



# the swash plate

MONTHLY  
**CHPA**  
NEWSLETTER

**Combat Helicopter Pilots Association, Inc.**

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**Nov - Dec 2017**

## From the President

*On behalf of the Board of Directors, we'd like to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.*

*God bless you, your families, our men and women in uniform and the United States.*



**Jack Bailey**

[president@chpa-us.org](mailto:president@chpa-us.org)

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It's been a very busy 2 months since the current Board of Directors took the reins of the organization. I'm proud of the work they and several of our project leaders have done to help us close 2017 strong.

I'd like to use this venue for describing some of the key activities over the last 2 months and our progress towards my 2018 priorities (addressed in the previous newsletter): new membership and retention; advancing our use of technology, the web and social media; and building a stable, permanent organizational cadence.

### **New Membership and Retention**

Recognizing that recruiting and retention is not a "one man show", Loren McNalley has graciously offered to support the effort as the new database manager, working closely with Dan McClinton our new VP, Membership. Together, with me and Terry Garlock in support, we have a recruiting work group focused on positive change. The work group collaborates via teleconference every other month. Dan is also working an effort to identify "field ambassadors" in the vicinity of key installations to support.

CHPA received a donation from a member for 15 free memberships to be gifted and Dan McClinton is closing the gap fast to issue them. Dan has identified 8 potential new members for gift memberships and is working on an additional 7. If the membership trends hold, we should be at 539 members by the end of

year. That "end strength" is higher than our year-end totals for 2014, 2015 and 2016.

CHPA had another member donate to support a direct mailer campaign to expired members. By the end of 2017 we should be sending approximately 500+ direct mail post cards to expired members with the intent of recruiting them back to active membership.

We are continuing with our Pay-it-Forward campaign and we'd ask all members to consider "gift memberships" as an option while you are planning your Christmas shopping this year.

### **Technology**

If you are a regular visitor to the CHPA web site, you've noticed we are trying to make it more "active" than "passive" and we've included holiday banners/artwork for Veteran's Day and for Thanksgiving. We'll continue to keep the site active in this way. Likewise, we've added an organizational calendar to the web site, accessible using the third tab at the top left of the home page. The intent is to provide predictability and transparency into what we do. We are looking for a better tool for our calendar and will have a more "readable" calendar there soonest. We've also included a section on the home page where I've been able to post President's remarks. This is intended to provide membership a close-to-real time insight into what we, the Board are doing.

We've been a little more proactive with the use of email too. I realize not all members use email regularly, but we are moving to be more electronically "savvy". Thus far, we've conducted mass emailings for three reasons: to engage our members in Florida, Alabama and Texas impacted by the hurricanes; to encourage support for the annual Gift Boxes for Troops campaign; and for Veteran's Day providing well wishes. Our intent is to use email sparingly and only for activities that "provide value" for our membership.

### Organizational Cadence

In October the Board approved a motion for a specific calendar of annual events and the publication of a public calendar on our web site. Both actions are complete. As stated previously, we'll have a better calendar tool on the web site soonest.

Effective 2018, the organization will hold quarterly Board meetings in accordance with our by-laws; the newsletter will be published quarterly; and the organization will focus outreach on two specific events: the Helicopter Association International (HAI) annual exposition and the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) annual conference. Charitable endeavors will include the annual scholarship campaign and the annual Gift Boxes for Troops campaign. We have solidified the CHPA annual business meeting and conference in Colorado Springs and the dates for this event will post to the CHPA web site in January 2018.

By making the organizational calendar more "deliberate", it provides you predictability in your planning. In particular, I'm making my first appeal to all members for attending the annual business

meeting and conference in Colorado Springs. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet you and thank you personally for your service to our nation.

### Charitable Giving

Lastly, I'd like to address the charitable giving of CHPA. Specifically I'll address two things:

**Hurricane Relief** – Alabama, Texas, and Florida have the largest distribution of CHPA membership, and most CHPA members living there was impacted in some way, whether large or small. The Board was compelled to take action in some way. Approved by a unanimous vote of the Board, and in accordance with our by-laws, CHPA made a cash contribution to Team Rubicon, an international disaster response nonprofit that unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly provide relief to communities in need. It was right to do so as an organization, but also as "Americans helping Americans".

