

The Ugly Angel

Memorial Foundation

History Newsletter

Vol. 1, No.2, Fall 2001



Well, those of you who were betting that Vol.1, No.1 would be it were wrong, I guess. A lot of stories and history got written this summer and now it is time to share it with the folks who still aren't giving in to this Internet craze. I hope it will inspire a few of you to write your stories so that we can keep this project going.

How We Got There

The original HMM-362 that went into RVN in April 1962 was relived by HMM-163 in July 1962. HMM-362 went back to MCAF Santa Ana-later designated MCAS Tustin- and reformed becoming a training squadron for fixed wing pilots training for helicopters, namely, the UH-34. In July 1965, when FMFPAC ordered MAG-36 to RVN, HMM-362, HMM-363 and HMM-364, with their 72 UH-34s sailed out of Long Beach aboard the LPH-5, USS Princeton Also aboard were some 54 army and USMC UH-1s, 6 H-37s, 8 F-5's, 16 A-1s and a C-117. After a short stop in Pearl Harbor, we sailed direct to NB Subic Bay. On arrival, the 30 Army UH-1s, the USAF F-5's, & A-1s + the C-117 were off loaded at NAS Cubic Point. All MAG-36 Helos-72 H-34s, 24 UH-1Es and 6 H-37s were off loaded, flown 4hours@, and put back aboard the LPH-5 in a Combat Load for off load at MCAF Ky Ha, RVN. On arrival at MCAS Chu Lai, the mat at Ky Ha wasn't ready so all Helo were parked at Marble Mountain up near Da Nang, folded and stored until Ky Ha was ready. By the way, on launch from the LPH-5 to RVN was delayed 2-3 hours, because the 6 H-37's who were spread to be the first air borne, blocked the deck because none would start. The CAPT of the Princeton threatened to push them over the side. Some quick thinking finally got them started one by one.

Submitted by Muddy Waters 3 August 1999 in response to queries regarding YL 37

651122

On the evening of 21 November 1965 Tac Tru, an ARVN outpost in southern I Corps, was attacked and almost overrun by the Viet Cong. It would require reinforcement/resupply to survive a second night attack. The frag order from 1st MAW in Danang was given to HMM-362 early on the 22nd. A company sized unit of ARVN would be picked up at Quang Ngai (ASAP) and flown to Tac Tru 50 ± miles SSE of the ARVN base at Quang Ngai. The mission would be accomplished by a flight of twelve UH -34Ds - no escort was assigned. Prior to loading our second sticks, all up a/c would refuel at Quang Ngai. The second/final sortie to the LZ would be by Division in day/VFR conditions and then RTB non-stop. As I recall the Flight Leader was LtCol Aldworth (ClipClop 6) 2nd Division - Major Smith (ClipClop 3); 3rd Division: Capt Gideonse (ClipClop 8). I was Section Leader of the last Division (co-pilot: 1/LT Yung)

The brief/preflight was completed mid-morning but Wing put the mission on Wx hold due to forecast inclement weather around Tac Tru. Ky Ha was VFR with a I500 ± solid overcast. Although the local Wx gradually deteriorated all day, the hold was not lifted until mid-afternoon, about three hours before sunset

After completion of the first lift into Tac Tru my original wingman and a couple of other aircraft were released back to Ky Ha for mechanical problems. Sometime during the second lift, 1/LT Visconti joined our Division as #4. As I recall when he joined on my wing he was NO RADIO, but did not signal any other problems then or anytime thereafter. Because of darkness and worsening weather, the final leg from Tac Tru to Ky Ha was by section. My section was the last one out of the LZ. It was necessary to use Route 1 as our visual reference. The ceiling was now about 600' and the tracers (small arms) along the Route 1 indicated our external lights made us attractive targets.

I decided to turn east towards the South China Sea and use the breakers to navigate until we received the Chu Lai TACAN. We were never able to contact Approach Control because all channels were already assigned/in use. When we reached the coast we turned north and then east again when we got to the Van Tuong peninsula. Visconti crossed over to our starboard side and accordingly I went visual and my co-pilot went on instruments. During this time the weather worsened to monsoon like conditions. In order to stay VFR we descended to 200 ± feet in order to see the surf.

About 15 miles south of Chu Lai I think we started receiving Chu Lai TACAN and commenced a left turn inbound to the base. The instrument turn was too steep and nose down. I recognized vertigo and transitioned to instruments. (The radio transmission reported by Larry Farmer was probably me thinking I was on "intercom".) We bottomed out as our running lights lit up shrubs on the hilly terrain. As we climbed, we got a lock on Chu Lia about 10 miles to the north. I contacted Chu Lai Tower and were informed that Ky Ha was closed and Chu Lai had no fixed wing traffic. We were instructed to maintain VFR east of the base and to make a final landing at the north end of the runway – "caution numerous parked helicopters".

To the best of my memory the only aircraft from our flight that landed at Ky Ha were those that had to RTB after the initial lift before darkness. Eight UH-34Ds were secured overnight where they landed at Chu Lai until the next morning. Crews were trucked in the rain the remaining three miles to Ky Ha (crewchiefs probably ROned at the Sikorsky Hotel). My crewchief and I were the last to see Visconti's aircraft. I suspect that he and Miller recognized our disorientation and chose to continue along the coastline, as it would get them to Ky Ha. Their NO RADIO status may have been as the result of the ground fire prior to joining us and if they had been hit by ground fire subsequently there may have been additional damage they did not signal us about in the pitch dark of the RTB leg.

I think Major Persons led a Division on a search south of Chu Lai on Nov 23d. Our squadron searched for 2 or 3 more days without a trace of the aircraft or crew. I first heard the "ID in a cave" story in June '66 at MCAS Futenma Okinawa. I had been medevaced to Naval Hospital Yokuska, Japan on 28 Feb '66 (660221).

Background Notes:

In the early 60s the Marine Corps recognized the coming requirement for experienced company grade pilots in the helicopter community. In '63-'64 a large number of fixed wing Captains and senior 1/LTs (with regular commissions) were transitioned to helicopters. Example: On 1 Feb 1964, the Death Angels of VMF (AW) 235 (F-8 Crusaders) completed a one year unit rotation with MAG-11 at NAS Atsugi, Japan. 7 of 12 Captains received orders to helicopter transition. HMM-362, MAG-36, 3dMAW was the training squadron for FMFPac. The transition syllabus was 75 hours to Co-pilot (H2P): HAC designation was 150 hours in the UH-34D Sea Horse. Our last transition class completed 30 June '64. Capt Jim Reynolds and I remained in HMM-362 which continued to be the training squadron for nuggets (H3P) fresh from Pensacola.

In early July '65 MAG-36 received a warning order to deploy to South Vietnam during August. At the time HMM-362 had about 12 H3Ps assigned. Their training was priority for the next two weeks before a maintenance/embark stand down. They had about 15-20 flight hours in the Marine Corps when we flew our a/c to the USS Princeton (LPH-5) at NB Long Beach on 6 Aug. The carrier sailed on 11 Aug with 100 ± aircraft on board (including a half dozen F-105s). Enroute we anchored in Subic Bay for three days to crane off the Air Force jets to make room for flight ops. USS Princeton arrived off the coast of Vietnam late 31 Aug and on 1 Sept disembarked the HR-2S squadron and three UH-34D squadrons of MAG-36.

On 15 Aug '65 the 7th Marines had conducted Operation **Starlite** on the Van Tuong peninsula to secure the TAOR around Chu Lai. Construction of the A-4 base began on 7 May '65 about 55 miles SE of Danang. Sea Bees had not completed the matting at Ky Ha by the end of Aug. Consequently approximately 75% of MAG-36 helicopters were flown to Marble Mountain on 2 Sept, folded and parked hub to hub south of the matting for ten days. During this period there were significant pilot transfers made between groups to balance the experience level of HMM-362. All but two of the H3Ps were transferred to MAG-16 in return for a like number of HACs and H2Ps with in country flight experience. This included Major Smith (S-3), Capt Gideonse (S-2) and 1/LTs Visconti and Miller. The Ugly Angels commenced full tactical operations out of Ky Ha on or about 14 September, 1965.

