The Christmas Boxes for the Troops project was again a huge success this year. CHPA HQ received enough donations to fund and send out 186 boxes. In a previous newsletter message, I mentioned that the success of any organization requires that the membership get involved. Many of you did just that! For all of those individual donors and corporate sponsors who did so please know that through your sincere generosity you will be providing a huge morale boost to our deployed aviation troops.

It is my pleasure to thank Jay Brown, CHPA Executive Director, who each year for the last seven years, has always put a huge amount of effort into making this annual project successful. His championing and coordination of this project, from soup to nuts, is one reason it has guaranteed success. It is also important to thank Pat Glass, who put these boxes together for overseas shipment. The manual labor, team work, leadership, and time it takes to do this task is absolutely another key to the project’s success. It is also a true expression of caring and giving.

Please be aware that this month, your Board of Directors will be considering a location for the 2016 Annual Convention and business meeting. When that formal decision is soon made we will let everyone know.

We are also looking into a proposal to have some local meet and greet gatherings for CHPA members in different geographical areas of the US for the coming year. It is a well-founded idea that would provide members with an opportunity to shake hands, bend an elbow, and swap stories.

Since you will be receiving the newsletter shortly before Christmas, I would like to take this opportunity to wish that each of you experience the many pleasures of the Christmas season. The holiday season is about bringing our religious beliefs into focus, our families, workmates, comrades, and friendships. It is a time of kindness, the joy of giving, belonging and resolutions. May I respectfully suggest that Christmas is not just a date, but a state of mind that brings pleasure and joy at this special time of year. From all of us at CHPA, we wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
How Are We Doing?

Jay Brown

Every month we try to bring you articles and notices that interest all of our members. Of course that entails gathering news items and articles from various sources and varying topics, from the humorous to serious news of world events. We hope we’re meeting your needs and providing entertainment and we’d love to hear from you on whether we’re meeting those goals.

If you have a comment or suggestion on what we’ve done well, where we could improve or want to submit a story drop us an email at HQ@chpa-us.org or give us a call at 800-832-5144 and let us know. Always of particular interest are stories from our members and supporters. Anything from tales of woe in Flight School to genuine TINS TIW stories can be submitted. So drop us a line and tell your story.

Share the “Swash”

Please feel free to forward this issue of “The Swash Plate” to your colleagues, potential members and other interested parties!

Sponsorship

Please consider sponsoring CHPA’s programs. You may make tax deductible donations to support the Goldie Fund, CHPA’s Scholarship program, the Holiday Boxes for the Troops, T-shirts for Heroes or the Association. For further information please look at Sponsorship at the website, http://www.chpa-us.org.
Reunions and Gatherings

Are you planning a reunion or event that may be of interest to our members? Let us help you get the word out and support veterans groups of all sizes and locations. Just send a message with the information to HQ@chpa-us.org. If you have a logo, send that along as well. Be sure to include accurate contact and registration information and we’ll take care of the rest.

The Swash!

One of the things we all know, nobody tells a better story than a combat helicopter crewmember, whether it’s the truth or “enhanced truth.” Our most entertaining and informative stories come from you, our membership. We often receive responses from our members when an article is published that opens a memory or touches a nerve, in a good way.

So where are all the story tellers out there? All you veterans of the skies of OEF and OIF with an idea for an article, or a story to tell it’s as easy as sending it in. Take a moment to lay fingers on keyboard or just put pen to paper and send them in. You can email them to hq@chpa-us.org or through the US Post Office to: CHPA • PO Box 42 • Divide, CO  80814-0042

Help us help you tell the tales of your experiences and continue to preserve our shared legacy of combat under a rotor disc.

Calling all HA(L)-3, HC-1, FASU Seawolves

The Seawolf Association is looking for any personnel who were attached to HA(L)-3, HC-1, or FASU Binh Thuy. If you were, or know anyone who was, please contact us at (501) 960-7248. We do not have access to the official Navy records as they remain classified in the National Archives due to the covert nature of many of the operations, therefore, the only way we can locate fellow Seawolves is with your help.

On 3 January 1997, the Bureau of Naval Personnel authorized, retroactively, the awarding of the Combat Aircrew Insignia to Combat Aircrewmen who served in HA(L)-3. With this approval, we need to locate our doorgunners so they can be awarded these devices and accompanying certificate. To request the insignia, fill out and send in the attached affidavit.