**Christmas Boxes for the Troops** - Once again, CHPA led an effort that will provide 166 gift boxes to our men and women forward this holiday season. A special "thank you" to Jay Brown for leading this effort as he does each year, as well as member Pat Glass and the volunteers he organizes to assemble the packages.

I'm very proud of this Board and the plan we've laid out. I'm looking forward to 2018 and the great work we'll do.

Jack Bailey  
CHPA President



## Combat Helicopter Pilots Association



Last month the Board of Directors approved a charitable donation to Team Rubicon whose primary mission is providing disaster relief to those in need - to restore hope and goodness where needed.

The organization seeks ways to provide veterans with three things they may lose after leaving the military: a purpose, gained through disaster relief; community, built by serving with others; and identity, from recognizing the impact one individual can make. For more information on this unique organization click here: <https://teamrubiconusa.org/>



## COME JOIN US

**IN THE HIGH COUNTRY  
COLORADO SPRINGS,  
COLORADO**

**CHPA Convention  
and Business Meeting  
Aug 2-5 2018**



**by Jay Brown**

Planning is well underway for the 2018 Convention and Business Meeting. My goal is to make this a memorable event for all attendees. Colorado Springs offers more than 55 area attractions, incredible scenery for endless outdoor activities, entertainment, and rich history. You'll find no shortage of things to do in Colorado Springs. For adventure there is whitewater rafting, rock climbing, horseback riding, biking, zip lining, hot air balloon rides, and more. The Royal Gorge Route Railroad runs a 24 mile round-trip journey through the narrows of the Royal Gorge granite cliffs and alongside

the Arkansas River. The Garden of the Gods is a geological wonder. You can journey to the top of Pikes Peak via car or by train. Colorado Springs is home to unique museums, art galleries, live performances, and a zoo.

Then let's not forget the two dozen or so craft breweries.

There's so much to see and do that you will want to spend a few days before and after the reunion.

If you have suggestions or questions, please send me an email at [jbrown@chpa-us.org](mailto:jbrown@chpa-us.org) and let me know.

### **Garden of the Gods**



### **Balloon Fest**



### **Pikes Peak via Cog Railway**



### **Royal Gorge Train and Whitewater rafting**



Jay Brown is one of the founders of CHPA and has held many leadership positions since. Because he has been a longtime resident of the Colorado Springs area, CHPA is very fortunate to have him volunteer for this task. We look forward to a memorable event.

Jay is also an avid hunter. Below are pictures from his recent outing. Note in the far right photo there are

two male Moose in the distance, fighting. Jay said they were earlier fighting nearer their tent.

When we gather in Colorado Springs, we will have more comfy weather conditions, we won't be eating MREs, and we'll be sleeping in a nice hotel room.



## Veteran's Corner



Changes are coming to TRICARE beginning Jan 1, 2018 which will change regions, add a new program and give more benefit choices and simplify cost shares. Information is now available at this Website: <https://tricare.mil/changes>

The U.S. Army Retired Soldier Handbook provides Retired Soldiers and Family members information on retirement programs, benefits and entitlements. If you live near a military installation you can pick up a hard

copy at the Army Retirement Services Office (RSO). A PDF version can be downloaded here:

[https://soldierforlife.army.mil/sites/default/files/content/docs/2015/2015\\_U.S.Army\\_Retired\\_Soldier\\_Handbook.pdf](https://soldierforlife.army.mil/sites/default/files/content/docs/2015/2015_U.S.Army_Retired_Soldier_Handbook.pdf)

If you are traveling for the holiday? Check out the USO facilities at many US airports for a place to relax between flights. <https://www.uso.org/stories/838-about-our-uso-centers>

