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MONTHLY  
**CHPA**  
NEWSLETTER

Combat Helicopter Pilots Association, Inc.

800-832-5144 [hq@chpa-us.org](mailto:hq@chpa-us.org) PO Box 2585, Peachtree City, GA 30269

## May-Jun 2017

We want your pucker factor stories no matter which conflict you flew in. Not everyone enjoys writing, if that's you please call and we'll get your story by phone, and you get final editing approval. Your fellow CHPA members will enjoy reading your version of an interesting day.

800-832-5144 CHPA  
[hq@chpa-us.org](mailto:hq@chpa-us.org)



Rich Miller

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

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## The President's Corner

### AAAA

Once again we had a successful presence at the AAAA tradeshow event in Nashville. Our team of member volunteers makes these events the success that they have always been. I would like to personally thank each member of the team for their repeat participation and dedication, year after year. We signed up some new members and I extend to you a sincere, "Welcome Aboard!"

### Scholarships

Each year, the CHPA's Goldie Fund Scholarship Committee convenes to evaluate scholarship applications. Scholarships range from \$1,000 - \$1,500 for the ensuing academic year. Applications must be postmarked by June 30, 2017. Please check the website for eligibility and application information.

### Annual Reunion

This year's Annual Reunion is being held in the Dallas/Fort Worth area August 24-26. Please check the agenda for the event and registration through the website at [www.chpa-us.org](http://www.chpa-us.org) I look forward to seeing you there.

**PLEASE register now to help us plan events.**

### Memorial Day

On Memorial Day many of you remembered the ones who didn't come home alive with us. Many veteran organizations sell poppies to raise funds that benefit servicemen and women in need. The tradition of the poppy flower was conceived over 100 years ago as a symbol that the blood of heroes never dies. The National Moment of Remembrance is at 3pm. local time on Memorial Day for duration of one minute. I wonder how many Americans know the tradition or took the time?.

Rich Miller, President

Please register for the annual reunion NOW at [www.chpa-us.org](http://www.chpa-us.org) so we can better plan events. Any registration problems call Terry Garlock on his cell 770-630-6064 or [hq@chpa-us.org](mailto:hq@chpa-us.org) See detailed agenda and hotel registration on next page.

**2017 REUNION**

**August 24 - 26th**  
**Combat Helicopter Pilots Association**

**MARRIOT LEGACY TOWER CENTER**

GROUND HERE

LOVE STAR TEXAS

CHPA COMBAT HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION



Combat Helicopter Pilots Association

## 2017 CHPA REUNION/CONVENTION SCHEDULE

DAY/DATE	EVENT TIMES & BRIEF DESCRIPTION	COST
<p>Early Reunion Registration Deadline 08/01/17</p> <p>Get more info at CHPA website <a href="http://www.chpa-us.org">www.chpa-us.org</a></p> <p>To avoid any misunderstandings, attendees have 3 personal expenses: 1 – travel 2 – hotel room 3 – CHPA registration</p>	<p>Checkin 3pm, Checkout 11am Early arrivals, call to request early checkin, based on availability</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">Hotel CHPA group link</a></u></b></p> <p>Plano Marriott at Legacy Town Center Mention "Combat Helicopter Pilots Association" to get reduced rate of \$105 + tax. Call: 1-800-228-9290</p> <p><b>Note1: Reserve your room early. Discounted rate applies to the first 75 rooms only.</b></p> <p>Note2: the <b>hotel does NOT provide shuttle service to DFW Airport.</b> See <b>Transportation Info</b> at bottom</p>	<p>\$105 + tax/night before 8/1/17 <b>\$200 + tax/night 8/1/17 and thereafter</b></p>  <p>7121 Bishop Road Plano TX 75024 22 miles NE of DFW Airport 30 minutes travel depending on traffic</p>
<p>Thursday 08/24/17</p>	<p>0900-1200, 1500-1800: Convention Registration</p> <p>CHPA reunion T-shirt <u>pre-order</u> S-M-L-XL-XXL-XXXL</p> <p>0900-1700: On-Your-Own Sightseeing</p> <p>1900-2100: Welcome Reception/Social at the Marriott Legacy.</p>	<p>\$35 per attendee before 8/1/17 <b>\$45 per attendee 8/1/17 and thereafter</b></p> <p>\$25</p> <p>None</p> <p>\$15 (Cash Bar/Snacks Provided)</p>
<p>Friday 08/25/2017</p>	<p>0900-1100: Convention Registration</p> <p>1000-1600: Visit two aviation museums with a stop for lunch in between. Cavanaugh Flight Museum: <a href="https://www.cavflight.org/">https://www.cavflight.org/</a> Frontiers of Flight Museum: <a href="http://www.flightmuseum.com/">http://www.flightmuseum.com/</a></p> <p>1000-1600: Tours/Shopping (On Your Own)</p>	<p>\$20 Transportation provided. Lunch will be <u>pay as you go</u> at Pappasitos Mexican Restaurant</p>
<p>We don't know yet if we will have enough participation to make these events work, and do not yet know date and time. On the CHPA registration form please indicate your interest. If scheduled, you may then decide if you are in or out. No \$\$ charge at registration, will collect \$\$ later if and when.</p>	<p>1000-1600: iFly Indoor Skydiving: <a href="https://www.iflyworld.com/dallas/">https://www.iflyworld.com/dallas/</a></p> <p>The Star at Frisco: Dallas Cowboys training facility and Conference Center VIP Tour, likely \$20 per person</p>	<p>Discounted \$40 pp (normally \$70) if we have 12+ people sign up. 2 Flights and video of your experience. Close enough to use hotel shuttle</p> <p>If scheduled, will collect \$\$ and provide transportation</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Saturday 08/26/2017</p>	<p>0900 -1000: Meeting of Past Presidents</p> <p>1000-1200: Annual Meeting of CHPA membership. Pilot or Crew voting members only.</p> <p>0930 – TBD: Special Brunch arranged for those not attending the business meeting. Please support this event.</p> <p>1200-1900: On Your Own – see below - shopping and entertainment and GOLFERS – from pretend to pro</p> <p>1900-2200: Annual Banquet, Marriott hotel Featured Guest Speaker: COL Cain Baker, Commander 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry BDE Fort Hood, TX</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>\$25 per attendee <b>Brunch</b> Orange, Apple &amp; Cranberry Juices Seasonal Fresh Fruit and Berries Freshly baked Breakfast Breads, Muffins and Croissants Bagels with Plain and Flavored Cream Cheeses Butter Fruit Preserves Breakfast Tacos served with Isabella's house made Salsa Freshly Brewed Starbucks Coffee Starbucks Decaffeinated Coffee Tazo Teas</p> <p>\$40 per attendee (cash bar) <b>Southern Comfort Dinner Buffet</b> Cheddar Cheese Biscuits Butter Tortilla Soup Texas Sweet and Spicy Slaw Heirloom Tomato &amp; Cucumber Salad 13 Hour house Mesquite smoked Brisket with house made BBQ Sauce House pickled Red Onions &amp; Jalapenos House cured Pork Loin Hoppin John Whole Grain Mustard Texas Hot Chicken House made Pickles Corn meal crusted farm raised Catfish Drunken local Cheddar Mac n Cheese Sweet buttered Corn on the Cob Oven Roasted Brussel Sprouts Texas Pecan Pie Warm Peach Cobbler Haagen Daz Vanilla Ice Cream Freshly Brewed Starbucks Coffee Starbucks Decaffeinated Coffee Tazo Teas</p>
<p><b><u>SHOPPING, DINING and ENTERTAINMENT</u></b> PLANO LEGACY TOWN CENTER and PLANO LEGACY WEST. Our hotel is in Plano Legacy Town Center which contains over 40 shops and restaurants within walking distance. Additionally, Plano Legacy West is located just across the North Dallas Tollway and contains another 40 shops and restaurants for you to explore.</p> <p><a href="http://shopsatlegacy.com">http://shopsatlegacy.com</a> <a href="http://legacywest.com">http://legacywest.com</a></p> <p><b><u>GOLFERS – from pretend to pro</u></b> Top Golf: <a href="https://topgolf.com/us/the-colony/">https://topgolf.com/us/the-colony/</a> High tech golf driving range, with many food and drink options. Must be seen to be believed. On your own. Close enough to use hotel shuttle</p> <p><b><u>TRANSPORTATION</u></b> The hotel does NOT have an airport shuttle. Paid shuttle service is available to and from both airports (Dallas Love or DFW Airport). Some suggested companies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Super Shuttle – 817-329-2000, 800-BLUE-VAN</li> <li>▪ Discount Shuttle – 817-267-5150, 800-748-0789</li> </ul> <p>Taxis are abundant at the airports UBER: <a href="https://www.uber.com/">https://www.uber.com/</a> or use the UBER APP</p> <p>The Marriott at Plano Legacy Town Center has a local shuttle service to take you to places within a 5-mile radius of the hotel free of charge.</p> <p><b><u>PARKING</u></b> For those who drive, the Marriott hotel does charge a daily fee for parking in their covered garage. There is free public parking in the area but you may have to walk a block or two if you wish to try this. <u>Be very careful</u> parking in those areas because there are also tow-away zones in the area.</p>		