Larry M. COLLINS (ClipClop 13)

[Dickey Chapelle: Connections with Angels](#)

Do you remember seeing the November 1962 issue of National Geographic? It's the one about Archie's Angels. Maybe you remember that it was written and photographed by a woman named Dickey Chapelle. Beside it being about our squadron, the article also made history for another reason. It was the first acknowledgement that American helicopters and troops were being used for anything beyond advisory purposes. Security officials strongly objected to the shot of the crew chief holding a weapon that he obviously intended to use. This is reportedly the first photo of a combat Marine in that war. The Pentagon, however, had every intention of using the tri-fold centerfold in a briefing for President Kennedy. That was the history of Dickey and HMM-362 as I knew it until recently. Tom Hewes, who invented this job of historian, had been keeping a lot of material that he has gradually filtered to me. Going through a file I came across this letter from Greg Lee to Tom.

"I had the very unpleasant duty of MEDEVAC'ing Dickey Chapelle's twisted and torn body from a rice paddy sometime in late '65 or before Oct. '66(November 2, 1965). The Grunts loved her as one of their own, and I still have that incident vividly and indelibly implanted in my mind. After I landed in the paddy while flying one of the 362's UH-34D's, and looked down while they loaded this "Marine" on the helo, I was thinking this was yet another poor damn Marine that stepped on a mine or tripped a VC booby trap.. I'll never forget the shock when her soft cover fell off exposing her long hair, and this was a woman dressed in utilities. I also remember the urgency of the troops yelling to hurry -"hurry and get her the hell out of here" to Delta Med there at Ky Ha. I didn't really know who she was at the time, but soon learned she was "special", and had the respect and admiration of every Marine in the bush. She reported things the way they were. No journalistic sensationalism, just what war was really like and what the Marine's had to endure. I also remember the overwhelming sadness when it was learned she had died, probably in my helo. I share this only as one of my haunting remembrances of an impersonal war during a bleak time of our history."

If you are interested in learning more about this woman who was loved by the Marines, get ahold of Fire in the Wind, her life story written by Roberta Ostroff and published by Bluejacket Books, the paperback side of the Naval Institute Press. There's a heck of a lot of history in there that you might have forgotten about.

TheVirgin

This story comes from Bill Newton, class of 67. While not as precise as the previous Special Edition, it might remind a lot of people what their first days were like. After I had read this, I asked Bill if he knew who the pilots were. He said, "no, but he was sure they remembered the flight" (and the cherry crewchief.) They might also get some satisfaction in knowing that Bill next joined the army where they made him a captain. You can write to this budding author at ryan-newton@msn.com

Dateline: USS Okinawa, Mid-June 1967

I was sitting in the door of my 34, YL 49, pretending to be invisible, when S/Sgt (Coffee Cup) Haines approached. Oh shit, here it comes. Haines said, "Newton, you've been in the squadron for awhile and flown some missions. Do you think you can handle Crew Chief?" I'd flown a couple dozen missions as gunner with Al Graber and Don Poindexter. I'd passed my written NATOPS. Yeah, sure, I was salty. I wore my 38 down by my knee with all five rounds chambered (the only ammo I was ever able to secure for it).

"Yes, Sergeant Haines, I think I'm ready." But I didn't understand the request coming from Coffee Cup since S/SGT Yarger is my section leader. "This is only for this one mission, Newton," Haines replied. "Are you ready?" "Yes, Cof... Sergeant Haines."

I preflighted YL thirty-something and signed the log book. Soon after the pilots arrived, the bird was ready to go.

We lifted off the Oki Boat without incident. This was somewhat unusual as I was shaking so badly that a test pilot would have downed the bird for a 4 per vibration. Somehow in my fog of terror, I remembered to tell the pilot, "All set below." My gunner was Robbie Robinson, a decent kid who had the mystical talent of chewing bubble gum while drinking beer.

Our 1st mission was a chow resupply to the Rockpile. It went okay except I skulled a FNG with a case of C-rats that he was attempting to catch. This guy was so new, I could smell mothballs from 30 feet above him. Didn't even have his home state Mark-a-Lotted on his flak jacket. If I'd known his name, I would have written his mother a letter.

The second mission was a routine medevac from a field hospital. Routine my ass! This poor bastard was not much more than a living torso. He was so bad, they sent a hospital corpsman with him to make sure we didn't dump him at sea. I finally came to the conclusion that war isn't fair. Until this time, I'd made a study of KIA's. Almost all of them wore wedding rings. This poor bastard had no place to put one.

The third mission of the day was the real shaker of my newborn career as a crew chief. Our "routine" medevac safely aboard the Sanctuary, we were off again. This time to the heavy jungle canopy west of Quang Tri. About 5 minutes from the PZ I learned that this was to be a hoist op. No problemo. I'd read my Natops and knew all the words. Mark, steady, left, right, up, down, you're settling. I scanned the unfamiliar bird for the remote hoist control and commo switch. They were . . . Apart! Everybody taped them together so that you could control the hoist, steady the cable and most importantly, talk to the pilot.

Three minutes to the PZ. TOOLBOX!!! Needless to say, I broke several nails prying open what I thought was a toolbox Fucking ammo. No electricians tape. No strings. No pliers. No vice grips. No blade tape. No mamma, no papa, no Uncle Sam. I'm fucked.

"Clip Clop 2-1. 2 minutes to zone. Pop A Smoke." "Be advised the zone is hot!" This mamma's baby boy is not ready for this yet. From the pilot, "Gunner, the enemy will be to your front. Stay on your gun." Now that seems to be a reasonable order. Little did the pilot know that his 18-year-old crew chief could not accomplish his mission without his gunner's help. His scared-shitless crew chief was not about to tell him.

Somehow through my stupidity, I remembered to start spooling out cable before we got to the zone. That was pretty smart. What was pretty dumb was that I spooled out about 30 feet too much. This sounds like a pretty bad day, doesn't it?

Approaching the PZ, it really didn't look too bad. I knew we had a few pilots in the squadron that could widen this with their UH34D weed eaters. Not this guy.

"Newton, you ready on the hoist?" "Roger," I said sheepishly. This is going to be a fucking disaster. I dropped the sling (the jungle penetrator was somewhere safely aboard the Oki) with its extra 30 feet of cable. I contemplated jumping to my death, but I knew I'd need another 30 feet of fall to do the job right.

Up the cable came. Do any of you have any idea of what slow is? Well, here we go. After what seemed like an hour, came the time to announce, "Mark." Only, I forgot. The plane started drifting right and the grunt staff sergeant who was being 'evaced' for what looked like severe poison ivy was about to add a few lines to his BDA. I let go of the cable to tell the pilot to correct to the left and raise up. When I let go, the cable started gyrating so violently that I was afraid we were going to pitch our medevac.

The hand went back to the cable and the pilot remained uninformed. After dragging the sergeant about 200 meters through jungle canopy and turning a routine medevac into a priority medevac, I noted the sergeant was still armed. I also noted the pilots were still armed. I also noted that since this began, I still had failed to communicate with either pilot.

Five more feet, I can see the blood flowing caused by the collisions with the branches. Should I jump now or get him inside the bird? When I got the sergeant inside the plane and the sling off of him, he broke out in the most gigantic grin. A grin that lives with me to this day. He's not going to kill me!!!

"Medevac aboard," I squeaked. "Thanks for keeping me informed, Newton!" the pilot replied. Never in the history of the Newton Family has the name been spit with such venom.

More on the Insignia

When HMM-362 left MCAF Santa Ana in Aug.1965 we still had and used the "Official" patch, a contra-rotating pair of angel wings with a superimposed shield with a sword and the lamp of knowledge as I recall. I have a copy of it around here somewhere, but not right now. Anyway, when we were west bound on the large gray boat thingy, and the other Squadrons in MAG-36 were reinventing themselves and their "logos", we got caught up in the frenzy. We became "Aldworth's Ugly Angels" (the original "Archies Angles" were still well represented in the 1965 Squadron) and used the oriental demon watermark on the Vietnamese 20 Dong note as the model. When we placed the head over the lightning bolt (so the demon was riding it) and cocked a halo over the head at an entirely regulation angle, we had the outline. The colors were scarlet and gold (both for the Marine Corps and the Vietnamese colors). The colors on the original patch are those with the black outline. We had a dickens of a time cutting the stencil board to make the spray paintable Ugly. A couple of months later, Flight Equipment made up the Ugly Angel flag we flew the mornings we flew strike missions. The background on the flag was insignia blue.