The new Forever GI Bill brings changes to Veterans education benefits. The law will allow more Veterans to use the GI Bill and more time to use it. Some of the changes will go into effect immediately and some do not. The majority of the changes enhances or expand education benefits for Veterans, Service members, Families and Survivors. <https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/forevergibill.asp>

## Articles by Members

### The Hostage Crisis in Iran & Birth of the 160th by Graham Stevens



*There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.*

*William Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar"*



On November 4, 1979, Iranian militants stormed the United States Embassy in Tehran and took approximately seventy Americans captive. This terrorist act triggered a personal ordeal for President Jimmy Carter and a crisis for the American people that lasted

444 days.

President Carter committed himself to the safe return of the hostages while protecting America's interests and prestige. He pursued a policy of restraint that put a higher value on the lives of the hostages than on American retaliatory power or protecting his own political future. The toll of patient diplomacy was great, but President Carter's actions, and the perceived threat from newly elected President Ronald Reagan, brought freedom for the hostages with America's honor preserved.

Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Shah of Iran, began his reign in 1941, succeeding his father, Reza Khan, to the throne. In a 1953 power struggle with his prime minister, the Shah gained American support to prevent nationalization of Iran's oil industry. In return for assuring the U.S. a steady supply of oil, the Shah received economic and military aid from eight American presidents. Early in the 1960s, the Shah announced social and economic reforms but refused to grant broad political freedom. Iranian nationalists condemned his U.S. supported regime and his "westernizing" of Iran.

During rioting in 1963, the Shah cracked down, suppressing his opposition. Among those arrested and

exiled was a popular religious nationalist and bitter foe of the United States, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Between 1963 and 1979, the Shah spent billions of oil dollars on military weapons. The real price of military strength was the loss of popular support. Unable to sustain economic progress and unwilling to expand democratic freedoms, the Shah's regime collapsed in revolution.

On January 16, 1979, the Shah fled Iran, never to return. The exiled Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Tehran in February 1979 and whipped popular discontent into rabid anti-Americanism.

When the Shah came to America for cancer treatment in October, the Ayatollah incited Iranian militants to attack the U.S. On November 4, the American Embassy in Tehran was overrun and its employees taken captive. The hostage crisis had begun.

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"I think we have an abort situation," Defense Secretary Harold Brown informed President Jimmy Carter on 24 April 1980. Carter simply responded, "Let's go with his recommendation," referring to the ground commander.

The mission to rescue 53 American hostages had failed. At a desolate site in Iran known as "Desert One," tragedy occurred when two aircraft collided on the ground and eight men died. The failed mission struck a blow to American prestige and further eroded the public's confidence in the U.S. government.

April 25, 1980 was a defining moment for President Jimmy Carter, for the American people and for America's military. At 7 a.m. a somber President Carter

announced to the nation and the world that eight American servicemen died and several others were seriously injured after a super-secret hostage rescue mission failed.



DESERT ONE, Iran, April 1980  
Wreckage of a C-130 where eight Americans died.

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1980, just two days after the Desert One debacle, work on Operation Snow Bird and Honey Badger, and the second set of plans to rescue American hostages in Iran, began.

Concurrently, at the behest of Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, a Joint Task Force (JTF) was organized to conduct military operations that would counter terrorist acts directed at the United States, its interest, and its citizens, was organized at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The JTF would include members from all the services and work outside the normal chain of command.

This organization, later to become the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), would become the parent organization for all Special Mission Units [SMUs] and would include the best of all the services: the Army's Delta Force at Fort Bragg; the Navy's Seal Team 6 out of Little Creek Amphibious Base, Virginia; Task Force 158 (later designated 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR) Army aviation units from Fort Campbell, Kentucky; the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment and the Air Force's Special Operations units at Hurlbert AFB, Florida.

My story, and my years with what would in later years become the 160<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), began in July of 1980.