## Expanding our Membership

by Jack Bailey, VP Membership



CHPA is not yet well known, so too many combat-qualified helicopter pilots and crew members don't realize our membership spans all US military services, all conflicts. Telling them largely depends on you.

You are the one your combat-qualified friends trust. You are the one they will listen to when you tell them, "You should be a member of CHPA!"

Tell them they are part of an exclusive club, and they should join us. There is a membership application at the end of this newsletter. Use it.

One way to help us grow is Pay it Forward. Several of us have used this method, paying for a friend's first year of membership, telling him (or her) you expect them to do the same and keep it going.

Stan Coakley took it a step further. He did a Pay it Forward and set up a chain of eight people from his unit he wants to join, one Paying it Forward for the next guy and so on.

If you care about CHPA, do your part to make it grow.

## A Flight to Remember

by Loren McNally



Chu Lai, on the Vietnam coast of the South China Sea, about 125 miles south of the DMZ, Feb 2, 1968. The enemy had launched their Tet Offensive all over the country just two days prior, an egregious treachery after negotiating a cease fire for the holiday on which they attacked.

The night had been fairly quiet. We experienced only a few mortars and probes to the

best of my knowledge. I was slightly in the "who cares" mode. My bud from flight school, Bobby Zahn, and I were due to DEROS on February 9th. That would put us exactly 365 days in country.

We stood down from flying on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January at Camp Evans. The two of us were real anxious to get back to An Khe, where we could do some serious partying until DEROS, plus Camp Evans really sucked. We lucked out and caught a maintenance flight that was headed back to An Khe.

The Huey landed at Chu Lai to refuel so Bob and I decided we had not properly told the doughnut dollies there goodbye, so we told the pilot that we would just stay for a day or two there. Of course, we never heard anything about AWOL or stuff like that.

We gathered our gear and found an empty place to sleep at the Americal Division Admin Pad, and then headed straight for the club. We needed some well deserved liquid refreshments.

We closed the club later in real Cav fashion and had to fight the doughnut dollies off so we could get some sleep.



Somewhere around 0400 hrs we heard and felt a giant explosion. We looked out and saw a large fireball lighting up the sky. We thought we had been nuked. I hoped it was a bad dream, rolled over and went back to sleep.

We got up rather late and stumbled out to the Admin Pad, almost stepping on a mortar round stuck in the PSP. We wandered down to the division headquarters area and found everyone all upset. They said something about

attacks and the enemy blowing up the bomb dump. Through the haze of our alcohol intake the previous night, this didn't make much sense to us.

We went back to the club to check with pilots hanging around. We were trying to get a ride south, but no aircraft were going anywhere. I checked back with the Air Terminal, and all they said was good luck.

I finally found an ARA (Ariel Rocket Artillery) crew that had a Huey in maintenance. They were going to fly back to Camp Evans the next day, so we could ride with them. Then hopefully we could catch a ride out of Hue/Phu Bai or Evans down to An Khe.

