

# The Ugly Angel

## Memorial Foundation Newsletter

7dash7, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002



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### Happy Birthday, Brothers

#### A Virtual Reunion

The following pages are a humble attempt to recreate the recent reunion in Pensacola. If you weren't there, I'd suggest you gather a six-pack or two and maybe plop yourself down on a nearby pile of sand before you begin to read. To set the scene, I am enclosing the following poem forwarded by the Sage of the Rockies, Joel Vignere.

#### **THE REUNION** *by Rachel Firth*

Autumn leaves rustling, together to the appointed place, the old warriors come.  
Pilgrims, drifting across the land they fought to preserve.  
Where they meet is not important anymore. They meet and that's enough for now.  
Greetings echo across a lobby.  
Hands reach out and arms draw buddies close.  
Embraces, that as young men they were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to accept so lovingly.  
But deep within these Indian Summer days, they have reached a greater understanding of life and love.  
The shells holding their souls are weaker now, but hearts and minds grow vigorous, remembering.  
On a table someone spreads old photographs, a test of recollection.  
And friendly laughter echoes at shocks of hair gone gray or white, or merely gone.  
The rugged slender bodies lost forever.  
Yet they no longer need to prove their strength.  
Some are now sustained by one of "medicine's miracles," and even in this fact, they manage to find humor.  
The women, all those that waited, all those who loved them, have watched the changes take place.  
Now, they observe and listen, and smile at each other; as glad to be together as the men.  
Talk turns to war and planes and foreign lands.  
Stories are told and told again, reweaving the threadbare fabricate of the past.  
Mending one more time the banner of their youth.  
They hear the vibrations, feel the shudder of metal as engines whine and whirl, and planes come to life.  
These birds with fractured wings can be seen beyond the mist of clouds, and they are in the air again,  
chasing the wind, feeling the exhilaration of flight close to the heavens.  
Dead comrades, hearing their names spoken,  
wanting to share in this time, if only in spirit, move silently among them.  
Their presence is felt and smiles appear beneath misty eyes.  
Each, in his own way may wonder who will be absent in another year.  
The room grows quite for a time.  
Suddenly an ember flames to life.  
Another memory burns.  
The talk may turn to other wars and other men, and of futility.  
So, this is how it goes. The past is so much present.  
In their ceremonies, the allegiances, the speeches and the prayers, one cannot help but hear the  
deep eternal love of country they will forever share.  
Finally, it is time to leave.  
Much too soon to set aside this little piece of yesterday,  
but the past cannot be held too long, for it is fragile.  
They say "Farewell" . . . "See you another year, God willing."  
Each keep a little of the others with him forever.  
Check six!

**Personally Speaking:** I've been wearing an Ugly Angel cap since getting one four years ago at my first reunion. Never had anyone ever asked me what it meant, aside, of course, from the clerk at the PX who asked me if it was for one of those cute men's clubs. We were going thru security at the Columbia, SC airport when one of the guards shouted, " Standby for a Marine." Boy, was I surprised. Then when we were waiting to board, this really distinguished black gent in front of us turned around and said, "Welcome home, my brother was a corpsman at Camp Holloway." It was obvious to me that the signs for a good reunion were lining up just fine.

Like most attendees, I'd been watching the weather named Lilli, like a hawk. As we started our approach into PNS, the pilot said, "it'll be a little bumpy. We're right on the east side of the storm, meaning, of course that it had been and gone, which was just fine. As you know if you were there, the weather just got better each hour.

**Willie, Burt and Archie.** Who knows how they do it but once again the "Fearsome Threesome" kept everyone well supplied with whatever beverages they desired. There was even wine with a cork! Of course, they were also the first room on the beach. How they always manage to have the HQ sited so perfectly for every event is well beyond my imagination but it sure makes me proud to be a Staff NCO, not that for even 1 second would I imagine that I was fit for more than drinking their beer.

**Archie's Angels, Part 1.** Possibly the most important part of the 2002 Reunion was celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the landing of Archie's Angels at Soc Trang, 15 April, 1962. This marked the beginning of the Vietnam war for the Marine Corps. The following is a message, sent by Archie to Rusty Sachs regarding separate dinners that resulted from his aviators' desire to celebrate the anniversary on their own terms—and who can blame them?

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Dear Rusty,

Strictly because I happen to have been driving the first Marine helo to land in Vietnam, I have sometimes been referred to as Angel No.1. However, along with that questionable designation, I failed to get the supernatural powers which Angel No. 1 should, in my opinion, have been given. Due to the fact that I've been shortchanged in that regard, I'm unable to be two places at the same time. I regret that that is the case, but that's the way it is, so I have to live with it. Therefore, I'll just have to standby for the consequences.