On my return from serving with the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Germany in October of 1978, I was assigned to B Company, 229<sup>th</sup> Attack Helicopter Battalion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The Army attack battalions of the day consisted of three attack companies equipped with OH-58A and AH-1S aircraft. The configuration of the attack battalions were driven by the Cold War and fighting Soviets on the Czechoslovakian and East German borders. The whole of Army Aviation was geared to this Warfighting profile and that is the way we trained.

At the time I was also a single father, with a ten-year-old daughter. Two combat tours in Viet Nam, years of TDY's, ten years of missed Thanksgiving's, Christmas's, and birthdays, had taken their toll. Good time for a new start.

But things would get better soon. A wonderful person I had met in Europe had come back to the US for her graduate work and agreed to come to Clarksville, TN, where I had recently purchased a house, so we could continue our relationship. Twenty-seven years later Jan continues to be my lynchpin.

The routine of the 229<sup>th</sup> consisted of unit gunnery and field exercises conducted on the Fort Campbell reservation, which lies on the border between Kentucky and Tennessee. It is a huge reservation, but can begin to close in on you after about a year of doing the same thing over and over. One morning in July 1980 would change this boring routine forever.

I recall showing up for work, and all the OH-58A scout pilots were gone. Their job was to scout targets and relay the information to the Cobra gunships so we could engage the enemy at maximum range. Tactics had changed since my two tours as an AH-1G pilot in Vietnam. Our revised tactic was to hover stationary just below a tree line and wait for the scout pilots to acquire targets for us. Then we would rise up to just above the tree level and engage the enemy at somewhere in the 2500-3000 meter range using Tube Launched Optically Tracked Wire Guided missiles known as TOWs. Scout pilots flew single pilot, often with enlisted Aerial Observers (AOs). The Cobras were crewed by two pilots, a Pilot-In-Command in the rear seat and a Co-Pilot Gunner in the front seat.

Usually the scouts and gun pilots met in our platoon rooms and chatted about the day's activities and what was coming up in the days ahead. But there were no scout pilots, anywhere. Not in our company, or in the other two company areas. And no one, if they knew, would tell us where they were.

Several weeks later, I arrived at work to find that all the AH-1 Co-Pilot Gunners in our company were gone as well. All the folks left in the company were a few pilots and the CO, XO, the operation officer and the enlisted maintenance personnel. And no one knows where they are? Soon the mystery would be revealed to me, for I too would disappear.

### ***Putting the pieces of the puzzle together.***

The special project known as Honey Badger would center on the 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion. Companies C and D of the battalion would serve as the primary assault force for the project. The Blackhawk was an easily deployable and highly capable assault helicopter and with its great power was able to carry large payloads at high speeds.

The 229<sup>th</sup> Attack Helicopter Battalion would initially provide pilots for the light assault helicopters. They would later man the light attack component as well.

Shortly after the failed hostage rescue mission, the Army formed a special aviation unit. The unit originally was formed of members from both the 229th Aviation Battalion and the 158th Aviation Battalion, one of the first Army units equipped with the UH-60A Blackhawk helicopter. So what were the 229th Cobra pilots doing in a Blackhawk battalion? The answer - navigating!

In the early years of flying with night vision goggles we flew with "full face plate" types like the ones issued to ground units. Essentially, while flying with these early ANVS-5's pilots would not have any peripheral vision.

Imagine trying to drive your car with a pair of binoculars cupped over your eyes. You see great at distance, or where focused, but you have no peripheral vision. This made reading a map and using the aircraft's Doppler Navigation System very dangerous while flying.



AN/PVS-5 Night Vision Goggle

All the pilot's skills needed to be focused on looking out with where they were going, and letting a 3rd pilot sit in a "jump seat" immediately behind and between the pilot and co-pilot where he had access to the Doppler Nav System and could navigate from. Essentially, he became the navigator only, because he was not rated to fly the aircraft.

The scout pilots from the 229th had begun to transition into the more versatile, although smaller, Viet Nam era Observation Helicopter OH-6A Cayuse's obtained from National Guard units. Because of their diminutive size the OH-6's soon became known as "Little Birds" and are still carry that name today.