No problem! We took off early the next morning and headed north up Hwy 1. Weather was a little stinky, but we could get to 50-100 feet AGL.

The two ARA pilots had no weapons or bullet bouncers (chicken plates) and the crew chief was a new kid with no experience or weapon. The C-model Huey was also without a weapon system. I had my M-16 and trusty .38 revolver and Bob was packing his .38.

Bob decided to sit and fly right door gunner, so he took my M-16 and I got in the middle. I did not plug in my helmet so I couldn't hear all that was going on.

The flight was pretty routine until somewhere north of Da Nang. We were now low leveling up the highway and I was reading a book. I looked out every once in a while. I notice there were a lot of hooches on fire and some trucks and stuff burning alongside the road. Suddenly, I heard enemy rounds hitting the aircraft. Bob started firing and I could now hear gunfire from the ground.

Suddenly the Huey turned sideways like the pilot had full right pedal shoved in. The wind whipped through the open doors, blowing out everything not tied down or heavy. I looked out the door and saw what looked like a company of troops in formation, marching behind a guy carrying a guidon and flag. The flag was red with a yellow star on it. The troops all had these funny looking little helmets and those are not M-16s they are carrying. They had AK-47s.

We straightened out and started to climb, but the ground fire picked up. I could hear rounds hitting the helicopter and stuff was flying all around. We turned sideways again and started for the ground. We were only at about 50 feet to start with so we didn't have far to go. I saw no movement up front, just the ground coming up through the left door.

I sat on the radio console and grabbed the pilot sitting in the right seat. He still had his hands on the controls. When I grabbed him and hollered, his head rolled to the side. I saw a bunch of blood on his chest and all over the instrument panel.

I took the cyclic and pulled back. This stopped us from hitting the ground, but we were now sideways about 10 feet off the ground and doing about 40 or 50 knots. I looked around to the left seat and the AC (Aircraft Commander) has slid down. The seat had blood all over it and I could see blood pumping out his left inner thigh every time his heart beat.

I unplugged the pilot's helmet and plugged mine in, while asking what the #%\$& was going on. Bob said he heard someone yell they were hit badly in the chest. I asked the AC how he was. We were still flying sideways. He said he was hit in the arm and leg and couldn't stay awake. I pushed the pilot's legs with my hands by reaching between the seats. This shoved in the pedals and we were at least pointed in the direction we were flying. I set the force trim and asked the AC to keep it pointed away from the ground until I could get into the pilot's seat.



Bob and I piled the baggage that was in the aircraft, against the transmission wall and in the rear seats. We then pulled the red release handles and laid the pilots seat back. We undid the seat belt and slid the pilot's body out and laid it on the floor. This was not an easy task. He was not a little person.

I then got into the seat while it was still laid back on the deck. Bob and the crew chief pushed the seat back into place and upright. I looked around at the instruments and it appeared nothing was working. So why worry?

Bob worked on putting a tourniquet on the AC's leg. Just like they had taught us in flight school. He used his belt and found a screwdriver or something to tighten it with. The AC then went unconscious.

I asked Bob where we were.

"North of Da Nang" was his answer.

"No &%#@!"

I went on the Guard channel with a "Mayday" call. I believe it was Crown on Guard who answered. This was an Air force radar station, and of course he wanted to know where I was. The weather was about 100 feet max ceiling with the rotor system in the clouds. He had me fly left and right, but I would not go back the way we came. He finally found us on radar and gave me a vector to Hue/Phu Bai. He stayed with me the whole time; talking to me. I know I didn't sound like I was under any stress,

but you know how we always practiced sounding cool on the radio. Right!

As we approached the field, he turned me over to the tower. The tower asked about the wounded on board. I told him one KIA and two WIA - Bob had taken a round across his leg. Crown talked me down to the medevac area. I had forgotten that the AC had slid down in the seat until landing time. I had no left and aft cyclic. That made for an interesting landing.

We finally slid to a stop with the rotor blades about two feet from a building. The hospital crew came running out to the aircraft and wanted to know where I was hit. I told them nowhere even though I was covered in blood. The inside of the cockpit was covered in blood, so it

looked like I had to have been shot. I told them I was fine and to help the guy in the left seat.

I stepped out of the aircraft and fell flat on my face. Something about when the adrenaline flow stops you just kind of shut down.

Bob and I got home all right. I never knew the pilots' names. I think they were both 1<sup>st</sup> Cav ARA (2/20<sup>th</sup>). I couldn't find a listing of an ARA pilot's death on Feb. 2, 1968, but they may not have gotten around to declaring him on that day. Things were very busy at the medical area so I didn't ask the nurses or doctors for the information.

This is a flight I will remember forever.

## The Rest of the Story by Graham Stevens

Preface to Graham Stevens' Story  
by Terry Garlock

The story below is by Graham Stevens, a new CHPA member and one of the two Cobra pilots who risked their neck to rescue me in Vietnam in 1969, a story I told in the last newsletter. I need to brag on him a little before you read his story.

Graham was my buddy in the 334<sup>th</sup> Dragon platoon based at Bien Hoa (III Corps) in Vietnam, about 30 klicks NE of Saigon. We were a Cobra company, and Graham was a fun magnet; he loved a good time and wherever grabass was in motion, there he was.

After I was medevaced home in Jan 1970, Graham got a lot of concentrated experience flying guns in the Cambodia incursion in 1970. The 334<sup>th</sup> moved to Phu Loi in 1970, and in his 2<sup>nd</sup> Vietnam tour Graham flew Cobras with C/16<sup>th</sup> CAV in Can Tho (IV Corps) from September 1972 thru the Ceasefire on January 27<sup>th</sup> 1973, after having fired the last Vietnam War pair of 2.75" rockets in IV Corp.

Graham went on to be one of the founding members of the famous "Nightstalker" 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR, flying AH/MH-6 aircraft as a Standardization Pilot (SIP). He flew Little Bird Gun lead in Operation Urgent Fury in Granada in October 1983. Their 160<sup>th</sup> Little Birds landed by C-130 just after the Rangers jumped in to secure and clear the runway but the LZ was still hot by snipers during their off load.

