. The Red Hats also called on flare ships and gunships to help defend the Airborne position. A Rescue Plan Myers returned to the 6th Battalion's command post at FSB Oklahoma, monitoring the situation on the ground via the radio net. At the firebase, he received a surprise visit from Lieutenant General Davison, II Field Force Commander, who asked simply, "What do you need. Captain?" Myers replied, "Sir, need a B-52 strike." Davidson said, "You've got it."

The general left and ordered an Arc Light mission for 1700 hours the next day. Brigadier General Shoemaker flew in later that night to be briefed on the situation. Shoemaker was a principal architect of airmobile warfare concepts and an experienced helicopter pilot. He flew his own command and control chopper throughout his tour.¹¹ Shoemaker listened to all the information about the condition of the wounded (there were now about 40 casualties), the resupply situation, and the ability of the troopers to hold on. He vowed to return in the morning with additional resources and a plan. He arrived the next day with three Medevac choppers, including two borrowed from another unit, and six Cobra gunships. The 15th Medical Battalion commander flew in with his Huey to direct the Medevac birds. The Cobra commander flew a Huey B-Model gunship. One command and control helicopter carried the leaders of the ground forces, the advisors, and the artillery: Lieutenant Colonel Phuoc, Vietnamese 6th Battalion commander; Red Hat Captain Myers, battalion senior advisor; Captain Hayden, commander of A Battery, 2nd of the 32nd Field Artillery; and the Vietnamese artillery commander. Shoemaker was in overall control in his own Huey.¹² Beginning at 0930, Red Markers directed a series of strikes into the perimeter of Medevac Meadow controlled by the well-bunkered NVA. As the airstrikes ended at 1100, according to Myers' description:¹³ "The plan was for the LZ to be ringed by Arty fire, friendly troops, and gunship suppressive fire. After we were airborne, we first adjusted the Arty. There were two ARVN 105mm How batteries, an ARVN 155 mm How battery, and the American 8-inch battery.¹⁴ The prep was fired and the wood line was smoked¹⁵ and then the extraction was started. Arty fires were not shut down, but shifted to form a corridor through which the Medevac ships were to fly. The gunships formed a continuous "daisy chain" whereby suppressive fire was kept on the area of greatest enemy concentration." After the artillery adjustment, Shoemaker flew his chopper at low level the length of the field to check the safety of the corridor before clearing the gunships and Medevac birds to proceed.¹⁶ The plan worked almost to perfection. The Medevacs came in, loaded up and took off in short order. The first two in line made it out of the clearing without any damage, but the third ship was hit heavily, sank back to the ground, and began to burn. The Cobra commander immediately dropped into Medevac Meadow with his Huey gunship, picked up the men who had been on the third rescue bird, and safely exited the hot LZ. The next day Silver Stars were awarded to nine rescue participants. Nineteen days later, General Shoemaker received the same award. General Dong, commander of the Vietnamese Airborne, presented a Cross of Gallantry in a ceremony at FSB Oklahoma to Captain Hayden and Lieutenant Granberg for the excellent work by their 8-inch battery. Back in the Fight, relieved of their serious casualties, the Airborne companies withdrew a couple of clicks to the southeast. Resupply choppers soon arrived with food, water, ammo, and medical supplies. At 1700 hours, the promised Arc Light mission hit the west side of Medevac Meadow. A light helicopter sent later to assess the damage was driven off by ground fire but not before seeing the NVA lining up their dead in rows. The 61st and 63rd swept the area the next day capturing weapons, signal equipment, and some wounded combatants. Some of those were in a hospital complex. ¹² Shoemaker logged 14.3 hours flying time on 25 May 1970 per Individual Flight Record, DA Form 759-1, Archives Texas A & M University - Central Texas ¹³ From Myers letter to "U.S. Army Aviation Digest," undated but shortly after June 1975. ¹⁴ Myers does not know the location of the Vietnamese batteries engaged in this effort. The Vietnamese had their own forward observers and controlled their own batteries. ¹⁵ With white phosphorous shells to screen the evacuation flight path ¹⁶ Per General Order Number 2605, Award of the Silver Star Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster) to Brigadier General Robert M. Shoemaker, 13 June 1970. The first award of the Silver Star and of a Distinguished Flying Cross to then Colonel Shoemaker came in 1965 as a Battalion Commander with the 12th Cavalry Regiment. The two companies continued to battle in the Fishhook until withdrawn with the rest of 6th Battalion on 25 June. At that point, each company had about 40 effectives remaining. The engagement at Medevac Meadow impressed Myers in a number of ways, as he wrote in his letter to "Army Aviation Digest:" "I saw time and again the courage and concern of one pilot on behalf of another. I saw outstanding teamwork between ARVN and American forces, between air and ground forces, and between combat and combat support forces. I saw magnificent employment of air/ground coordination to provide massed fires. I saw commanders all the way up to the three-star level who were vitally interested and concerned for the welfare of their men and who were willing to get personally involved to remedy a bad situation. And finally, I saw raw courage and heroism displayed time and time again by U.S. and ARVN soldiers alike."¹⁷