Seriously, I would very much like to be with your group at dinner. However, I'm sure you can appreciate that the appropriate place for me to be that evening is with the guys (and their ladies) who performed such an outstanding job for me personally, and for our esteemed Corps in Vietnam.

I know I speak for all hands when I say that we're looking forward to being with all generations of HMM-362 who get to Pensacola. This is especially true for the get-together Friday afternoon hosted by the "Uglies." The efforts expended to make that happen are indeed appreciated. I look forward to seeing you there, if not before.

Semper Fi!

Archie Clapp

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**Archie's Angels, Part 2.** On Friday afternoon, the Uglys gathered on the beach to honor the Archie's. Plaques were handed out to each of those pioneers who set the mark that every helo squadron would try to match. Since no Angel has ever spoken more eloquently than Tom Hewes, he was the "speaker du jour" and made the following remarks, immediately prior to distributing the plaques.

“Forty years ago this April in a small country in Southeast Asia that most of us had never heard of, an event occurred that would, to one degree or another, shape the course of the lives of every one of us.

In the early morning of 15 April 1962, unnoticed by the rest of a sleeping world, an Amphibious Ready Group comprised of the LPH USS Princeton and a few destroyers began launching the 24 HUS helicopters and 3 O1B aircraft of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron–362 to a small WWII Japanese airstrip near a village named Soc Trang in the Republic of Vietnam.

The 250 Marines of the squadron were led by WW II and Korea veteran Lt Col Archie Clapp. They, along with a small Task Unit Headquarters and 250 man MABs Detachment, were the first Marine units to deploy to Vietnam, beginning a deployment that would over the next ten years involve nearly every helicopter squadron in the Marine Corps – and every one of us.

Fortieth anniversaries of any significant historic event are usually cause for the award of honors, tearful remembrance, and overlong speeches. The award of honors is why we’re here this afternoon; remembrance is our constant companion; but if you want a long speech you’ll have to go elsewhere.

We honor Archie’s Angels, as 362 was then known, not only because they were the first, but more importantly because of the standard of excellence and courage they established and passed on to the squadrons that followed them in country.

In addition to being the first to fight, they are credited with a score of other firsts: First to employ surprise, deception, and diverse helicopter tactics, First Eagle Flight or quick reaction force, First night helicopter assault, First helicopter recovery plan, First to employ TAFDs for forward area refueling, First to see the need for fire retardant flight gear, First to identify a requirement for armed escort helicopters and for a Helicopter Coordinator Airborne.

So many firsts that, as one Marine Corps history publication notes, “they identified almost every area which would eventually require further development in helicopters.”

Marines like Jim Perryman, Denny Anderson, Len Altano, Frank Quadrini, Curt Ryan, Jim Shelton, and Bob Cramer carried this knowledge and the same high standards to other squadrons, and the Marines they mentored carried them to still others.

The result: a sustained record of operational excellence and personal courage that characterized Marine helicopter operations throughout the Vietnam War.

The heroic deeds these operations inspired, and their cost in lives, evoke memories that will live within every one of us as long as we draw breath. Those memories are a large part of why we are all here in Pensacola. There is not one of us who doesn’t hear the faint echoes of an emergency medevac into a hot zone, the recovery of a wingmen down in Indian country, and the emergency extract of a besieged Recon team. And we still see the faces of those we left behind.

The tradition established at that small WWII Japanese airstrip continues down to this day, and I’m proud to report that the same standards were reflected in the Marine helicopter community’s performance in Afghanistan.

It is only fitting that we, their successors, honor the 40th anniversary of their deployment by offering the Marines of Archie’s Angels a small token of our respect for their contribution to the proud history of our Corps.

It is also fitting that former Commanding Officer of the squadron, Col. Archie Clapp, be the first to be honored.

SNCOs may be the backbone of the Corps, but as all career Marines know it is the Commanding Officer who sets the example that ultimately determines whether a squadron is great or merely a gaggle of guys, a pile of 4.8 boxes, and 24 hunks of aluminum. And as his Marines, a surprising number of whom went on to make the Marine Corps a career, will be quick to tell you, Archie Clapp's leadership made them a great squadron.

The best evidence of that is the 33 Archie's Angels who are with us today – 24 of whom are retired from the Corps.