Graham retired as a CW5 with 28 years of service, some 6000 total rotary wing hours, and 1500 total combat hours. He and I started out as new pilots in the 334<sup>th</sup> about the same time, but in the end, with my flying days ended by my injury, from an aviation

and combat perspective I'll have to be content to be a small pimple on Graham's butt.

My view about medals has long been they are nice recognition and sometimes the guys who deserve them actually get them. It is worth noting that Graham was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross four times, the Soldiers Medal for rescuing me, the Bronze Star three times, Air Medal with V three times, and a bushel basket full of Air Medals since in Vietnam we got one for every 25 flight hours.

As a civilian, Graham is the Technical Publications Manager at IOMAX USA for the Archangel Aircraft production project. This is a closely held company in Mooresville, NC - with a heavy dose of the 160<sup>th</sup> - doing a remarkable job of transforming Thrush crop-duster aircraft into armed and upgraded aircraft for border patrol, surveillance and close air support with 10 hours of loiter time and the ability to drop a Hellfire missile in your shirt pocket from 9 kilometers. Since the US isn't smart enough to use such border protection tools, IOMAX sells them to buyers in the middle east.

I think you will agree that Graham Stevens has a bunch of interesting stories to tell. In the story below, he talks about Larry Pucci, another of our 334<sup>th</sup> Dragons. Larry is still flying helicopters - Life Flight missions in Arizona. In any contest of knowledge on helicopter matters among walking, breathing encyclopedias, I will bet all my money on Larry.

I bought Graham's first year CHPA membership in our Pay it Forward scheme, and he is buying Larry's. So even though Graham didn't plan it this

way, at the end of his story below I am including Graham and Larry together, a recent vintage pic of two men I admire.

## “The Rest of the Story... “

by Graham Stevens



“By direction of the President . . . actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.”

The flowery words of an award are not the ones I would have conjured up to describe the events surrounding any action in which you are getting shot at. However, we had many ways to describe our experience. One of my colleagues observed about our year in Viet Nam, “Great guys and a fun place.”

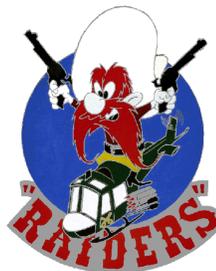
That was also my first impression of the 334th Aviation Company (Aerial Weapons) when I first arrived in Bien Hoa, Vietnam in early September 1969. After my graduation from flight school in June, I had attended the aircraft qualification for the AH-1G Cobra in Savannah, Georgia. Man had just walked on the moon, and I was a really cool new Cobra pilot, molded in the image of Chennault’s Flying Tigers, and on my way to battle the “wily, elusive, yellow hordes of communism.”



Yes, now I was invincible. I had a new flight jacket, shiny new wings, and my badge of courage Cobra patch. To quote Dan Grossman of the 48<sup>th</sup> Blue Stars, “Little did I know that for better or for worse, for all the fun times, for all my personal ups and downs, I never expected to have had some of the best times of my life intermixed with many of the worst nightmares of that life.”

There is a real bond among air warriors. But since man first strapped a gun on an aircraft, we aerial gunslingers have been different. Oh yes, we’re all pilots, but “gun pilots” take that dashing, daring, death dealing, devil may care, white silk scarf image a step further.

The 334<sup>th</sup> was divided into three gunship platoons, the Playboys, the Raiders, and the Dragons, a maintenance platoon named Gun Runners, and the headquarters platoon named Sabers. The 334<sup>th</sup> and its predecessors had built a solid reputation for themselves, dating back to July 25<sup>th</sup> 1962, when advanced elements of the Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company (UTT) arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. The 334<sup>th</sup> was the first fully armed helicopter unit in Vietnam.



Flying with the 334<sup>th</sup> in III Corps from September 1969 to September 1970 was, to say the least, interesting. The terrain varied from flat marshy rice fields in the southern

portion, close to the Mekong River, to rolling hills and rubber plantations, left over from the French occupation years, in the North. The unit supported everyone. American, Australian, New Zealand Kiwi's, Vietnamese, Thai, and Special Forces units all requested our support. After three months, a pilot would work with almost every unit in III Corps. The one thing that never changed though was the tenacity of the enemy. It never ceased to amaze me how much firepower they could muster in the middle of nowhere. We owned the day, they owned the night.



Graham Stevens in the Cobra back seat

I remember my "rite of passage," drinking the "Green Dragon Cocktail" at the Bien Hoa Officers Club, and later being advanced from being a "Peter Pilot" front seater to being an aircraft commander. I don't, however, remember much after I finished vomiting up my rite of passage. In the interim there were days and days of flying and learning how to stay alive. Lessons on how not to get fixated on your target during a rocket run, and fly into the ground, especially at night. Lessons on how to apply immediate emergency procedures to avoid spinning into the ground after losing your tail rotor. Lessons on which hospital to take a wounded co-pilot or pilot to in the event he got shot during a mission. Above the shoulders wounds went to the 21<sup>st</sup> Evac Hospital, and below the shoulders wounds went to the 93<sup>rd</sup> Evac Hospital.

One could go on forever on incidents, and operations that were experienced but perhaps this story will speak to the many similar actions that synopsise the Vietnam experience for some of us Dragons, Raiders, and Playboys of the 334<sup>th</sup>. Sometimes we did incredible things and overcame unbelievable obstacles and still came home to laugh about them over a beer in the club. Sometimes we weren't so lucky.

Probably the most important mission that the 334<sup>th</sup> had at the time was our scramble teams. These consisted of Cobras fully prepared and ready to cover anyone in III Corps anytime of the day or night. Within five minutes after receiving the call for assistance, the Cobras were in the air and on their way. Scramble missions were never routine, because the same exact conditions never occurred twice.