⁸ Emails with Lloyd Prevett, Dec 2020.

⁹ The Red Marker is unknown. It could have been Lieutenant Blair, Lieutenant Byron L Mayberry, or Lieutenant Shaevitz, all of whom are now deceased. The author suspects it was an O-2A FAC because Myers states the plane made several passes dropping containers from its armament shackles. The O-1 could only drop from all of its pylons at once using an emergency "jettison" button. The O-2 could select a single shackle and drop one at a time.

¹⁰ Emails, Jan-Jul 2021, former Sergeant Patrick Martin, crew chief on Medevac 2, Medevac Platoon, 15th Medical Battalion.

¹¹ Lieutenant General (R) H.G. "Pete" Taylor, telephone interviews, January 2021.

¹² Shoemaker logged 14.3 hours flying time on 25 May 1970 per Individual Flight Record, DA Form 759-1, Archives Texas A & M University - Central Texas

¹³ From Myers letter to "U.S. Army Aviation Digest," undated but shortly after June 1975.

¹⁴ Myers does not know the location of the Vietnamese batteries engaged in this effort. The Vietnamese had their own forward observers and controlled their own batteries.

¹⁵ With white phosphorous shells to screen the evacuation flight path

¹⁶ Per General Order Number 2605, Award of the Silver Star Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster) to Brigadier General Robert M. Shoemaker, 13 June 1970. The first award of the Silver Star and of a Distinguished Flying Cross to then Colonel Shoemaker came in 1965 as a Battalion Commander with the 12th Cavalry Regiment

¹⁷ Myers letter.

THOUGHTS FOR 2022

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

— Maya Angelou

Go and make interesting mistakes, make amazing mistakes, make glorious and fantastic mistakes. Break rules. Leave the world more interesting for your being here.

— Neil Gaiman

Flying the JATO -Assist Cobra

By Randy Larsen

Not many folks are likely to have flown a “JATO-Assisted” helicopter.

I did, just one time. JATO stands for jet fuel assisted takeoff. The most famous demonstration of this system is the Blue Angels C-130, known as Fat Albert.

It works great on airplanes, such as the C-130, for reducing the length of takeoff rolls or providing steep climb outs, but who ever heard of putting JATO on a helicopter?

In April 1969, I was flying a combat mission in the Republic of South Vietnam as an aircraft commander in an AH-1G Huey Cobra gunship. I was the wingman in a two-ship formation. An infantry company from the 101st Airborne Division was in a nasty firefight with an unknown-sized enemy unit. Because the American unit was trapped in a tight valley, we had to confine our rocket and machine guns passes down that valley— making our flight path highly predictable (bad idea, but no other options available). On each run down that valley, I was firing 3-4 pairs of 2.75 inch folding-fin aerial rockets (FFARs) from my inboard rocket pods. (These rockets had 17-pound warheads, which made them the equivalent of a 105 howitzer round.) As I pushed the nose over to begin our fourth pass, my copilot was firing the mini-gun (in the turret) in response to tracers coming from halfway up the mountain slope on our right. I armed the outboard pods and was flying at near redline airspeed (190 knots) and suddenly found myself pinned to the right side of the cockpit. Out of my peripheral vision I could see an enormous fireball on the right side of my Cobra. I then experienced one of those rare moments when everything seems to slow down. What seemed like a long time actually occurred in about 2-3 seconds, or less:

I realized my right outboard XM-19 rocket pod (loaded with 13 2.75 inch FFARs) was engulfed in a fireball

I reached for the pod eject switch on the center console between my knees

I actually thought about switching to “outboard only” (we flew in the “both position” (inboard and outboard)

I decided to dump all four pods, and in one motion lifted the cover and flipped the switch

Instantaneously, the Cobra went from what seemed like a 30 degree crab left from the forward track of the helicopter back to proper alignment.

My mission was over, and I returned home without further incident.

Since the bad guys were known to use unexploded 2.75 FEMI as land mines, the infantry unit eventually recovered all four pods.

One had a large bullet hole in the side and was extensively damaged by the fire.

Apparently, the bullet had jammed a rocket in the tube just as it was launched (or perhaps, it ignited the rocket motor and caused the jam). Either way, I had one or more rockets and a JATO-assist on the starboard side of my Cobra. The stress on the tail boom from redline airspeed with the nose 30 degrees off of the relative wind must have been incredible.

Thanks to the folks at Bell Helicopter, I made it back to Camp Eagle—still shaking, but happy to have survived a short flight in a JATO-assisted Cobra. I was still too young to ‘buy’ a can of beer, but do recall drinking a few (perhaps many) that night.

LESSONS LEARNED :

Don’t put JATO-assist on a helicopter but if you do, make sure it is on both sides. It is very uncomfortable when it is just on one side

Randy Larsen, Dragon 31D

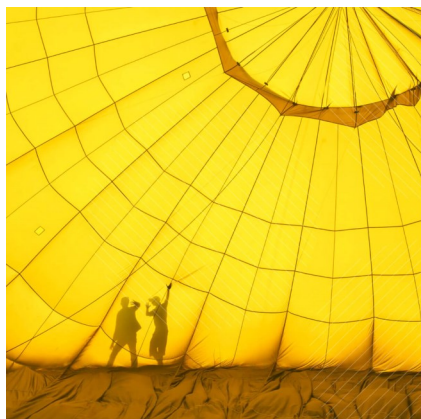
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101st Airborne Division ~ 1968-69

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My second greatest thrill of a lifetime is flying The first you ask ? Landing !

Rodger McAlister



Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance.

~
Martha Graham

The Army Cobra Pilot

Contributed by Jim Casl BlueMax3500-2000@yahoo.com

As seen by himself:

An incredibly intelligent, tall, handsome, innovative, and highly trained professional killer, idol to countless females, and Gentleman Adventurer, who wears a star sapphire ring, carries a hair-trigger .45 automatic in a specially designed, hand-made quick draw holster along with his trusty survival knife, who is always on time thanks to his ability to obtain immediate transportation and the reliability of his Rolex watch.

As seen by his wife:

A disreputable member of the family who comes home once a year all bruised up, driving a stolen jeep up to the back door carrying a B-4 bag full of dirty laundry, wearing a stained flight suit, smelling of stale booze and JP-4, wearing a huge watch, a fake ring, and that damn ugly beat-up pistol in that stupid holster, who will three months later go out the front door, thankfully for another year.

As seen by his commander:

A fine specimen of a drunken, brawling, jeep stealing, woman corrupting liar, with a star sapphire ring, fantastically accurate Rolex watch, an unauthorized .45 in a non-regulation shoulder holster, and trusty survival knife.

As seen by Division Headquarters:

The embodiment of a drunken, brawling, jeep stealing, woman corrupting, lying, zipper-suited **Sun** God, with a ring, a proscribed 1911A1 .45 in a non-regulation shoulder holster, a Rolex watch, who for some reason carries a survival knife.

As seen by the DoD:

An overpaid, rule-ignoring, over-ranked tax burden, who is unfortunately totally indispensable simply because he has volunteered to go anywhere, and do anything, at any time, only so long as he can booze it up, brawl, steal jeeps, corrupt women, lie, and wear a star sapphire ring, Rolex watch, and carry an obsolete hand gun and a survival knife.