Archie's Angels: As your name is called, I ask each of you to step up on the stage to receive an engraved plaque honoring the events of 15 April 1962 and your role in establishing forever the proud combat record of Marine helicopter aviation.

Col Archie Clapp	Bob O'Dare	Len Altano
Terry Owens	Denny Anderson	Jim Perryman
Chris Christensen	Jim Plummer	Darcey Clasen
Frank Quadrini*	Lyman Cokely	Bill Rose
Bob Cramer *	Earl Rose	Chris DeFries
Hugh Rothweiler	Del DuPont	Curt Ryan
Walt Gould	Jerry Scanlan	Tom Hammack
Mike Shields	Jim Lary	Blake Smith
Dave Leighton	Jim Shelton	Jim Losey
Early Spiars	Curt McRaney	Bob Whaley
Tom Murley	Charles Wimpler	Charles Wood

It remains only to say, thank you Marines of Archie's Angels for lighting the way.  
Semper Fidelis!

### **Friday Night Squadron Dinner**

#### ***President's Invocation***

Good evening. It's appropriate to begin this assembly by expressing thanks.

By expressing thanks to Creation Six for making it possible for us to convene here today. We are the *Ugly* Angels, and we take great pride in the title.

We give thanks for the opportunity to gather once again in good fellowship to remember our brothers, those whose lives ended in a small Country far, far away, and those who have left us since returning to the Land of the all-night generator. We give thanks for the fortune of surviving the *Ugly* years of combat, and for the privilege of serving as Angels to the wounded grunts we evacuated.

And we give thanks for knowing the *Ugly* truth of war. The truth that only warriors can know, a truth we dare speak only in the presence of each other. War is exhilarating. Amidst all its horrors, war brings out the finest qualities of mankind: courage in the face of terror, dedication to a cause, cooperation and teamwork, self-sacrifice, and devotion to one's peers.

We give thanks that we can recall the experience as *Ugly Angels*. *Ugly* by situation, Angels by aspiration, and always faithful to the memory of our companions now absent.

**After the grace**, a fabulous meal was had by all. Unfortunately General Hendrickson was called away. There was some time, never enough, of course to visit with friends old and new. There were also several drawings for prizes. Somehow "Lucky" Ransom managed to snag two of the biggies. I for one would never even hint at the possibility of Mike being the God-father of Miss Sachs who drew the winning tickets so well. Lastly, I would never want to say there was something good about having two separate dinners but the facts are, we wouldn't have fit if everyone came to one dinner. It was packed. There is no doubt that 362 carried the ball this time, as you would expect

**Saturday, Noon Memorial Service at The WALL, South.** Coordination really has nothing to do with a reunion. This ceremony was no exception but no one seemed to mind. It wasn't as hot as 4 years ago and since Larry Turner wouldn't be astounding anyone with his great skill with the H-34, everything was cool. The highlight of the ceremony was the remarks made by retired Lieutenant General Bob Keller who was the Assistant Wing Commander, 1st MAW, in 67-68. They follow.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I was fortunate enough in three wars to survive rather frequent active exposure to enemy fire, which missed most of the time! My two sons also often went into harm's way in the Vietnam conflict, and came through unscathed.

This makes it especially meaningful for me personally to remember and honor the roundly 600,000 American citizens who were killed in war-time combat actions during our national history. The names of close to one in ten of that large number, as you and I know, are right here on this Wall.

I have been searching in very recent days, for some new and different words which truly would do justice to the nature of this remarkable gathering, but, as happens on occasion, they do not always present themselves as readily as one might wish. This troubled me considerably.

However, just a few nights ago while I was in restless sleep and dreaming fitfully, a young military man suddenly materialized in those dreams. Curiously, a phenomenon similar to this actually had happened to me once before several years ago. I did not recognize this young man, though, as he started speaking to me, but I concentrated strongly on his words. As nearly as I can recall, what follows now is what he communicated to me.

'Sir, long ago I was aware that you and my father were good friends. Perhaps it may be that I can help you with some words.

'In the last few moments of my life when I knew with certainty that I was about to die, a flood of thoughts, emotions and memories flashed through my mind.

'Sir, respectfully, if you do not believe this is possible, wait until your time comes.

He continued, - 'some of those thoughts, emotions and memories I will not share with you -they are too private. Others, were of my loved ones, bless them; I also had a millisecond of regret for missing the future, whatever it might have held and now never would be for me; and, I felt a comforting, warm sensation of confidence that in the long run all would be well. Then, I died.