It was a day just like any other day, except today we would "standby" and scramble if needed from a little airstrip close to Tay Ninh and only minutes outside of Cambodia. After an early get-up and an "aviator's breakfast" of a cigarette and a coke, we took off for Tay Ninh. We would shut down and monitor our radios until we were needed. We knew that if we went it would be into Cambodia. President Nixon had announced to the world during the last week of April 1970 that armed forces of the United States were to cross the boundary line separating South Vietnam and Cambodia to destroy enemy supply caches and base camps. That decision had a tremendous effect on the entire world. Nowhere was it felt more acutely than by the aviation units like the 334<sup>th</sup>.



L-R unknown, Graham Stevens, Larry Pucci, Johnny Almer

We arrived at Tay Ninh with our fire team of two Cobras, shut down and waited for something to happen. Being the second oldest of the four at 21, I also happened to be the Flight Leader. My wingman, Larry Pucci, was 19. Our front seat co-pilots, Jimmy Smith with Larry and Johnny Almer flying with me, had both been in Vietnam for some months and were already seasoned pilots. As seasoned as we were, however, we were soon to get bored of just waiting, and began to play. Our attention turned to throwing rocks at a smoke grenade we had tied to a tree by the safety pin. As mid-morning approached the temperature began to rise into the mid-90's and of course the humidity was already at 100 percent. No one had yet hit the darn grenade. As we continued to smoke and joke we removed our shirts to "catch those rays", and stay somewhat cooler.

Finally, someone hit the smoke grenade and out popped the pin, followed by a little puff of smoke. There was much disappointment, however, when no colored smoke appeared. Next, two things happened almost simultaneously. The radio crackled to life with our order

to “scramble” our aircraft to a location in Cambodia, and we were hit with the invisible vapors of the riot gas grenade we unknowingly popped. Being hot and sweaty and exposed to riot gas is not an exciting experience on the ground, but when you have to go fly, well . . .

So with eyes burning from the gas we managed to get off the ground, and off we flew in search of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) mechanized Infantry Company, with American Army advisors that was in a hot firefight with a reported battalion of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars. Twenty minutes later we identified the location of the ARVN unit by their signal smokes. These were smoke grenades that units would pop and we would identify the color by radio and the ground unit would confirm. The enemy was sometimes clever in that they would wait till the friendly elements would pop their smoke, and then pop the same color smoke to confuse us. Today however, we didn't have any problem finding the location of the enemy. Angry red and green tracers were coming at us from everywhere.



Graham Stevens

I immediately radioed to the unit on the ground that we would begin our rocket attack oriented on a West to East azimuth. So in we dove, rockets flying and mini-gun spraying bullets at 4000 rounds per minute. I had a good fix on the “bad guys” that were shooting at us, but as I broke off my rocket attack I saw out the left side another anti-aircraft position. Suckered! About the same time I saw the gun emplacement the enemy rounds just started coming in the cockpit just like in the movies. Plexiglas was splintering, warning lights flashed, #1 and #2 hydraulics “out” lights lit up, and my wingman reported to me over the radio that I was on fire! Great, thanks for confirming that I'm in deep doo-doo!

The bullets, remarkably, missed the human targets, but had taken a terrible toll on the aircraft. We were going down. Your first thought is to get as far away from the

enemy as possible, but Cobra's don't fly too well without hydraulic pressure to the flight controls, so all I wanted to do was get the aircraft on the ground. Just about the same time the controls began to freeze up, from not having any hydraulic fluid left, we touched down. We threw open our canopies, jumped to the ground, and ran as fast as we could over to a bomb crater. It was here that the two of us realized that we had no weapons. I had not put on my survival vest prior to takeoff because my tearing eyes made me forget to do anything but get the helicopter started and take off. My front seat, Johnny Almer, had his vest with him, but had dropped his pistol upon leaving the aircraft. So all we had managed to escape the aircraft with was one survival vest and one survival radio.



Nineteen Year Old Larry Pucci

What an ignominious end! I was thinking we'd both be shot dead in a bomb crater, like the end of the “Bridges at Toko-Ri” when William Holden and Mickey Rooney get shot. Well, not just yet!

It suddenly occurred to us both that we were not really that far away from the good guys, so, after peeking about we scurried out of the bomb crater and ran the hundred yards to the ARVN position. What a relief, friendly faces. Now it was time to get back in the game. With the aid of the infantry company's radio we reestablished communications with our sister aircraft. They had been orbiting some ways off waiting for the situation to cool off somewhat. I'm sure the commies were dancing about after their victorious shooting down of our aircraft.

Eager to get back into the game, Larry Pucci in our wing ship wanted to know where the bad guys were that shot us down. I told him the machine gun, which we referred to as a “high speed 30 caliber” (7.62mm machine gun on two wheeled cart), was located at the corner of the tree line we had attacked. So Larry brought his Cobra about and lined up on the long axis of the tree line and began his attack.

Whoomp! Whoomp! Whoomp! The 17-pound High Explosive rocket war-heads threw mud, trees, and enemy up in the air. What an awesome sight. As was customary in our tactics, the front seat copilot would begin to “cover the break” with 7.62 mm mini-gun,

spraying the area with bullets at an ear shattering rate of 4000 rounds per minute as the aircraft broke to climb out and go around for another pass.

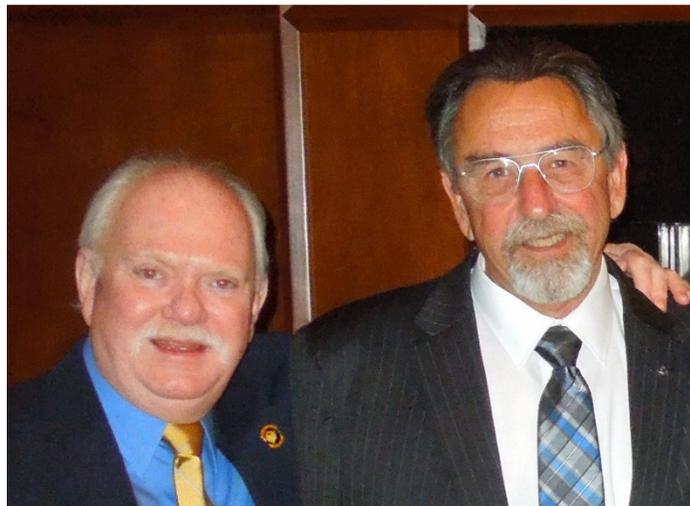
Halfway through the turn though, the mini-gun stopped shooting. I radioed to Larry. "Everything okay?" Through the crackle of the radio I heard him say, "Front seat is hit." I radioed back "How bad?" His reply sent shudders down my spine. "I don't know", Larry said, "All I can see is a hole in the back of his neck." Because the pilot and copilot sit in tandem in the Cobra, it is difficult for the back seater to see anything below shoulder level of the copilot in the front seat. Larry radioed me that he was breaking off and heading for the hospital in Tay Ninh. A thirty minute ride with someone who is slowly bleeding to death and there is nothing you can do about it.