As seen by the enemy:

The implacable inescapable face of death!

Why you shouldn't wait until retirement
to travel





Chaplain's Corner

Editors Note: I am a poor substitute for our beloved Chaplin, Bruce Wilder, but desperate times call for desperate measures.

“No More Tears”

I believe we will all agree that 2020-2021 has been a difficult span of time. There have been too many deaths from Covid-19 and its variants. Too many personal encounters and gatherings cancelled and postponed. Too much money lost due to various economic downturns, shortages, job loss and too many businesses having to shutter their livelihoods. Our Association has had to twice cancel our annual reunion and we have had to live with the threat of our age, our wounds, our disabilities and our infected fellow man culminating our lives with a disease for which we had no cure or vaccine. Even as we developed means to battle this plague, it regrouped to change its status enough to continue to be an enigma. And, of course, our increasing suspicion and, ultimately, complete distrust of our government.

On a personal basis, 2021 claimed the life of Bruce Wilder, our beloved Chaplain. A man of marked patience, a spreader of oil on troubled waters, a conveyor of calm wisdom, a friend with whom time spent was well spent, a faithful and courageous soldier and one whose absence will be noted for years to come. His death was due to Covid-19, but only because he bore too many wounds and scars from his years of service to his country. His loss is a grievous one for those who knew him and benefited from his pastoral guidance.

There is a popular myth that the highest rate of suicide is around Christmas, in the dark cold days of winter. The logical explanation is that people are saddened at these times by the loss of friends, loved one, memories of better days gone by, or the depressing effects of cold and darkness. The facts belie this “logic”. The highest rate of self-destruction is in late Spring and early summer—go figure!

All of which brings me to reflect on the tenuous hold we have on life; which is one of the last instincts to leave us when our sands run out. The heart spontaneously starts beating in the fetus around 5-6 weeks of life, and it stops somewhere in the future in an equally mysterious manner. This brings to mind that while we put dates of birth and death on tombstones, the really important matter is the “dash” between them. We have no control over the “bookend” dates. However, we will be remembered, and judged, by what we did with the time represented by the “dash”. In this so-called “modern” world many have abandoned the teachings of our youth and supportive beliefs which carried us through war, “the whips and scorns of time” personal loss and tragedy, financial distress, the ravages of divorce, rejection, and illnesses of various magnitudes. The Humanists and Evolutionists of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries were dedicated to destroying the grip that ignorance, rigid religiosity, emerging science (which really tended to prove the existence of a benevolent creator) and satisfying an insatiable lust to think themselves more powerful and wiser than God. This “thinking” has become increasingly more accepted and prevalent in our world. Churches, organizations designed to create and teach a moral fabric to make mankind better, have succumbed to a miasma of self-indulgence and material achievement. Today’s youth have discarded the concepts of marriage, replication, patriotism and faith to chase a future which has no good end. Our current birth rate is inadequate to sustain our civilization.

The Scriptures, which survived and sustained us for thousands of years are now ignored. The fastest growing “religions” are those that practice the least human concepts. It does not matter if a man says “There is no God” and “I am the Master of my fate”. God is upset, but He is still in control. “It is appointed unto each man a time to die, and then the judgement. Regardless of our opinion, there is a Heaven and a Creator on His throne. It is so simple. If I am wrong and “they” are right; it makes no difference. But if the Bible is right and they are wrong: there is a world of hurt awaiting them.

At Christmas, we celebrate what we believe to be the first coming into the world of a child who would grow into a man and share truths that can save the world from itself. Those same scriptures tell us that in that Heaven there is no sorrow, parting, pain or tears. All things are made new. The alternative destiny is eternal separation from the God who loved, made us, saved us and died for us. As a betting man, I know what way I want to go.

The ball is in your court.