After finishing their initial cross training into the aircraft, the Little Bird pilots also began an intense period of learning to fly and navigate. Pilots and crew also learned how to load and unload these aircraft in record time from the C-130's, C-141's, and the giant C-5A's that would move them around the world.

These were exciting times. New frontiers, technologies, tactics, and methods for conducting night

flying were evolving overnight. From July 1980 on, it was not unusual for Task Force members to be on the road three weeks out of four; maintenance did, after all, have to be performed at some time.

Little Birds were chosen for the light assault role because of their small size and ease of transport. They could carry only three soldiers and a single pilot, but they could land in the most restrictive locations.



The armed AH-6C and pilot CW5 Graham Stevens

Personnel at Fort Rucker, Alabama developed armed Little Birds (AH-6C) as a separate part of the project. Selected 229th personnel would team with the Fort Rucker element toward the end of the initial project as Company B, 229th Attack Helicopter Battalion and become the Little Bird organization of the Task Force.

Company A, 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion would provide the heavy lift element of the new organization. CH-47C Chinooks, although not as easily deployable as the other aircraft, were capable of moving large numbers of personnel and heavier payloads. Chinooks would prove most effective in the project by establishing forward area refuel/rearm points (FARPs) for long-range operations. Together, these men and aircraft formed Task Force 158.

The 160th SOAR (A) still uses the same basic models of aircraft that were used in the initial project; however, though they have undergone significant modifications to enhance mission performance.

The project began as separate training deployments. The Blackhawks were moved to Norton Air Force Base (AFB) in San Bernardino, California, on Air Force C-5 transport aircraft, while the Chinooks self-deployed. At Norton AFB, the Blackhawk aircraft were modified to increase their range and improve long-range navigation capabilities. Meanwhile, the crews were given intensive training over the California desert. Few of the aviators were qualified to fly with night vision goggles (NVG), and no one was qualified for NVG flight in the UH-60. In fact, the aircraft instruments and

lighting were not NVG compatible, and modifications had to be made before training could begin.

Once the aviators completed a 10-hour NVG syllabus, they progressed to long-range navigation training. Training flights consisted of up to seven and one-half hours of night flying with AN/PVS-5 night vision goggles (NVG). Pilots who completed the designated route, known as "Black Route," three times with the NVGs were considered qualified. The Chinooks stopped at Reese AFB in Lubbock, Texas, and Luke AFB in Phoenix, Arizona, for refueling and crew rest, and then joined the Blackhawk's at Norton AFB.



AH-6C Armed Little Birds Uploading into a C-141 for Mission.

Pilots selected for the Little Bird helicopters were sent to the Mississippi Army National Guard Aviation Support Facility at Gulfport, Mississippi, for two weeks of training on the OH-6A helicopters. Following aircraft qualification, the Little Bird aircraft and crews were loaded on Air Force C-141 aircraft and moved to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, for two weeks of mission training.

Armed OH-6 aircraft would join the training program later in the fall of 1980. Ultimately, aircrews would perform missions over routes as long as 1000 nautical miles. Little Birds would load on C130 transports and move to appropriately located forward staging areas to train for their role in the mission.

All of the units continued extensive training throughout the summer and fall of 1980 in desert environmental skills and long-range, close-formation precision navigation with NVGs in preparation for the unspecified mission. Late in the fall, the aircrews were asked if they wished to volunteer to continue with the project. As expected, most volunteered to remain.

At this time, the volunteers were given their first formal briefing on Operation Honey Badger, which was to be the air component of a second attempt to rescue the U.S. hostages from Iran.



AH-6C Little Bird Gun uploading onto a C-141A

On 20 January 1981, the hostages were released, and Operation Honey Badger was cancelled. The men of Task Force 158 expected to disband and return to their former units; however, Army leadership determined that the unit was needed to meet future contingencies.

The new unit, soon to become the 160<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, consisted of a Headquarters and Service Company (HSC), a Light Assault Company (MH-6s), and a Light Attack Company (AH-6s). With the addition of two Blackhawk companies and a company of Chinooks, Task Force 160 was formed.