This is one of the times we weren't so lucky. Jimmy Smith died on the way to Tay Ninh. He was old. Twenty-two years old. The aircraft he was flying in took one hit. The armor piercing round entered on the left side of the aircraft, went through his Jugular vein, through his spine and out the back of his neck. More than likely Jimmy Smith never knew what hit him. The aircraft flew back to our home base where the small hole in the side was patched and the blood was washed out. We would need the aircraft the next day with a new crew and a new mission.

Jimmy's luck ran out as so many others did during those years. The youth, the life, the blood, just ran out.

Those of us who are left, however, know that their actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon themselves, their units, and the United States of America.

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Note – Jimmy Smith is a pseudonym out of respect for the family of our KIA brother.

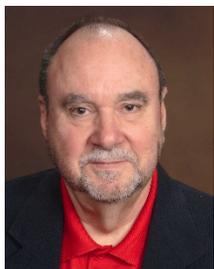


Graham Stevens (L), Larry Pucci (R)

Send feedback to Graham [gstevens@iomax.net](mailto:gstevens@iomax.net)

## The Way We Were, Part II

by Terry Garlock



### Part II

Part I was my story of being shot down in a Cobra in 1969, seriously injured in a way that ended my flying days, and the two fellow pilots who risked their necks to rescue me, John Synowsky and Graham Stevens, my brothers.

But how do you define brotherhood? Well, here's one way.

From my home in Peachtree City, GA about 35 miles south of Atlanta, at roughly noon on Dec 31, New Year's Eve, I called Andy Burleigh. Andy is a Founding and Charter and Life member of CHPA and lives in Greer, SC, a 3.5 hour drive away. He talked me into joining CHPA years ago.

Andy and his wife Margie are good friends, but you have to go beyond friendship into brotherhood to make my brazen New Year's Eve proposal when he picked up the phone, seeing my ID and saying, "How the hell are ya'?"

"Andy, how about I drive Kristen up this afternoon, stay overnight with you and tomorrow we take your motor

home on a drive to Mooresville to have lunch with Graham Stevens? I'll buy the lunch and the gas."

Andy Hmmm'ed for about 3 seconds then said, "Sure, come on!"

There was a reason for my presumptuous request, but first I'll tell you how I met Andy.

In 1998, the year I would turn 50, my wife and I traveled to China to adopt Melanie from an orphanage in the northern part of the country, 300 miles west of Shanghai. She was 12 months old then. Time flies; she just finished her sophomore year at the U of GA a couple weeks ago.

Julie and I both had prior marriages but neither of us ever had children. At my age, kids were not part of my plan, but happy wife, happy life, so my plans changed. We ended up going back in 2003 – when I was 55 for Pete's sake! - to adopt Kristen from an orphanage on the southern China coast near Hong Kong. She was also 12 months old at the time.

Now that I had kids late in life, even before Kristen was born I started to think about the BS they would learn in school about my war, and more importantly about my

brothers, and so that part of my life emerged from where it had been deeply buried to the front of my mind.

In 2000 I had been back from Vietnam 30 years, and like many other Vietnam vets, I had never been to a veteran gathering of any kind. The country seemed to have lost its mind when we came home. Values had been turned upside down. Breaking the law to publicly burn draft cards was popular. A cottage industry arose in doctors specializing in medical reports that would fraudulently disqualify young men from the draft. The anti-war movement got legs and became mainstream.



Andy and Margie Burleigh  
CHPA 2016 Annual Reunion, Ft. Rucker AL

In the 1970s there were a thousand ways to show disapproval of anyone wearing a uniform, but overt hostility was spotty. Part of the populace quietly supported us, the other part treated us as invisible. Even good people were disappointing as they looked the other way while protestors gathered every day at CA airports from the late 60s on to welcome troops returning from Vietnam by hurling insults and thin packets that burst open with urine or feces or chicken blood, with insults continuing inside the airports.

When this practice became established, returning troops were warned before leaving Vietnam to avoid confrontations and to get out of their uniforms immediately for their own personal safety, and so CA airport bathrooms looked like a K-mart dressing room floor with piles of discarded fatigues.

In that setting do young men returning home from war engage in political debate? No. Nobody wanted to hear our story anyway, they knew all the answers about Vietnam, they had seen it on TV, which was strange since many of us were a little confused about the geopolitical answers ourselves. A lot of us kept our story deep inside and went on with life.

Now, too old but with young kids, I had a reason to be more public about my service, and my brothers. I started kind of obliquely.

In early 2000 I wrote my first newspaper column, published in the Atlanta Constitution, about my Dad, a Navy Corpsman serving on the USS Fanshaw Bay, a small escort carrier with a total of 25 airplanes, the flagship of Taffy Three, a security task force of three escort carriers and support craft on the western periphery of the 700 ship armada taking a prima donna named McArthur back to the Philippines. When the monster battleships of the Central Japanese Force decloaked by steaming at dawn through the San Bernardino Straight to jump the armada, this Goliath ran smack into the David of Taffy Three, and thus began the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest Naval Battle in history.

Dad wasn't a big shot, but he was there, and he did his Corpsman job in Leyte Gulf and in the bloody battle of Okinawa over 82 days with 14,009 allied KIAs.

Dad never talked much about the war, and he died five years prior to that first newspaper column which I titled, "Thanks, Dad!" and of course the editor changed it to the title he liked. In that column I mentioned in passing that I flew helicopters in Vietnam.