The first patches for the squadron arrived at Ky Ha from the great patch maker's headquarters in Okinawa around the end of '65 as I recall, and they have a scroll at the top which declares "Ky Ha 1965". To my knowledge, there ain't no more "first Ugly Angel patch" than that. As soon as I can locate it I will delayer my "original" patch and check his background color, but I'm almost positive it's blue like the flag was.

Submitted by Mike Zacker, 11 May, 2000

Diary of Oramel E. Hall**April, 67-**

My first flight assignment was as gunner on YL-42 with Cpl. Cush as Crew Chief. Somehow YL-42 and YL-37 both had a painting of the "finger" on their oil cooler armor plating, done by "the phantom," One pilot commented, "no wonder we were shot at so often."

The types of missions flown were day and night med-evacs, resupply, troop movements in I Corps for the personnel there as well as for the CAPs (Civic Action Platoons) sometimes taking the Vietnamese women to the hospital for their babies to be born. The entire family might go along.

We also worked a lot with the ROK's down near Chu Lai. Whenever we went into their landing zone, they'd be doing their marital art stuff but would stop when we landed to load us up. They'd always turn it into a strength contest. Who could carry the most? I have a picture of one carrying 12 C-Ration boxes, damn near hit the rotor blades.

May, 67 –

More of the same type missions, but night med-evacs increased. One day, while refueling at KY-HA the driveshaft between the intermediate and tail rotor gearbox broke. It was pretty scary for a minute. I was just hoping that it wouldn't start spinning like a top out of control.

Late in May or early June, we YL-42 was chase bird with Lt. Mike Readick being the pilot. Maj. Wright was lead pilot. The grunt radio operator said not to return gunfire because they were involved in some hand-to-hand action on the ground surrounding the landing zone. Just as Maj. Wright landed, a round hit right in front of his chopper, which immediately burst into flames. When he saw the arty burst Lt. Readick autorotated to the deck. That was one fast auto! He put 42 right next to the ashes of their chopper. It sure burned quick. We loaded Maj. Wright, the co-pilot whose name I forget, Cpl Whippo and Cpl Buitron into our bird.

Lt. Readick tried to take off but it wasn't going to happen. The manifold got hit with small arms fire and we lost pressure. We threw everything out not tied down to lighten the load, but still no go. Cush and I got off. Still no lift off. Then Whippo and Buitron get out. By now, Capt. Curt Ryan is there with the relief chopper. Whippo is limping and I go assist him over to that bird. In the meantime, while I am helping him, YL-42 does a lot of bouncing to get lift, and is able to fly away without us. It's a strange sight to see your ride leave without you- - - in the middle of a hot zone.

We were taken to an aid station with Whippo and Buitron so they could be checked by medical. Cpl Whippo had a bruised leg and Cpl Buitron had some other bruises. I don't recall any other serious injuries to them. A motor transport jeep was going to Chu-Lai, and would take Cush and me if we wanted to go along. I went. Cush stayed with Whippo and Buitron. When we got to Chu Lai, we found that YL-42's engine had frozen when landing at the hospital. By the time I got there, they had already changed the engine and were finishing of the installation.

While Cush was on R&R, I was made acting crew chief of YL-42. A short time after Cush returned, I was assigned as the regular crew chief of YL-42 and Daniels was my gunner except for a couple of weeks when Sgt. Mikel, the paymaster flew.

June, 67 –

While doing a water resupply for the ROKs, we loaded what the pilot said to load. It was too much and now we had another no lift. He told us not to lighten the load, so here we go bouncing again, with water splashing everywhere, but out of the chopper. It was one wet cargo area. And then trouble struck. As we lifted, the left strut separated and was hanging below us. Now we were told to throw the water cans out. On the flight back to Ky Ha, we called in for the crash crew to be there. Willie and the maintenance crew did well on such short notice to have a make shift pad to support the chopper if needed. They were able to slide the separated strut back together. A quick recharge of the strut and we were back in business again.

Around May or June there was some racial tension with groups confronting other groups when leaving the club. The Base C.O. ordered all weapons to the armories. The only exceptions were for flight crews, and our reaction/guard force. One night one of the supply ship got mortared, while in dock at Ky-Ha. Another time, this tinsmith came to me and asked for directions to medical. While drilling out the screws to replace a rotor blade end cap he had drilled into his thigh. I pointed him in the right direction and he walked over to medical. I wonder if he got a medal?

Also in June, we had a mission to deliver fire-fighting equipment to an airstrip. A cargo plane carrying ammo had caught fire on landing. When we arrived with the fire-fighting equipment, the ammo inside had started cooking off. The plane was lost.

Another day while lifting off at Ky-Ha, I had just finished loading the M-60. Raising my arm, the sleeve of my flight suit lifted the barrel quick release lever. The barrel fell into the South China Sea and we had to return to base for a replacement barrel.

During the med-evac missions, the helicopter going in would autorotate down, getting out of the sky faster that way. In the daytime you're still a good target. At nighttime, with a clear sky, the autos weren't too bad. With an overcast sky, all night med-evac missions were scary with or without enemy gunfire. During daylight, if the med-evacs were near a river or tree line, we would do terrain flying. Aviating at 90 knots, 10 feet off the ground following a winding river is exciting and scary.

On one mission we took a priest and hot chow to the mountains so the troops could have services and a hot meal for a change. Another mission had a senator, Gen. Walt, and a Colt firearms representative. They came to talk with the Marines about the M-16 problems encountered in the Hill fights in May. The base had a big feed going on that day with grilled steaks and all the trimmings.

During June there were a lot of 2nd Lieutenants and senior Staff NCOs who would fly as my gunner in the crew chiefs seat. I don't know if we were short of snuffies or if these guys just wanted to get their wings.

On June 29 we landed on the Okinawa and there was a terrible smell was in the air. The pilot, Captain Ryan, told me to check the transmission area. All the time, I'm thinking that if anything is found burning, it's into the drink with old YL 42. Nothing was found so she was chained down and shut down. I never was able to find the source for that awful smell. Later, there was an award presentation on the flight deck before sunset.

On the next day there were day and night carrier qualls. The pilots were judged on landing and takeoffs. When we landed, the maintenance crews practiced folding our blades as soon as we were on the deck and then pushing us into our assigned parking space. Then they would reverse everything and push us to the launch spot and unfold us and off we would go again.

July, 67

July began with the sound of general quarters, Operation Buffalo was starting. A Marine unit had been caught in the DMZ. There were a lot of casualties. We were flying both troops and resupply. YL-42 had some battle damage. The steps had broken from their mounts and tore the skin. The exhaust cluster was cracked too. After de-fueling we took her to the hangar deck. I worked with the metal shop on repairs.

On another night, a couple of grunts had been on the flight deck by the tower, reading a book. Going down the ladder way, one fell overboard. His buddy notified the people in the Tower Island. They sounded the alarm for muster on the hanger deck. Before everyone was there, he had been picked up and was back on the ship.

On one mission, we took a bullet in a rotor blade. This provided a whole new experience; blade tracking on the flight deck while the ship was steaming.

On a test flight, the pilot offered to let me take the controls. As soon as I did, I was all over the sky. He told me not to make sudden moves and try to be smooth. I settled down doing what he asked me to do. First a right turn, then a left turn, descend and hover, climb to a certain altitude and level off. I did the best I could and then the sky was mine for a few minutes. On the way back to the ship the pilot told me to make the landing. He radioed in for a landing spot. Behind the island there were two spots. The one at the very end of the flight deck was taken but there was an empty spot between it and the island. That was where I was supposed to land. With his verbal instruction, I did it. I am sure that he had partial control. Too bad I can't remember his name.