Original members of B Company, 160th Aviation Battalion

Both the Blackhawk and Little Bird units drew on some of the best aviators in the Army. The unit became a battalion of its own on October 16, 1981. Designated the 160th Aviation Battalion, the unit was popularly known as Task Force 160 because of the constant attachment and detachment of units to prepare for a wide variety of missions.

Today we know them as the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) "The Night Stalkers."

## 13DEC03 in 4<sup>th</sup> ID History

by LTC Patricia “Trish” Baker

It is not every day you get to say you helped depose a dictator, but that is precisely what 4ID did near Tikrit in 2003.

December in Tikrit, was rather unusual for an Army Captain from Minnesota, it was grey and cloudy but not below freezing and there wasn't a flake of snow near Tikrit that year. What was near Tikrit that year was the Ace of Spades, hiding in an underground bunker near his former vacation palace.

I had just returned from mid-tour leave that was not mid tour for a Commander who had been in country since April. Finally caught a C-130 flight out of Ali Al Salim and thought I was merely bound for my plywood command post for my company back at Tikrit Airfield on 13DEC03.

Instead, I lugged my assault pack into the flight operations building at Balad Airfield and saw a couple of

my helicopters parked near the terminal. Not hard to see the chalk markings of the Ivy Leaf on UH-60 engine cowlings in broad daylight.

After many talking to's by the flight operations people about how I simply could not walk out onto the flightline, I reminded them for the tenth time those were my airframes and I was walking out to the ramp and simply made my way.

My crewchiefs recognized my fast-paced walk that I learned at the 101<sup>st</sup> AASLT and escorted me to an open seat on Chalk Two. They were just doing routine battlefield circulation and passenger hauls, were not full up and glad to see me back in country. After a few stops at COBs and FOBs along the way, our two Banshee Blackhawks arrived and shutdown at Tikrit. What awaited us in the command post was just short of earth shaking.



Everyone was gawking at AFN (Armed Forces Network) and motionless in the Banshee CP. I surveilled their faces completely unaware what had just been announced as breaking news. To me AFN was to television as Forrest Gump is to MENSA, so why everyone was glued to the tiny TV with the grainy image of an AFN announcer was beyond me. But within a couple minutes the announcer came back on and stated that Saddam Hussein had been captured near Tikrit, a mere 9.2 nmi from where we were staring at TV in our CP.



After deploying in March of 2003 and flipping through those named people of interest cards a hundred times, it really happened, someone from 4ID spotted and we had caught the Ace of Spades. The speculation began to run rampant among my aircrews; some crewchiefs and pilots were absolutely convinced that we would simply pack up, hand over the country to the nascent Iraqi Army and return to Fort Hood. It would be the "Mission Accomplished" moment that President Bush had declared in May finally come to pass for 4ID. But for all the speculation of my Banshee crews, it turned out to be a winter of discontent.

Instead of the operational environment suddenly shifting to a feeling of we just won the war, it dynamically worsened and the missions about to be flown would test us all that winter.

The capture of Saddam Hussein actually emboldened others to avail themselves of the power shift among groups now encouraged to perpetrate new acts of violence and crime across Iraqi cities in most of the provinces. The C2 and VIP flight company for 4ID suddenly found itself in a series of named battles and campaigns flying high risk insertions and extractions from where the 1-10 CAV was stationed near the Iranian border, inward toward Baqubah and Samarra, west near Ramadi, up north near Taji and back to Tikrit. Banshee airframes were coming back with splay marks in the skin where mortars had hit too close, bullet pock marks, and holes in the tails like when we first flew in battles during July and August.



The end of the tour could not come fast enough. After a year in theater with thousands of logged hours of combat time the war weary flight crews had gone from elated to downtrodden from the capture of Saddam in December to flying out of Country in March 2004. Although I cannot speak for the impact of 13DEC03 on other units in 4ID, the day we caught the Ace of Spades is bittersweet for Banshees. The day that we thought we had won the war, fourteen years later turns out to solely be the day that we caught the man that instigated it. The residue of OIFI is pride tinged with the sting of no lasting tactical effect.