Kristen in the shotgun chair of Andy's motor home

Andy lived near me in GA at the time, he read the column, and he called to invite me to attend a meeting of the GA chapter of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) in Atlanta. John Synowsky, my platoon leader and one of the guys who received the Soldiers Medal for rescuing me, had called me over the years a few times to ask if I'd go with him to the VHPA annual reunion. I always politely declined. I didn't want to relive that part of my life, and I certainly didn't want to be a victim like the losers who seemed to make a life hanging around the Vietnam Memorial wearing fatigue remnants, looking perpetually haggard with a broken spirit, selling trinkets. They might have been phonies.

So I politely turned Andy down the 1<sup>st</sup> – and the 2<sup>nd</sup> – time he called to invite me to a VHPA meeting. When he

called the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, I told him, “Andy, I’ll go with you to a meeting if you’ll kindly get the hell off my back!”

And so I went with Andy to the meeting, and I found out I had been wrong all those years, that these were my brothers, the ones who understood me, the ones who did the same hard things I had done, the ones with whom I can communicate volumes with just a few words the public will never comprehend, the ones I feel close to the first time we meet, the ones I would call first if I needed help, the ones I can trust to watch my back, the ones who sweep away the isolation I often feel in a crowd of dummies who have lived their life under a bubble of protection and plenty and complaint and would never sacrifice a thing for their country.

I reconnected with my brothers. I became involved with the GA chapter of VHPA. I started my own local group of Vietnam combat vets called the Pucker Factor Club. I began speaking to university and high school groups about the Vietnam War. I would later begin a five year effort to write a book about my brothers in Vietnam. Andy is in that book, in a chapter I titled “Magnet Ass” since he was one of many to earn that moniker, and if you ask to see his scar you would be taking the risk he just might drop trou and bend over to show you.

I wrote another column in the Atlanta paper about learning the true meaning of loyalty and courage and trust by watching the young men I served with, this time focusing on my platoon leader, John Synowsky. Color me surprised when his sister, Joanne, called me since she lived in the Atlanta area and had read the column about her big brother.

One thing led to another and John came to Atlanta from TX and flew in his mother from Butler, PA, to join a dinner Joanne arranged between their family and mine. My daughter Melanie was four years old then, and while she was tugging on John’s beard just to make sure it was real, every time I started to talk to John’s mother she started to cry and turned away. Finally she gripped my hand and said to me with a quivering voice and very wet face that she had heard about me for many years and, “I’m so glad my Johnny was there to help when you needed him.”

Wow. Me too.

When we parted that night, my pistol of a daughter Melanie said two things to John. She said while wagging a finger in his face, “You stop smoking, not good for you!” And then she said, “Thanks for saving my Daddy, Mr. John.” All of a sudden John got something in his eye.

That was September of 2000, 15 months before my younger daughter Kristen was born in China, 17 months before we would arrive in southern China near Hong Kong to adopt her at 12 months old.

When she was seven years old Kristen became suddenly and seriously ill with viral encephalitis, inflammation and swelling of the brain. She was initially

hospitalized nearly a month as pediatric Neurology specialists in ICU tried to diagnose her illness and stop and treat her seizures. Since then Kristen has been hospitalized six times, transported by ambulance four times and helicopter life flight twice. She is epileptic from her illness and has 3-4 seizures clustered in a three-week cycle despite best efforts of a Neurologist who is one of GA’s top gunslingers. Without meds and a device surgically implanted near her left armpit sending signals up her vagal nerve to her brain, her seizures would be far worse.



Andy Burleigh (L) with Kristen Garlock (R)

From her illness Kristen’s ability to learn, focus, comprehend and retrieve what she remembers is impaired, so she is in special needs school programs and needs lots of help with homework and studying and school projects from me. And I’m not only impatient but a lousy teacher to boot.

To make things worse for a kid who has been through more than any kid should have to endure, she desperately wants friends but has none because she is socially awkward and kids are cruel.

All this means I discovered late in life what you have known for a very long time, that you don’t truly know love until you have a child. I also discovered you don’t truly

know heartbreak until you have a child with life's important tools broken and you cannot fix them.

So you will understand why I spoil Kristen rotten with the one joy in her life I can give her – food. Friday, May 26 was her last day of school with a math exam to take after we prepared together with practice over a week. She made an 80 on that exam, and I think the fact her teacher, Ms. Jill, loved Kristen's relentless cheerfulness maybe had something to do with a generous grade. Kristen had a bad cold that day, which sounds minor, but any illness makes her more prone to seizure. Prompted by a heads-up email from me, Ms. Jill gave her the math exam early in the day and called me to come take her home since she clearly felt lousy. Kristen slept on the couch much of the afternoon but perked up about 5pm because she had no intention of letting pass our Friday tradition of the local seafood buffet. Well, her Friday tradition.

While eagerly eating catfish and shrimp she fell out of her chair, her head bounced on the carpeted floor, arms and legs contorted on the floor while her head twisted and eyes rolled up and she gurgled in seizure. A lady at a nearby table screamed, "Call 911!" Kneeling beside Kristen, cradling her head and telling her to squeeze my finger so I would know when she could hear me and was regaining consciousness, I said loudly, "Please don't call 911, she'll be ok in a minute." And she was. Her seizures last usually about 30 seconds and then she needs absolute, pure, uninterrupted rest. So when her seizure passed and I could lift her back into her chair, brush the hair out of her face, straighten her glasses and coax her back to really awake and make her extend her right leg as a test since it gets paralyzed in her seizure, I knew then I could hold on tight to walk her out to my truck to get her away from upset patrons and let her rest. It's just part of life with an epileptic child, but a stab to my heart every time it happens.

You're probably wondering what this has to do with brotherhood.

During the Christmas break Kristen didn't have nearly enough to do and spent too much time watching TV. And her Dad is a lousy playmate. She had often asked me why I haven't purchased a motor home, telling me in her immature way she thinks it would be fun. And she had started to understand what it meant that her Dad had been in a war, that we weren't "teams" trying to win a game as she earlier perceived. She was asking questions about flying a helicopter, and when I told her about the two guys who rescued me when I was shot down, she asked when she could meet them.