Jeff Crouse did his thing on the 25th. Earlier on the day it happened, I spotted him on flight deck in a helo doing the revolver-spinning thing. We had an argument about this particular activity. He left the flight deck. This was the second time we had the same discussion. The first time was in February 67 back in the H&MS-36hanger at Ky Ha.

Someone saw a missile launch into the night skies one night while they sat on the flight deck in late July.

Caution;

While flying support for Hill 55, we gave some Vietnamese kids some C-rations. The next day another squadron did the support. We returned the day after. The gate sentry came over to me to tell me that the kids that were given the food had thrown a grenade at the chopper when it was taking off. The crew returned fire killing the 3 children. Their grandfather

had seen what was going on when I gave them the food. He told them what to do the next day. That was his confession after being captured.

The Okinawa lost a generator and the elevators were on limited use. Then the other generator started acting up. The emergency generator became the main source. This didn't seem like a great situation.

The infantry is put into an operation called Cochise before the ship goes to the Philippines for repairs.

August, 67

HMM-362 offloads at KY-HA. I stayed at the club pretty late. Around 3AM there's a red alert; everyone to the flight line. I'm with the XO Maj. Flannigan and a new pilot, Ben Casio. There's a 16-bird launch. Maybe 2 people are sober. We take off while it's still dark and refuel at Phu Bai. Our job is to pick up troops for an insert. It was dark when we got back to base. Amazingly there was no damage done to any of the A/C.

On a mission to Quang Ngai, we had some free time go into town. When we turned onto the main street there was no one to be seen. It's late morning, so we walk to the other end of town. When we get to the Town Square, which had a masonry wall around it here was this guy in green wearing a pith helmet waving a large flag with a big star in middle of it up on the stage. The square was packed with people. There were some who had blankets spread out that were covered with weapons and C-rations, 782 gear; supplies you would see in the field. The guy on stage sees us and points at us. We back away, and walk back up the street. One of the guys had to see if his girl was in so we waited outside. At the square entrance there are 3 or 4 of these unfriendlies standing out in the street looking our way. We are about 200 ft apart from them, just standing there, looking at each other. Buddy rejoins the group and we get back to the flight line. We tell the pilots what we saw. They fired up the choppers and we quickly fly over the square. There was not a soul to be seen. Where could a couple of hundred people have gone so quickly?

We were on a night med-evac to pick up someone with a sudden reaction to penicillin. We followed the directions of the radio operator but just couldn't locate them. The pilots said that the area we went to was not an area of operations for our troops.

Caution;

On another night med-evac for the ROK's "One-shot Charlie" kept us out of the landing zone. The next afternoon the same pilots and crew were working with the same ROK unit. The radio operator and pilot recognized each other's voice. Our HAC, asking about the med-evac was told that he had died. We were also told that "One-shot Charlie" was captured. Our pilot requested that he be put aboard our chopper. The radio operator said, " look at this," and pulled the sniper's head out of the bag.

We went back onto the ship for two weeks.

September, 67.

We off-loaded at Phu-Bai. All of the 46's were grounded because of tail rotor failure. Many extra flights were required of us 34 squadrons. Pilots from the 46 squadrons helped out on the flights. There was lots of flying including plenty of recon missions, photo, and team inserts. We also carried several snipers to put on hilltops or down in the valleys.

We had a change of command, Lt.Col. Kapetan departed and, Lt.Col. Cline took over.

Rules of engagement were established. Returning gunfire was only by order of the pilot or co-pilot, under threat of court martial. While on a recon insert, I believe Capt. Nederhouse was the pilot, we received a call for an emergency med-evac of another recon team, which had been trapped, two emergencies, one urgent. We get there as soon as we could after refueling and getting the basket for a hoist pick up. As usual, there was no gunfire going in. Once in a hover, though and we get the basket started down, all hell breaks loose. My gunner, Cpl. Phil Jackson, got hit four times. The back of his bullet bouncer was hit. The front bullet bouncer was hit. The steel plate under his seat was hit. The brush knife on the survival pack was hit then knocked into his foot. Phil also received shrapnel inside his upper arm. As for me, as soon as the basket starts down I get hit in the right elbow, which gives me a bit of a quick twist and knocks me backward into the bulkhead into a standing position. I do a quick check on Jackson and grab the first aid pack from the rear bulkhead, return to doorway to make the pick up. We could tell by the noise that plenty of bullets were flying by. Our two gunships were firing all of their guns and rockets. I was having trouble using my hand pulling in the med-evac. Phil pulls the med-evac into the chopper. The pilots got us back to base. The med-evac is alert but hit 5 times, neck, chest, arms, and legs. I don't know if he was hit while being hoisted. At the hospital, the pilot tells the two of us to go in and get checked out. Maj. Evans comes to hospital to talk with us about what was going on. I told him more support was needed.

While they were working on me, I was watching them operate on the three medevacs we and our wingman had eventually picked up. One of them died while they worked on him. After surgery I'm wheeled into a squad bay. There are two MP's standing at the foot of a bed that has a Vietnamese in it who's missing one leg below the knee. Across from him and a couple of beds away is another Vietnamese missing both legs below the knees. This is great, recovering from wounds with the enemy, and MP's. My bed is across from the MP's. They tell me they have to watch the guy with one leg because he is a Kit Carson Scout, and has gotten out of bed several times to try and kill the other Vietnamese who just happened to be a VC.

operated on for the second time a day later. A day after recovery, I met Gen. Westmoreland's wife, doing Red Cross duty. An army S/Sgt. in the room with me was from Hawaii and had property next to the Westmoreland's.

A couple of days later I was sent to Guam for recovery and rehab of my right elbow. Around Thanksgiving I got released from the hospital and was sent to Camp Hanson, Okinawa for 30 days of convalescent time. I was given a job assignment as a duty NCO for the transit unit. It wasn't a bad deal, 24 hrs on and 48 hrs off.

I met Cpl Swenson on his way home for 30 days after extending for 6 months. He gave me the bad news that YL-42 was missing with Capt. Darrow, Lt. Kisucky, Cpl. Bird and Cpl. Hays. What a let down that was. Later I ran into Capt. Travis. He told me that Capt. Nederhouse was looking for me, but we never met up. During all of this time I had no pay record with me. I was given \$40 a month while my records were being tracked down. At Dispersing, the officer in charge made one up for me. I collected a few hundred and had a party in town for a few days

December, 67

On the 22nd, I received orders to return to RVN. My rotation was to be in Feb. 1968, to complete my 13-month tour. I arrived back in country a few days after Christmas. Back at MAG 36 again, Major Tom Hewes asked me which squadron I would like to be with. Naturally I chose to go back to 362. After settling in I found Phil Jackson, who was getting ready to rotate out and go home. I was assigned to the maintenance hanger to work on the helos.

Maj. Bob Cramer was trying to get me back into flight status. I was approved to fly before taking a flight physical and scheduled for a night med-evac. That afternoon Maj. Cramer came to me and said the flight surgeon said no to flight status. He would allow test hops though, but only around the base, no test and go's at all. That was okay by me. Later that night, Maj. Cramer and Capt. Colburn crashed and were killed on med-evac.

I got a lot of test hops until my flight status was restored on Jan. 15. I was sent to Khe Sahn for a few days. 362 had several helicopters down that needed to be hauled out of there. I took a crew up there to do the prep for lifting them out. As it was, the downed choppers made good targets for the incoming rounds. I remember watching Sgt. Tony Troop attaching the sling. As soon as it caught, he went sliding off the front of the 34 As soon as his feet hit the ground, the 53 lifted out with the 34.

We did a few med-evacs off the side of mountains, and supply drops. One funny thing happened in the hut we slept in. One particular night one of the crew zipped the mummy bag most of way up. During the night we had incoming. Everyone was up and running to the bunker except the one in the mummy bag. He hopped all the way to the bunker and still couldn't unzip the sleeping bag. On another day, while refueling, a jet dropped WP near the runway. My gunner had my movie camera taking the movie of that drop.

We got back to Phu-Bai. By now I was looking forward to being told when my departure date was. The Tet offensive began On the Jan. 31st of January.

February, 68

My last mission was to fly around Hue with an army General for a look-see, then take him to DaNang. When we returned to base I was told I would be leaving for DaNang to go home on the 3rd.