'Sir, please ask the folks you will be addressing to remember us, all of us, but only positively. Do not weep for us any more. Our troubles are long over.

'Rather, do for us the good things we could and would have done, but were denied opportunity.

'Enjoy the love we will have missed; make life easier and better for as many others as you can, and, within your individual reaches, work to strengthen our magnificent country, and improve the welfare of our society.

'I hope - oh how I do hope!-, all of you are having long, happy, and productive lives. - If you will live for us, as well as for yourselves~ we shall continue to live through you, and we shall not have died in vain.'

With that, the young man identified himself to me and then vanished.

I awakened with quite a start, and instantly knew I must share with you the words of 1st Lieutenant Robert f. Conti, Echo Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, who was killed in action on November 24th 1969. He was the son of Major General Louis J. Conti, USMCR, (retired.)

Ladies and gentlemen on his behalf, and that of every other person whose name is inscribed alongside his, I ask that you heed his words.

And now, would you all stand with me for a moment of silence, looking at The Wall and thinking of Lieuteant Conti's words

Thank you

**Regrets.** These came in after the last newsletter went out but before the reunion. Jim and Kitty Aldworth were at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville checking up on why Kitty hasn't done all that well since her fall several months ago.

Jim Gordon also was sorry he couldn't make it

KD Logue probably had the best reason having just been appointed as Supervisor of Airport Security Screeners at the Portland Airport. He gleefully reports, "I can transfer my Federal time and retirement from the Postal Service, and keep all of my current benefits.

#### **Letter to the Editor**

I was a member of the original HMM-362 sent to Vietnam in 1962. I was a corporal and the S-2 Chief. I also have the very unique distinction of being the first Marine gunner on a combat operation in Vietnam when the S-2 officer, Capt. Conlon, allowed me to go on the first night helicopter operation in history. We conducted four assaults that day and I was armed with both my M-1 rifle and German made MP-40 9mm sub-machine gun.

S/F Joe Eke

#### **Taps**

Mike Kennett died of cancer on Aug 24, 2002. Mike was a member of HMM-362 in 66-67. If you would like to make a call or send a card to his wife, Kathy the following info is provided: telephone-home evenings as Kathy works- 707 996 5939, Address- 7199 Grove Ct., Sonoma California 95476. Mike worked for United Airlines for 33 years and his last position was Captain on the 747-400. He will be greatly missed by all his friends and comrades. Mikes ashes were scattered under the Golden Gate Bridge on Oct 18th 2002.

Posted by Jim Hippert , 66-67. e-mail [jimdebhip@aol.com](mailto:jimdebhip@aol.com)

#### **Presidents Message**

I hereby nominate Lew Barnes and TC Wilson as Ugly Angels of the Year. Lew, as reunion coordinator-in-fact, not only stepped in to fill Mark Statnon's shoes when Mark become disabled by divorce, he did so with enthusiasm, grace, and skill. The UA dinner Friday evening was the best we've had – even though Lew remained three thousand miles away, tending to family needs. We admire his priorities as much as we regret his absence, and several hundred Angels join me in wishing our best for Jeanne.

Tim Wilson, not to be outdone, took on the mantle of honcho with style. He single-handedly persuaded, convinced, and cajoled Marines throughout Escambia County to enter their luck in the UA raffle of memorabilia, generating more than \$2000 in contributions to the Ugly Angel Scholarship Fund. We'll have more info on the UASF in the next newsletter.

All in all, Reunion 2002 gathered us together in fellowship and fun. We cleared the decks of time and spoke with the clarity that only time can offer. And Jim: I apologize again for turning off the lights.

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### **Request for Info**

The following inquiry came through Al Barbour. For some reason, it seems very familiar. If you know something, please advise.

Incident Date 660725 - KIA - Fabris, Chris Frank CPL Crew HMM-262 660725. | However, the personnel from HMM-262 only arrived "in-country" on Dec. 3, 1966 and our aircraft arrived a few weeks later on the USS Core. We started flying OJT missions within a week of our arrival and our first casualty was S/Sgt. C.I. Henry, KIA Jan. 28, 1967. From some of the information on the Popsmoke website, I noticed that HMM-362 was in-country at that time, so there may be a "typo" somewhere. We certainly do not want to ignore this departed Brother and want to see that he gets listed with his fellow squadron mates. Maybe we could put out a query to the HMM-362 guys from 1966 to see if they remember him?