Asa “Doc” Talbot
Red Baron 16

Ladies of the Association

My husband was surfing the internet looking for a particular variation of "The Night Before Christmas" and ran across this one. After reading it I thought it was appropriate for this time of the year because it is a tribute to our soldiers – past, present, and future who guard the gates of freedom. Our guys have been there and done this. Gloria Hobby Falconess 6X

TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE A SOLDIER'S CHRISTMAS

T'was the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,
In a one-bedroom house made of plaster and stone.
I had come down his chimney with presents to give,
And to see in this home just who did live.
I looked all about, a strange sight I did see,
No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.

No stockings by mantle, just boots filled with sand,
And on the walls – pictures of far distant lands.
With medals and badges, awards of all kinds,
A sobering thought came to my mind.
For this house was different, so dark and so dreary,
The home of a soldier, I now could see clearly.

The soldier lay sleeping, so silent and alone,
Curled up on the floor in this one-bedroom home.
The face was so gentle, the room in such disorder,
Not how I pictured a United States soldier.
Was this the hero of whom I'd just read,
Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed.

I realized the families that I saw this night,
Owed their lives to these soldiers who were willing to fight.
Soon around the world, the children would play,
And grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day.
They all enjoyed freedom, each month of the year,
Because of these soldiers, like the one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone,
On a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.
The very thought brought a tear to my eye,
I dropped to my knees and started to cry.
The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice,
"Santa, don't cry, this life is my choice.

I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,
My life is my God, my country, my corps."
The soldier rolled over and soon drifted to sleep,
I couldn't control it, and continued to weep.
I watched for hours, so silent and still,
And we both shivered from the cold evening's chill.

I didn't want to leave on that cold, dark night,
This guardian of honor, so willing to fight.
Then the soldier rolled over, with a voice soft and pure,
Whispered, "Carry on Santa, it's Christmas Day, all is secure."
One look at my watch, and I knew he was right.
"Merry Christmas my friend and to all a good night."

Merry Christmas to all of America's warriors throughout the world. Thank you for making it possible for us to enjoy our holiday in peace and safety.

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"Small problems that are solved by the government will have complex solutions. Simple solutions to complex problems will not be tolerated."

Subject: Lexophile winners

A "lexophile" is one who has a love for words, such as "You can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish", and "To write with a broken pencil is pointless". An annual competition is held by the New York Times to see who can create the best. And the winners are:

I changed my iPod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

Haunted French pancakes give me the crepes

This girl today said she recognized me from the Vegetarians Club, but I'd swear I've never met herbivore

I know a guy who's addicted to drinking brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time

I got some batteries that were given out free of charge.

A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.

A will is a dead giveaway.

Police were summoned to a daycare center where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.

Did you hear about the fellow whose entire left side was cut off? He's all right now.

A bicycle can't stand alone; it's just two tired.

A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.

The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine last week is now fully recovered.

He had a photographic memory, but it was never fully developed.

When she saw her first strands of gray hair, she thought she'd dye.

Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

Did you hear about the cross-eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?

When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.

I am reading a book about anti-gravity. I can't put it down.

Away with you Larry Mobley

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I have everything that I wanted as a teenager, only 70 years later. I don't have to go to school or work. I get an allowance every month. I have my own pad. I don't have a curfew. I have a driver's license and my own car. The people I hang around with are not scared of getting pregnant and I don't have acne. Life is great. I changed my car horn to gunshot sounds. People get out of the way much faster now.

Gone are the days when girls used to cook like their mothers. Now they drink like their fathers.

I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes five years in a row. I decided to stop calling the bathroom "John" and renamed it the "Jim". I feel so much better saying I went to the Jim this morning.

Old age is coming at a really bad time.

When I was a child I thought "nap time" was a punishment. Now it feels like a small vacation.

The biggest lie I tell myself is... "I don't have to write that down, I'll remember it".

I don't have gray hair... I have "wisdom highlights"! I'm just very wise.

If God wanted me to touch my toes, He would've put them on my knees.

Last year I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet.

Why do I have to press one for English when you're just going to transfer me to someone I can't understand anyway?

Of course, I talk to myself. Sometimes I need expert advice.

At my age "Getting Lucky" means walking into a room and remembering what I came in there for.



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C/O Jesse Hobby

For Office Use Only

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Cairo, GA 39828

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