While we were in DaNang, we visited with Lt.Col. Kapetan and Sgt. Maj. Pemberton. We were put up in the 1st MAW barracks for a couple of days. Checked out a basketball from special services and played some b'ball. We reported to the air terminal to get on the manifest for going home and got out on a nighttime flight on the 5th .

=====

"Tales of an Ugly Angel; "The Purple Heart

By Gary Doss gdoss@telepath.com

September 14th, 1967, Phu Bai, RVN

We were up early that morning; the sun had yet to make its appearance for the day. I had already shaved, dressed and made my way down to the mess hall for some hot over cooked coffee, dry sausage and stale toast. I couldn't stomach the powdered eggs that always looked so deceptively delicious.

After breakfast, it was a trip to the armory to check out the M-60s and a couple of cans of belted 7.62 ammo. Then it was off to the flight line to prepare the old helicopter (YL ??) for another flight. While in the armory and on the flight line I kept bumping into my old buddy, Phil Jackson, who would be the gunner on one of the other planes in our flight. Although we had been buddies for a long time, you wouldn't know it today. I guessed that he was still mad at me for the present I had picked up for him the other day at the Freedom Hill PX. I was sure we'd straighten it out before the day was over. With the guns in place and the pre-flight completed I was in the line shack sucking on another canteen cup of coffee.

The line shack was always a busy place, crews coming and going and signing off the aircraft yellow sheets and recording maintenance just completed. It was here that flight assignments were made according to the readiness of aircraft and crew. A crew chief and a gunner were teamed to each aircraft and were responsible for all maintenance. They had a through knowledge of the aircraft and whenever and wherever it flew, they went with it. I was the gunner on YL and Mike T?? was the crew chief

The night medevac crew had been busy during the darkness. Later they would have stories of their adventures to relate, now they only wanted the relief crew to take over so they could grab a few hours sleep before another mission.

The doors to the line shack would open and close as the pilots came in from mission briefings to select their aircraft from the ready list. After a review of the aircraft records, they would sign-in on the aircraft logbook. The names of the crew were already there.

We drew the CO, our new commanding officer, Lt. Col. Cline. Since the senior officer leads the troops, we'd be the first to touch down in any zone today. But today, I figured on another PX run and maybe a chance to visit the USO in Da Nang.

The first light was just enough to see the old bird sitting chocked behind the double stacked row of 55-gallon sand filled drums called the revetment. Her dark green skin had a low sheen, she was clean inside and out and ready to fly. The early light of dawn carried enough light to allow the pilots to do their visual walk around. Sometimes it was a kick the tires and light the fire look. Sometimes it was a more detailed inspection. It didn't matter, the old bird was always in top shape, and the incessant leaks had been temporarily wiped away. Fuel tanks were topped off, fluids serviced, rotor head and tail rotor full of grease and wiped down. This was all routine maintenance after each flight. Our lives depended on this aircraft. If we were to go down, it would not be caused by a preventable mechanical problem.

The pilots climbed up to the cockpit, slid back the windows and crawled into their seats and buckled in. With a flip of the battery switch, the instrument panel came to life and the artificial horizon globe slowly rolled into the straight and level position. The checklist was read and the instruments were in order. All was ready. The APU was cranking out juice. On signal, the powerful starter was engaged and whined loudly as the massive pistons deep inside the engine began to rotate. The crew chief stood fire guard by the exhaust stack as the pilot turned the "Mag" switch to indicate both, closed the auxiliary air door on the huge air intake on the carburetor and pushed the throttle to idle detent. The engine belched smoke, caught hold, seemingly only on 5 or 6 cylinders, then all were engaged and she quickly reached idle speed.

"Looks good." said Captain ??as he again scanned the instruments. "Okay, engage the rotor," commanded the CO.

The rotor blades slowly began to move, then quickly picked up speed. The sudden application of torque to the rotor head always caused the helicopter to rock on the big rubber tires in front and strained to move the tail wheel that was locked into position. The droop stops flew out and we were ready. The bird rolled forward, taxiing into position for lift off.

Today's mission was to insert recon teams into the jungle out near the Laotian border. This wasn't a run to the PX. It was a free fire zone; either way. It was a three-bird flight and we would go in first!

Recon teams; I always thought they had to be a little crazy. No, a lot crazy. Think about it, a small force, ten to fifteen men, lightly armed, behind enemy lines, cold camps, and the nearest reinforcement miles away. No doubt about it, they

were nuts. The only thing worse was a sniper team, silent, skillful and deadly. Of course, they never thought we were exceptionally intelligent either. We flew into zones behind a fuselage you could pierce with a ballpoint pen, always a target, no place to hide, sitting over the top of hundreds of gallons of 115/145 avgas. When we would drop them into no-mans land, we were both happy to part company.

The day hadn't been all that bad. We'd completed three recon insertions and now were headed home to complete an early day. It was about that time that things began to unravel.

Pinned down and engaged in a vicious firefight were the remaining members of a reconnaissance team. The unthinkable had happened to them ...discovery by a much larger and more heavily armed force. They were dead and dying. Those still alive were hoping and praying for salvation. They needed us to get their more seriously wounded out so they could get down to the business of fighting. Uncertain of their exact position, they began to describe landmarks they had passed along the trail. The colonel told them to pop smoke.

My mind was racing out of control. I could see the yellow smoke from the grenade lingering in the tree line just up ahead. The smoke served both to mark the zone and to display the wind direction. A lone Huey flitted around the sky like a mad bumblebee that had just lost its nest. He was our close air support. He was quick and agile and loaded hot. We were slow and clumsy in comparison. He headed directly for the ridgeline where the VC were entrenched. He let fly a barrage of 3.5 rockets and quad M60's screaming red tracers and white-hot lead. The smell of war drifted into the crew compartment, as the smoke from spent rounds was carried in on the wind. We were next. We'd do the rescue, first positioning and then hovering above the treetops where the cable of life would slowly spin off the hoist drum to the ground, far below. Normally, we would spin off several feet of cable and hold it like a lasso to release in the zone. This would save precious seconds in the killing zone. Seconds held life and death between their ticks. "Is the basket ready?" the pilot called down. "The wingman has it, sir." said Michael T, the crew chief. That changed the situation considerably. With me going down, we would start from scratch.

The roar of the engine in the compartment just in front of the crew chief was deafening. The Wasp radial 1820 throbbed as it transferred power to the rotor head as the pilot adjusted the power on the collective stick and manipulated the cyclic to position the aircraft into the approach. In a rolling sway the helicopter responded as the rotary wings slapped and popped at the air pushing it forever downward to sustain flight while dropping to tree top level. Without the basket and straps, I would have to be lowered down on the cable hooked to a waist belt with the horse collar harness for the wounded man. With it, I would assist him on the return trip into the *safety* of the helo'. "Gary, get ready, you're going down. When you have the medevac in harness, signal. I'll bring you up." "Michael T "tried to sound upbeat but his eyes revealed the truth. We were all a team and we depended upon each other. Our lives were in each other's hands.

Kneeling in front of the cargo door, I swallowed hard trying to keep my heart out of my throat. The treetops were a sea of green as they swirled below in the wash of the rotors as we lined up on our pickup. I had to fight off the panic that wanted to take control. I was yet to see my 21st birthday and now it looked like I wouldn't. I knew that the odds of surviving the slow decent into the kill zone were next to nil! Then there was the little matter of the ride back up! That is, if the helo could even sustain flight under such an assault of enemy firepower.

Placing the waist belt around me and latching it onto the hoist cable, preparations were complete. It would be over seventy feet to the ground through a shower of enemy lead. I withdrew my .38 from its holster and quickly glanced at the cylinder, full. I took little comfort in knowing the six rounds were there and waiting to be unleashed. "This must be what the ducks in shooting galleries at a carnival feel like," I thought momentarily. In my heart, I knew this would be it, the end. Good bye, Phu Bai! I may make it down, but I would never return, at least, not complete in body, mind, and spirit. Adrenaline was flowing through my veins like a river, the blood pressure on my inner ears was about to be released. On the ground, death had already paid several visits and I knew he was coming again ...this time, for me!