## Do you have patches?



Several of you have graciously donated patches or pictures of them to CHPA. Please dig through your old patches and consider donating or taking a picture of it and sending to us for inclusion in the newsletter.

Email to [hq@chpa-us.org](mailto:hq@chpa-us.org)

Mail to CHPA, PO Box 2585, Peachtree, GA 30269

## YOU EARNED IT

by Gordon Eatley

Ok, you served your country in a branch of the Armed forces; perhaps for only three or four years or even less. You make it through Vietnam, Panama, Haiti, OIF and or OEF, or just stayed state side without a scratch and you were honorably discharged. Know this: Military and VA Records are the key to your benefits.

Over the years many things get misplaced, lost, stolen or just disappear to include the awards and decorations from your time in the military. That could include awards of your parent's military service, also. Fear not for there is a way to get your medals and ribbons replaced, free of charge. What is even better you can apply for them on line at <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>.

I have personally applied and about six months later a big envelope came in the mail packed to the gills with my awards and service medals some with my name engraved on the back and one I never knew I had!

As you already know the DD-214 is your ticket to benefits for both you and your family and having one will help with everything from getting a veteran status placed on your driver's license in some states to getting military honors at your funeral. For those of you that have lost your copy of your DD-214, or just never got a copy, the Archives has a place to retrieve those too! <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>

[records](#) That's right it's the same place you go to for the medals!

This site is also a place to get medical records. However, if you have or are filing a claim, the VA will have your medical records. You can request a copy through your local VA office. You can also download recent records at Myhealthyvet.

If you haven't done so already, and are in the VA Health system, you should sign up for a premium account. It's free. With this in place, you can communicate with your doctor, see your results of visits, tests and appointments, share them with a civilian doctor, plus find great information about health related problems you may experience.

For those who are still on active duty, it is extremely important that you have all of your medical issue documents in your health record. Falling and injuring a knee while on the flight line may be a lifelong medical issue. A severe sunburn while deployed to the sandbox may lead to skin cancer. If you were subjected to loud noise associated with your MOS you may have hearing loss. Low back pain is common for helicopter crewmembers since a helicopter vibrates constantly in flight.

Remember, if you are active duty then you are on duty 24/7. What you may consider as a recreational injury could be considered as an on-duty medical issue.

Have it documented! Here is a site that can help with disability claims.

[https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/dbq\\_listbysymptom.asp](https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/dbq_listbysymptom.asp)You

Once retired and you want to file a claim for disability compensation, it is recommended that you have an impartial advocate in your corner because the VA system is full of traps and confusing procedure. The

American Legion, VFW, DAV or your state veteran agency may be alternatives as you select a rep. Here's a link to DAV. <https://www.dav.org/learn-more/about-dav/mission-statement/>

Bottom line is, if you didn't see the medics or an accident report wasn't filed, "IT DIDN'T HAPPEN" as far as placing a disability claim is concerned.

## How to Operate a Helicopter Mechanic

A long, long time ago, back in the days of iron men and wooden rotor blades, a very complex ritual began. It all starts when a helicopter Pilot approaches a helicopter Mechanic to report some difficulty with his aircraft. All Mechanics seem to be aware of it, which leads to the conclusion that it's included somewhere in their training, and most Mechanics are diligent in practicing it.

There are Pilots who refuse to recognize it as a serious professional amenity, no matter how many times they perform it, and are driven to distraction by it. Some take it personally. They get red in the face, fume and boil, and do foolish dances. Some try to take it as a joke, but it's always dead serious. Most Pilots find they can't change it, and so accept it and try to practice it with some grace. The ritual is accomplished before any work is actually done on the aircraft by the Mechanic. The ritual has four parts, and goes something like this:

1. The Pilot reports the problem. The Mechanic says, "there's nothing wrong with it."
2. The Pilot repeats the complaint. The Mechanic replies, "It's the gauge."
3. The Pilot persists, with the complaint. The Mechanic maintains, "They're all like that."
4. The Pilot, heatedly now, explains the situation, enunciating all the perceived parts of the problem.