Jake [JosephEJacobs@aol.com](mailto:JosephEJacobs@aol.com)

### **Honors upon Honors**

Anyone who has been around here for more than 3 months knows that everything we are as a veteran's group is entirely because of Tom Hewes. In the early days, he found each of us and made us a part of the operation. His organizational and leadership skills are unparalleled. Apparently, we are not the only ones who noticed. Pop A Smoke has just added Tom to their Board of Directors. Congratulations, Tom!!!

### **Board of Directors**

A recent decision to increase the number of board members from 6 to 9 resulted in an abundance of volunteers and nominations. We eventually wound up with 11 names. After 2 separate votes were taken the following members were chosen and will be added to the BOD: Sherard Dukes, Pete King and Dave Luhrsen, Thanks to everyone who volunteered or nominated someone.

### **Trial Balloon**

One of the biggest and most famous events ever held in conjunction with HMM-362 was the Open House put on by Gerald Hale and the YL 37 Group. Quite a bit of talk went on at the reunion about a repeat of this event; well, an almost repeat. Several things have changed over time. Now they apparently have 3 H-34s flying which are quite a few more than 1. There are also a lot more of us than there were then. It seems apparent that there are quite a few reasons why a 362 only event would be desirable but first we need to see how many people would be interested in attending and how many guests each might bring. Give it a little thought and get back to me as soon as possible. Again, this is simply an inquiry regarding a possibility. No replies, no possibility!!

### **History Newsletter**

After having done those 6 pre-reunion newsletters and this after-action report, I could use a rest but us gunny-editors hardly ever rest so we need to start asking for more material for the History Newsletter. Apparently it has been of some interest but we need some stories. These do not have to do with death or heroics. Just some interesting thoughts and observations are enough. Did you have an interesting "Bunkie" or a way to kill time. Tell us about your shop or how you rolled a 34 down a hill. If you don't feel too comfortable about writing, I can edit it into a beauty. Like they say in the movies, "I can work with you, kid." And I don't charge a dime.

### **Books Worth Reading**

Since I earn my living as a librarian, I can't help but mention a few books I have recently read regarding Vietnam.

The first is a big one but I found it to be quite good. [The Cat from Hue: A Vietnam War Story](#) by John Laurence describes a correspondents 3 tours in-country. Because he and his associates were reporters, they hopped from one major event to the next and so spent a bit of time in a lot of battles and got to see how a lot of units operated. He eventually turns against the war and produces “The World of Charley Company”, a pretty well known documentary.

The book is almost an encyclopedia of the war and really is an interesting read if you ever wondered how non-helicopter people, like civilians, might have lived.

The next one is actually the proceedings of a conference put on by the University of Virginia School of Law and is titled [The Real Lessons of the Vietnam War: Reflections 25 Years After the Fall of Saigon](#). Being a compendium, it consists of numerous talks by a wide array of experts. What I found to be particularly interesting was not so much their opinions but the actual questions that they were interested in. For an event that took up more than two years of my life, I am somewhat ashamed of my lack of knowledge of what went on beyond our particular area of I Corps and also of some of the assumptions that I made. By the way, if you think conferences make for dull reading, this one will prove to be an exception. There was a chapter or two I skipped over but most of them are pretty gripping. The editors are J.N. Moore and R.F. Turner who are director and co-director of the School’s Center for National Security Law.

The book that I am currently reading is by a print journalist named David Lamb and is titled [Vietnam, Now](#). I guess all that I knew about the country after the war was the re-education camps, the boat people and how American and European companies eventually have gone over there. Well, once again, I got to learn a lot. Like most things in life, this is not a simple story. The author makes it particularly compelling because he goes back through the pages of Vietnams ancient history as well as events of less than a few years ago. He also finds the most interesting people to interview such as the man who dragged John Mc Cain out of the lake after they shot him down as well as Hanoi Hannah and General Giap.

I think these are all available through Amazon.com or better yet, ask your librarian to get them for you.

### **Final Thoughts**

Bob and Ginny Case dropped us at the airport on Sunday for a noon departure. Just as we were arriving I was struck by the thought that our government certainly put us in harms way and there was an enemy very interested in completing the job. Didn’t anyone realize what a great bunch of guys we really were? Seriously, have you ever met a more decent group of guys in your life? I sure haven’t.

Enjoy the holidays, both November 10<sup>th</sup> and 11th as well as the upcoming big ones.

Send me some stories and I’ll get them out as soon as I have enough for an issue.

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NOTE: If you have e-mail, please send me your address so I can save us all some money and let my dogs sleep instead of making them lick stamps. Thanks.