"If you take fire, don't return it, we have friendlies on the ground, they will respond" said the voice inside my helmet. Michael reached for his mike button and replied, "Roger that."

"Oh God! How did I ever get into this mess?" I cried out within myself and looked earnestly into the overcast heavens. A battle between self and soul raged inside. I knew I had been trained for such a time as this. This was my job. But, I had never done it like this before. This was real! In my distress I cried out to God. "God, be with me, help me to do my job." was my prayer. A peace immediately filled my body. We were headed in.

I had made my commitment; the inner battle was over. My cry had indeed been heard even though I did not deserve or was worthy of such a response. The fear was gone. It was replaced by a perfect peace, a peace that surpassed any understanding. I was ready for whatever lay ahead.

"What happened? I ask Mike. I had been oblivious to our change in heading, concentrating only on the task ahead.

"We lost radio contact with the guys on the ground. Had to wave off. YL 42 is going in our place." Mike replied.

Unhooking the harness, and taking my seat behind my gun, I was not sure what exactly had happened. Below, on the stage of life, the play was being acted out as I sat watching from the balcony, out of harms way. I had heard, or read, or hoped, that "He always provides an exit when there is none." I silently pondered this thing to my self.

As we formed up for a second approach, it suddenly occurred to me who the crew of YL 42 were. "Oh God no! Jackson is the gunner on that bird," I felt my inner self-cry. Jackson and I had become close. He was my best friend, perhaps my only confidant. We had first met in school at Memphis. Now he's going in where I was meant to go, only minutes earlier—and we still hadn't straightened out the little problem we had had only a day or two earlier.

It had all started when I had lucked into a PX run to Freedom Hill. While strolling around, admiring all of the starched and polished rear echelon poguees, I had stumbled into the uniform shop at the big PX. I just happened to look down at the ribbon counter and there on display was the, "Purple Heart," 15 cents. It was then that I thought of Jackson and what a joke I could pull on him. I bought it.

When we returned to Ky Ha late that evening, Phil was up on the transmission deck of YL-42, wiping, servicing, and greasing. Standing on the ground just beyond the cabin door and holding a brown paper bag, I began to tell Jackson of my days' adventure. I told him of my trip to the PX and how I had found something that he would need and how I had purchased it for him. He graciously thanked me. So I pulled it from the sack and in one easy motion, tossed it to him.

He recognized it immediately. It barely touched his hands. He dropped it like a hot rock. He cut loose with a string of profanity that I didn't think he was capable of. He told me in no uncertain terms that he **would not** need that and if anyone would it would be me! I didn't know he was so superstitious. He also told me never to buy anything for him again. Suddenly, this event jumped into my mind's eye and I wondered if this had been an omen.

Yankee Lima 42 was beginning the approach, into the wind and dropping low, using the trees for a shield. A few more yards and she'd be over the zone.

The Huey gun ship was making another pass, another two rockets flew out of their nest trailing smoke and heading for the ridge. The gun ship was right behind the smoke trails, with machine guns booming in a continuous burst. The pilot tugged on the collective and swung the cyclic left while depressing the tail rotor peddle. This resulted in a hard up and a half roll to the south. In another few seconds, he'd be in position to release another of his stingers.

"This is Yankee Lima 42, we're taking heavy small arms fire."

YL 42 was in position, over the zone. There it would stay, as if fixed in place, until the mission was complete, at all cost. There were Marines down there and they needed help. Orm Hall eased the basket out the door and it dropped rapidly until it reached the end of the slack reeled out by the crew chief to saving those few seconds of exposure in the killing zone. Then a slow and steady decent, a slight hesitation, then down again until the basket disappeared into the foliage.

The old UH-34D seemed to shudder as she came under assault. Puffs of smoke appeared from her sides and then quickly dispersed in the wash of the rotor blades. She was locked in position over the zone ...the mission wasn't complete.

"Both crewmen are hit," the pilot screamed over his radio. The mission continued. My heart sank.

The basket appeared from the trees, and was on its way up and into the crew compartment. It was a somber flight to the hospital at Phu Bai. Our small, lightly armed rescue force was no match for the well-entrenched foe. The Recon team was still on the ground and still dying.

"This is Clip Clop medevac coming in with wounded." ETA, twenty minutes. Notify Chu Lai to send the Phantoms with some HE and Hot Jelly. Muster the Sparrow Hawk team for a reactionary strike!" The flight leader barked over the radio to headquarters.

At the hospital, Yankee Lima 42 taxied to a halt. The medical team quickly removed the wounded. The stretchers were just entering the building as Yankee Lima 42 taxied across the field to the squadron area. With a quick motion of the pilot's arm, two more crewmen climbed on board and took their positions in the now blood soaked belly of the bird. Then they too were off to ferry the much-needed re-enforcements into the battle.

The strike force was assembled and ready to board when we set down at the end of the field. Seven or eight Marines in combat dress were about all the old birds would lift on a hot day and it was always a hot day. We would need several choppers and a second trip to the LZ in order to insert enough troops to affect a rescue.

Soon we touched down in flights of four in the meadow at the base of the hill delivering our cargo of grunts. We couldn't hear the scream of F4 Phantoms over the pounding drone of the 1820 recip and the popping whirl of our rotor blades but we knew they were there, as they made run after run. The grunts would sweep the area in a horseshoe formation going up the hill on both sides defending from a flank attack while other units would move through the woods and re-enforce the decimated recon team. This action would force the VC to retreat or spill out of the open end of the shoe and the jets would send them to visit their ancestors.

The sky was filling with smoke and debris, fueled by several fires that burned along the ridge. The first strike was precise, hammering the hilltop with bombs and incendiaries. The results were immediate. The VC tried to disengage and disappear in to the jungle but it was too late for many. The ambush was broken. The tables were turned. Abandoning their positions, the VC began to flee.

Finally, it was over, another long, hot day. I couldn't help but think of Jackson as we flew steadily back to the strip at Phu Bai. After touchdown on the runway, we taxied to the fuel pits to top off the tanks. The old 34's were always thirsty after a flight. You never knew what might transpire between the twilight of the evening and first light. Full tanks are always best.

Then, head to the revetments, chock the wheels, check the droop stops, and shut down the engine. As the pilots and the crew chief headed for the line shack to complete the yellow sheets, my work was only beginning. I had to check the fluids, grease and wipe the rotor head, change a zerk fitting, wipe the transmission deck, get more grease, squirt the tail rotor and check the engine. Add oil. Complete any repairs and sign off the yellow sheet. Wipe down the outer skin, store the gear in the belly, service the APU, collect the 60's and head for the armory to clean and check in the guns.

Only then did I get over to view YL-42. Over 60 rounds had hit her. The blood shed in battle was obvious. The positions of the bullet holes and the placement of the crew left little hope that anyone could survive such an onslaught. Jackson and Hall were gone ...or so it would appear. Both were indeed wounded. Orm Hall was hit in the right arm as he lowered the rescue basket but continued the mission using the fixed hoist switch just above the cabin door. At one point he glanced toward, Jackson. Phil had just had one round bounce off his back and one off his chest, one off his seat and one off his knife and, finally, a stinger ripped him under his arm. He wasn't happy. Returning his gaze to the basket, Hall spotted a fresh hole where his head had been. The basket was retrieved and the mission finished.

Later that evening Phil Jackson and I were reunited along the flight line. He wasn't mad at me anymore. I didn't see Hall again until the Ugly Angel dedication of YL-37, 32 years later. I still have Jackson's Purple Heart ...he still doesn't want it.

681117

The HMM -362 History Project has relied heavily on the digests that you have received periodically. In many cases, however, the digest form does not function too well, particularly with some of these long and detailed reports. This report is another fairly lengthy one. It is also an extremely compelling story. Here is the story of one of our own, Phil (Andy) Anderson dying but four others living, file #681117. You will probably notice some minor discrepancies in the varied reports, such as when the aircraft were switched. I did, too. It is also unique in that we have three separate viewpoints of the same event.