So I thought, Melanie met John when she was four, why not take Kristen to meet Graham in North Carolina, and GET HER OFF THE DAMN COUCH!

Recognizing a pregnant opportunity, I called Andy at the last minute – ok, dammit, because I'm impulsive and

I needed to get out of the house, too – to set up an Andy/Margie visit, short motor home outing, introduce Andy to Graham and introduce Kristen to Graham, all in one bowling ball knocking down a bunch of pins.

Kristen didn't remember Andy, though he had visited our house multiple times before and after he moved to Greer, SC, and he knew my wife Julie and both Melanie and Kristen.

Andy said ok to my pushy request, I called Graham to set up a lunch meeting in Mooresville, NC, Kristen and I threw an overnight bag each together, we jumped in the truck and off we went toward Greer.

Road trip! I love it when a plan comes together – instantly!



Kristen meeting Graham Stevens at the restaurant

Margie was gracious putting up with the unexpected intrusion on a holiday eve, we had a nice visit, crashed, and the next morning pulled out for Kristen's mini-adventure in Andy's motor home, with her riding shotgun while I played 2<sup>nd</sup> fiddle at the table in the galley. Kristen had a big time though she wouldn't say so – because she's a tough customer, that's why – and thoroughly enjoyed a trip toward a meal at a restaurant she had not previously explored, and as I said food is her one glorious indulgence. She also had some curiosity about this unknown guy named Graham.

We arrived at the agreed location and found Graham waiting for us. Andy and Graham hit it off and could have talked for hours, but Kristen was only going to wait so long. In her mind - that works in puzzling ways - Graham Stevens belonged to her for this lunch meeting. I warned Graham that Kristen doesn't have the same filter other kids do and be ready for her to say anything.

We ordered, the food arrived, we began to eat and the tension mounted in Kristen, to which Andy and

Graham were oblivious, absorbed in their conversation, so I wedged into an opening to say Kristen wants to ask Graham some questions, giving Andy a big hint. As if Andy takes hints. So Kristen, usually awkward or at least unorthodox in her unfiltered conversation, started talking to Graham, but she made the mistake of pausing and Andy squeezed right back in to pick up his conversation with Graham.

We went through a few cycles of this, which was no surprise to me because, you see, Andy loves to talk. Andy could talk an auctioneer into submission. Andy could casually and unintentionally make a Benedictine monk sworn to silence declare, "Awww, screw it!" so he could pick up his end of the conversation. I don't mean Andy is a bore, far from it, he's a pleasure to talk to, a fount of information and has a fascinating breadth of experience. He just loves people and likes to talk.



Graham (L) and Andy (R) deep in conversation

So, eventually I grabbed Andy like I needed to conspire privately with him and took him to a remote empty table in the restaurant to give Kristen some private time to ask Graham some of the questions brewing in her 15 year old under-developed mind, like, "Was there blood?" We gave them about 20 minutes and then rescued Graham, paid the bill and ambled outside, conversing in the parking lot.

Actually, since they live just two hours apart, Andy and Graham should get together now and then to enjoy each other's company. That was one benefit of the trip. A second benefit was I got Kristen off the couch for a day or so with a new experience. A third benefit is I have one daughter, Melanie, who has met and spent time with John, and another daughter, Kristen, who has spent a little bit of time with Graham, the two guys to whom I owe a debt that cannot be repaid.

But there was more. Kristen and I both had the pleasure of spending some time with Andy and Margie

Burleigh, and Kristen had her ride in Andy's mobile home.

Finally, I had a reminder of brotherhood. There are many ways to describe it though sometimes words just aren't enough. One way is feeling sufficiently comfortable inconveniencing a friend to indulge your own child, and on the receiving end responding with, "Hmmm, OK!" That's a closeness that comes from a shared experience doing our duty under hard circumstances, whether we knew each other in-country or not.

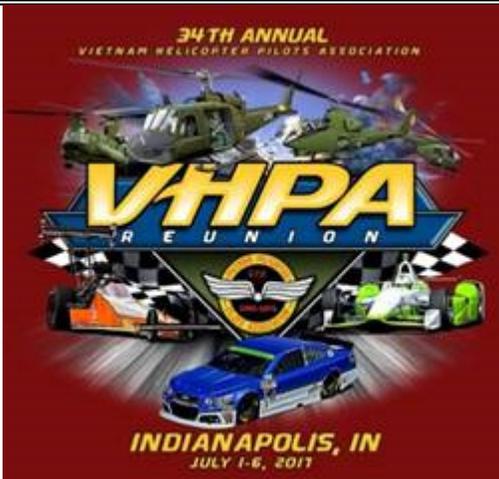


Terry Garlock (L) with Graham Stevens (R) and Kristen enjoying herself goofing off

Andy and I did not, but we are brothers just the same. In a way he rescued me all over again, this time from myself, and he thought nothing of it. Because that's the way we were, we had learned to instinctively watch each other's back. I don't mean when he did me a favor on the New Year's Holiday, that was a brother's kindness. But long before that his poking me with a sharp stick to re-engage my brothers had important consequences.

If you went through this missive and noted the string of my actions that followed Andy's persistent calls to me when he first read my newspaper column, and if you are the philosophical type, you might wonder what changes in my life were precipitated by his determined phone calls, sort of like the chain of possibilities when in Borneo a butterfly flaps its wings.

## Reunions and Gatherings



VHVA Annual Reunion  
Registration - <https://reunion.vhpa.org/>

July 1 - 6, 2017  
Indianapolis, IN



DFC Society 2017 Convention  
Sep 24<sup>th</sup> thru 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Dallas, TX

theme - "*Heroic Women of the DFC*"  
[www.dfcsociety.org](http://www.dfcsociety.org)  
POC: Bruce Huffman,  
518-578-7089  
[bhuffman@dfcsociety.org](mailto:bhuffman@dfcsociety.org)

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CHPA – 800-832-5144 [hq@chpa-us.org](mailto:hq@chpa-us.org) PO Box 2585, Peachtree City, GA 30269