After the ritual has been played through in its entirety, serious discussion begins, and the problem is usually resolved forthwith.

Don't confuse "operating" a Mechanic with "putting him in his place." The worst and most often repeated mistake is to try to establish an "I'm the Pilot and you're just the Mechanic" hierarchy. A mechanic's satisfaction comes from working on complex and expensive machinery. As a Pilot, you are merely tolerated, for until they actually train monkeys to fly those things, the Mechanic needs a Pilot to put the parts in motion so he can tell if everything is working properly.

The Pilot who tries to put a Mechanic in his "place" is headed for a fall. Sooner or later, he'll try to crank with the blade tied down. After he has snatched the tail boom around to the cabin door and completely burnt out the engine, he'll see the Mechanic there sporting a funny little smirk and rolling on the floor.

Helicopter mechanics are indifferent to attempts at discipline or regimentation other than the discipline of their craft. It's accepted that a good mechanic's

personality should contain unpredictable mixtures of irascibility and nonchalance, and should exhibit at least some bizarre behavior. The basic operation of a Mechanic involves four steps:

1. Clean an aircraft. When you would normally take an afternoon nap, start cleaning that bird from top to bottom, inside and out. This is guaranteed to knock even the sourest old wrench off balance. He'll be suspicious, but he'll be attracted to this strange behavior like a passing motorist to a roadside accident. He may even join in to make sure you don't break anything. Before you know it you'll be talking to each other about the aircraft while you're getting a more intimate knowledge of it.

2. Do a thorough pre-flight. Most mechanics are willing to admit to themselves that they might make a mistake, and since a lot of their work must be done at night or in a hurry, a good Mechanic likes to have his work checked. Of course he'd rather have another mechanic do the checking, but a Pilot is better than nothing. A Mechanic may let little gigs slide on a machine that is never pre-flighted; not because they won't be noticed, but because the Mechanic figures the Pilot will overlook something big someday, and the whole thing will end up in a smoking pile of rubble anyway.

3. Don't abuse the machinery. Mechanics see drivers come and go, so you won't impress one in a thousand with what you can make the aircraft do. While the Pilot is confident that the blades and engine and massive frame members will take it, the Mechanic knows that it's the seals and bearings and rivets deep in the guts of the machine that fail from abuse. Mechanics aren't looking for pilots with fancy girlfriends, tricky maneuvers, and lots of juicy war stories. They're looking for someone who'll fly the aircraft so that all the components make their full service life. They also know that high maintenance costs are a good excuse to keep salaries low!!)

4. Do a good post-flight inspection. Nothing feels more deliciously dashing to a Pilot than to end the day by stepping down from the bird and walking off into the sunset while the blade slowly turns down. It's the stuff that beer commercials are made of. The trouble is it leaves the Mechanic doing a slow burn. The Mechanic needs some fresh, firsthand information on the aircraft's

performance if he is to have it ready to go the next day. And if so, tell the Mechanic that the bird flew really well. It's been known to make Mechanics faint dead away.

As you can see, operating a Helicopter Mechanic is simple. It is not by any stretch of the imagination easy! What it boils down to is that, if a Pilot performs his pilot rituals religiously, in no time at all he will find the Mechanic operating smoothly. Helicopter Pilots and Mechanics have a strange relationship. It's a symbiotic partnership because one's job depends on the other, but

it's an adversarial situation too, since one's job is to provide the helicopter with loving care, and the other's is to provide wear and tear. Pilots will probably always regard Mechanics as lazy, lecherous, intemperate swine that couldn't make it through flight school if they gave it their best shot, and Mechanics will always be convinced that pilots are petulant children with pathological ego problems, a big watch, and a little whatchamacallit. Both points of view are viciously slanderous, of course, and partly true.

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