Incident report, Ken Logue, chase plane crew chief

During the night of 16 November 1968 I was the crewchief of YL-1 flying night medevac with my gunner L/Cpl Al Cain. The HAC was 1stLt Al Nitchman. I don't recall who the copilot was; we also had a Navy Corpsman aboard, name also unknown.

Our Chase plane was YL-4, piloted by two majors and crewed by L/Cpl Phillip R. Anderson, and a S/Sgt gunner from squadron ops. We had flown virtually all night long, and at around 0430, 17 November 1968 we were in the line shack talking; Anderson said "I'm bored flying chase". I said "Take my bird and I'll take yours". A few minutes later we were called out for another mission.

Anderson took my aircraft and I flew in his. We arrived at the LZ and the lead aircraft began its approach. I kept my eye on the aircraft and as they were about 400 feet from the zone, they took fire from both sides of the aircraft. Andy returned fire but was fatally wounded. By this time the aircraft was on fire but still airborne. Lt. Nitchman flew the aircraft for a great amount of time to a rice paddy and landed. Our chase plane landed right near the burning H-34.

By the time they had landed in the rice paddy, the a/c, YL-1, was totally engulfed in flames. Phil Anderson was already dead and it was not safe to try to evacuate him as the rounds under the crew chief's seat were going off. I exited my a/c to assist the four crew members. They boarded and we took them to NSA. L/Cpl. Al Cain was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions during this incident.

I know it was YL-1 that burned because; we took it in the middle of the night when my original aircraft, YL-6, was having mechanical difficulties. I was required to sign several affidavits stating that it was in fact Anderson on board that YL-1, as we did not switch names on the yellow sheet. Phil Anderson and I were good friends and slept in the same hooch at Marble Mountain. He had become a father to a baby girl only a few days prior to this incident and had only found out about it the day before. We had been in-country about 6 months. Andy took about five rounds to the chest and was killed instantly. He wasn't wearing his bullet bouncer.

[Letter from Allan Cain to History Project, April 18, 2001](#)

Unfortunately most of all I know about that night during the flight was what others have told me. "Others " defined here as Al Nitchman and Ken Logue. Of course Ken's perspective is from "above". As you are probably aware, the "gunner" heard very little intercom conversation due to the engine noise. I know we were descending to enter a LZ. I believe Capt. Nitchman asked if what he was seeing at the LZ was incoming or outgoing rounds. The reply was "outgoing". Obviously that was incorrect. It seems to me that as we were approaching 500 feet Al just flickered the lights (this could all be in my mind I would prefer a confirmation). As he did, heavy automatic weapons opened up mainly from the right side of the plane. As I turned toward the crew chief, he was slumped over the M60 and the plane was on fire seemingly from a ruptured fuel cell. I'm not talking about smoke-there were flames rolling in from under the plane.

Capt. Nitchman told me later that I reported the condition of the plane and he advised that he was going to get us away, and for me to advise him when the flames became too intense. Can you just imagine the presence of mind he must have had to be able to manage the aircraft, and still be concerned for us below as well as to reason the situation. He said a couple of years ago that the planes controls were extremely sluggish when all of a sudden all the controls came back to life which allowed him to fly us to a point away from the immediate danger. (At that point, I guess it was not the most pressing danger when one considers the blazing fire.) He also said that I advised him that the fire was getting dangerously close to igniting the belts of ammunition. He also advised me that he made a hard landing in the rice paddy in an attempt to control the fire. Good idea but it didn't work.

This is about it. I would just consider this as background and encourage Al and Ken to properly describe the events for the sake of unit history.

Allan

Letter from Alan Nitchman to Allan Cain, May 1, 2001

Dear Allan,

Well it has been some time since you requested that I tell you what happened the night we received the Good Lord's Blessings with his guidance for our safety. I apologize for taking so long but life has been busy and one task leads to another. Here it goes:

As you know we were returning with 3 or 4 WIA's that we had pulled from a real tight zone in the jungle. Andy told me that he could not believe that we had gotten in the zone and that I was going to have to pull straight up in order to get out without hitting the rotor blades into the trees. So I did what he told me and as I added full power and pulled collective the old bird blew her dampers. I do not know if you recall, but we were having a rough ride to the hospital at Da Nang. Then I received a call from the ready room saying that we had a "hot" zone and they were launching gun ships and had A-4 on the perch and "Snoopy" was on station. As I was receiving the instructions for the zone location the gun ships got air borne and they heard me telling the ready room that we were going to have to drop the WIA's and then return to the base to get a replacement helicopter. The gun ship pilot knew me and I knew him but today I cannot recall who he was. He told me that he would head out to the location and talk to the troops and set up the zone while we accomplished our tasks.

I am certain that you remember us going back to the base after we left the hospital zone to get the replacement. When I talked to the ready room they told me that there was only one aircraft up and that was YL-1, which was just out of rehab and was assigned to the CO. I told them that worked for me and that we would be there in a few minutes to replace aircraft. When we arrived I sent you and Andy and the corpsman to the aircraft with the co-pilot to do the preflight while I went to the ready room and got the coordinates and the Tacan bearings to locate the zone. I remember coming back to the aircraft and climbing in thinking how great the aircraft looked.

On the way to the zone I told Andy that this was going to be "hot" and to make certain everyone was ready with bullet bouncers on and ammo in the 60's. As we approached the area and came up fox mike I could tell that the troops on the ground were under great stress. As we said back then, this was truly a "shit sandwich". The pilot of the gun ship was not doing a good job with the radioman in the zone, and things were not going well with the men on the ground. As soon as I got within range I instructed the gun ship that I would take over the communications with them and for him to standby for my instructions. Once I started talking to the radioman in the zone, we started to get some of the answers that we needed in order to decide how to approach our pending situation. It was clear that they were in one "hell" of a firefight. I could see the mortars and rockets bouncing off the bridge across the river that they were pinned down by. After some discussions on the type of zone they had and what kind of fire power they could put down, I asked them to set up a zone that was clear of all obstacles and could be marked by a single light. This way they would have the capability of maximum firepower along the river. It was amazing to me how calm you could get those young men when they know that you were going to come in and get the WIA's so that they could fight their way out of the situation. With all that established, we were ready to go in. I instructed the chase bird that when he saw my lights go out, his should go on. I made one last call to Andy to make certain that you guys were ready and knew that this was a "hot" zone.

At that time I split the needles and we started a tight spiral approach from about 2 to 3,000 feet. I kept it in close to the zone as I know that "Charlie" was waiting for us but we had no choice in the matter as these Marines needed to get prepared for a long night of fighting and the WIA's would be a burden. In the typical style, when we got down to about 800 feet we started to make a standard approach to the single light. As I rolled out and started bringing the power on I heard a .50 cal open up from across the river. That is when we started talking about returning fire, which you were already doing. I know that if we did not get out of that zone, we were in for a really bad situation. It was at this point that the Marine Corp training and the Navy Wings along with the Good Lord's Blessings saved our lives. The first thing that came to mind is that I must get this helicopter under control and fly it out of the zone. As I recall, it was then that you told me that Andy was dead and that we were on fire. Once the helicopter was under control, I turned to Lt. Fanning and said, "when we get ready to set this bird down, remember gas, battery and mags off and don't forget to unplug and get out of the aircraft." Fanning was new at this point and he got so excited that he turned the gas, battery and mags off immediately. I remember turning them back on and saying, don't touch any thing, but when we land, unplug and keep your head down."

By this time you and I were talking and you where telling me that things were really bad and it was time to abandon the aircraft. At that point we landed in the rice paddy. I was so concerned about losing my head or any one else's with a rotor blade that I sat in the cockpit and went through the shut down. I remember you coming up the side and asking if I was okay. I said, "get down," because I was right behind you. Once on the ground we talked about who had the M60's and M16 but no one had them. You asked about Andy and I said that with the aircraft on fire, the danger of explosion as well as "Charlie" shooting at us as we ran across the rice paddle, we would have to leave him. I know that this has been a concern of yours and I understand why but at the moment and for the safety of the remaining crewmembers we made the right decision. As you know, they did recover Andy's body the next day.

Allan, you where a brave young man that served his country to its fullest. I am proud to have served with some one like yourself and apologize for not completing this task sooner.

Semper Fi

Capt. Alan C. Nitchman

670227

The following report describes the death of Mike Carley, told principally through the eyes of Ron Fix. I have combined three separate letters from Ron written over several years and trust that I have kept to the spirit in which he wrote them. I have also included bits from other interested parties that added insights to the events of that day. Bob

Captain Jim Hippert was HAC of YL-42 (BUNO 143968). Mike Carley was the copilot and Bill Willey was the crew chief. I don't have the name of the gunner. Jim was leading a flight of 3 Ugliers from Ky Ha to Nui Dang (Nui Loc San area.) in the Duc Pho district of Quang Ngai Province on 27 February 1967. I was the HAC of the second UH-34D, YL-37 (BuNo 148783) and Bob "Deak" Warner was my copilot. We were carrying troops (US Marines) and some resupply materials.

We stayed to the west of Nui Dang, heading south, just to the east of Highway 1. We began our descent into Nui Dang with a left hand turn so we would approach west to east. This would place us several clicks southwest of the Marine CP and airstrip at Duc Pho. During the descent we began to take a heavy mixture of small arms and .50 cal fire. Our crew chiefs and gunners were returning fire and we were trying to go as fast as possible.

YL-42 received extensive battle damage and could not sustain airspeed or altitude. Jim Hippert had his hands full. He was wounded and I believe Mike was dead before they landed. I was on the inside of the turn and looking at Mike when he was hit. Jim subsequently made an emergency landing several minutes flying time from Nui Lac Son and we plotted the coordinates. I directed dash 3 to stay overhead and cover YL 42 while I flew to Duc Pho where I offloaded my grunts and asked the Ops O at Duc Pho to organize a reaction force. I returned to extract the crew and passengers from YL 42.

I landed approximately 50 meters from YL 42. There was a rice paddy between us and the zone was hot. The overhead 34 provided cover. My crew chief and gunner made their way to the downed helo and retrieved the ambulatory members of the crew. We extracted them to Nui Loc San and then returned with elements of a reactionary platoon to secure the sight and retrieve Mike's body. We then helped organize and transport a reactionary and recovery operation. All the time that this was going on, "dash 3" remained overhead protecting YL 42's precious cargo of Mike Carley. I have no specific recall who "dash 3" was (for some reason, I think it was Ed Hunneyman).

Mike's body was recovered that day and Deak flew it back to Ky Ha. The grunts who did the work reported that YL 42 had landed in a minefield. There were stories that the Grunt lieutenant who recovered the body received the Navy Cross for the work he did that day.

I have always considered Jim Hippert a hero for the professional job he did that day. Every crewmember in that lead aircraft was a hero.

I have never forgotten my time in the company of Mike Carley. I remember telling Mike Jr. the pride his father had in his uniform, particularly his spit-shined flight boots, thus the nickname of "PigPen"

One of my favorite pictures of the time of that time in my life is a picture of Mike and Smoky (James D.) Norton doing the skit where their torsos are painted to resemble faces and their arms and heads are covered by oversized top hats. Their navels were mouths with cigarettes hanging from them and somehow they could make the darn things puff like someone was really smoking them. I think Pat Bray or Beetle (Gene) Bailey taught them how to do that. Mike and Smoky were the two JOs who kept the rest of us smiling.

Editors note:

The Marine Grunt lieutenant who secured YL 42 and recovered Mike's body was identified as Ron Benoit of Montpelier, Vermont by Rusty Sachs, also of that state. According to Rusty, Benoit and Carley were well acquainted with one another. Benoit was no "boot second lieutenant" but a salty former master sergeant who had recently been commissioned. He had, in fact, been Mike's instructor at Brown University's NROTC program. Mike had been so impressed with the professionalism of the Marine that he had opted for the "Globe and Anchor" and had chosen Marine Air.

There were reports that Benoit had gotten the Navy Cross for his activities that day. A little investigating revealed that Benoit had not gotten it for that day's action but for another action 2 days earlier when his platoon had been lifted into a zone that was booby trapped and completely surrounded. I do have a jpeg file of that citation if anyone wants to see it.

As mentioned throughout this series, Mike Carley was the first of many Ugly Angels to die or be wounded in YL 42. Think of them when you see Jim Moriarty's flying version or the static version at the Naval Aviation Museum at NAS Pensacola. Also, keep in mind that YL 37 was the chase bird on this mission and it is still wearing our colors out in Oklahoma.

April 1962

About the time we get to publish the next newsletter, it will be the 40th anniversary of the first Marine Corps tactical unit entering the fray in South Vietnam. Since that first combat squadron was us, I feel a pretty strong obligation to get as much material as possible of the folks who were involved but I can't keep making stories up. I need your help.

Not only did the squadron and all of its members make history in Vietnam but in many other ways. After returning from that deployment, as we have seen above, 362 was instrumental in transitioning fixed-wing pilots to the UH-34 which they would fly in that same war. From that original group there were at least two who became the CO of HMX and several became presidential pilots. Now is not the time to be shy or polite. Please drop me a line if you have anything even

moderately interesting to say about yourself or a buddy, dead or alive. I'd be real pleased if we could fill up the whole issue with stories, remembrances, etc from that one historic deployment and the people who were involved.

Buzz Knight

Chuck Bowers asked if anyone had any information about Captain Knight. The bits that Chuck had were that Buzz had been the pilot who picked up young Lewis Puller when he stepped on the mine. He also had heard that Buzz had gotten the Silver Star but was not sure if it was for that particular medevac. Lastly he had read that Captain Knight had been severely injured when struck by a car while running. If anyone can confirm any of the above or add to it, please advise.

MIAs

Somehow we seem to have lost a great many Angels who were receiving this newsletter electronically. As you can see, this particular issue is somewhat weightier than I had expected and thus somewhat more expensive. If you have a new e-mail address or access to one, please send it to me at rskinder@att.net. You'll get the news faster and the UAMF will save a fortune. Thanks!

Late Breaking News

I just got this the other day but it looks like YL 37 is gonna make a Veteran's Day run to Branson, MO. For more information, please contact Ed Tatman or Gerald Hail.

Pictures

At some point in the near future I hope to go to an illustrated newsletter. For the time being though, the History Project has a unique opportunity. Wally Beddoe, webmaster of Pop A Smoke has set up a separate section for the project in addition to the regular HMM 362 pages. The intention is that I can illustrate our stories with pictures of authors, participants and sites. I also intend to develop a site for the project as soon as I can find a little time. Stay tuned.

Finally

Wars have always had stories. In this particular issue, I think you will agree that we have seen a pretty good cross section of what HMM 362 did from 1962 until 69, how we lived and how we died. I don't know of any adequate way to thank those guys who dug down so deep and pulled those stories out of their hearts and souls except to say, "Thanks so much, Brothers, we owe ya."

Classifieds

Ugly Patches and 66-67 cruise books. Please contact Bobby Johns. Very good prices, just like new.

Finally, "*A True Helicopter Story—YL 37 Flies Again*" available from the author and savior of the original YL 37, Gerald Hail. Prices are \$8.something for softcover and \$14.75 for hard cover. I am sorry to say that I am not sure if the price includes postage. There is also a bulk price for ten copies of either version should you have many grandchildren or feel like benefitting the local library or school system or even Toys for Tots. Contact Gerald at YL37@aol.com or YL 37 Group, 14157 E. 580 Rd., Inola, OK 74036.

Nominated for 9 Academy Awards and still only about \$20.00 is the Ugly Angel Memorial Dedication Film. This is absolutely a GREAT film. Get it from the Sachs Law Office, PO Box 1360, Norwich, VT 05055 or ClipClop6@aol.com

Gunners Belt Buckle. Probably the best 30 bucks you'll ever spend assuming you were a gunner. I think that pilots who wanted to be gunners can get them for \$40.00. Contact Frenchy at comprisetv3@aol.com He also has a complete line of Ugly Finery for just that right look in the boardroom or country club.

Please send all information, materials, comments and questions to:

Bob Skinder
20 Claytor Rd.
Hopkins, SC 29061
rskinder@att.net

HMM-362_History_Project

Copyright Ugly Angel Memorial Foundation, Inc., 2001