US Navy Seawolves aboard the USS Harnett County
GOT PATCHES?

CHPA continues to receive quite an assortment of patches from our members. These patches are displayed at our booth at HAI, Quad A, and VHPA. Several of you have donated patches, but we’re always looking for more. They are very eye catching and help us garner attention. So please dig through your old patches and if you have some you’d like to share, send them to us at:

CHPA • PO Box 42 • Divide, CO 80814-0042
2015 Christmas Boxes for the Troops
Jay Brown

The CHPA Christmas Boxes for the Troops project for 2015 is now complete and we’ve had another great year, thanks to our members, supporters and volunteers who worked together to make it all happen. Without the participation of everyone involved this project would never get off the ground and sincere appreciation and recognition is called for.

First, to those who supported us financially by sponsoring one or more Christmas boxes we offer a sincere “Thank you”. You were all the driving force that started this project off.

John Bailey
Linda Banks
Carol Barager
Carl Bell
Sherman Bennett
John Bercaw
Lynn Billow
Evelyn Bilognia
Sigmund Bloom
Drew and Barbara Boudrieau
Mark Bowen
Christopher Bradshaw
Jay Brown and Sue Prescott
David Butler
Chuck Canfield
George Carey
Budd Christman
Tommy Clack
Dave Clemmer
Sam Conde
Kenneth Cowl
James Delashaw

James Donadini
Albert Doucette
Brent Ebaugh
John Fore
Terry Garlock
Maurice Geldert
Patrick Glass
Patricia Hastings
Frank Heffernan
David Hintz
Peter Howson
Jeffrey Lacey
Cliff Letts
Al and Catherine Major
Loren McAnally
Rich Miller
Ken and Sue Morford
Doug and Linda Mouton
Harry Neving
Wayne and Debbie Noonan
Daniel and Terry Odell
Hillevi Peterson-Hirsch

Pidcoke UMC Mens Group
Elizabeth Prescott
Mary Prescott
David Rose
Allen Schultz
Karen Schwab
David Sebright
Sara Sheldon
Donald Slack
Robert Stacy
Paul Stecklein
Fred Swets
Highland Lakes ROMEOS
Janie Thurman
Michael and Molly Traynor
Wayne Weeks
Martin Wifholm
Grover Wright
Richard Yood

Second, the guy who gathers up the constituent contents of each box, all the boxes and oversees the packing, transporting and mailing of each and every box and essentially does all the hard work, Pat Glass. Without Pat we’d have a lot of sponsors with no product nor delivery. Pat has been doing this job for a number of years now and always stands ready every year to do it all over again. Thank you, Pat, for another great job. We couldn’t do this without you.
Third we give sincere appreciation to the PMS, LTC Eric Atherton and cadets of McDaniel College in Westminster, MD who stepped up to pack, seal and transport the boxes to the post office for shipping in time for Christmas. This really restores some of your faith in the future of this nation. The Cadets are:

MS IV Nicholas Mullica  MS III Sean Kaliszak  MS III Evelyn Logan
MS IV John Collins  MS III Andrew Schiller  MS II Frank Skovran
MS IV Chris Miller  MS III Abby Phillips  MS III Noah Conner
MS III Jesse Guttman  MS III David Thornberry  MS II Matt Meagher

Without the help of these cadets, and everyone else listed here, CHPA would not have been able to ship 186 boxes to deserving servicemen and women who will be away from home this holiday season. CHPA is grateful to you all for your help and your support. To all of you, wherever you are, wherever you serve, we wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, Happy Kwanza and Happy Holidays. May your season be merry and bright.

Recipe Request
Sue Prescott

CHPA is still hard at work, trying to pull together enough recipes for a cookbook worthy of our audience. We would still like your stories and recipes. We need MORE. Recipes with a story about learning/cooking it when overseas or when a service member returned from a deployment are even better. Submit recipes to RecipesCHPA@yahoo.com.

I love to cook and my friends and neighbors all benefit from it. I collect recipes and love to try new ones. When I started this project, it was my intent to put the recipes in a common format with common words for the methods to make the recipes consistent; my engineering background coming through. That format is ingredients first, in the order used, then instructions. That’s not absolutely true anymore. I’ve received a couple of recipes that are so engaging, though not in my format and words, that I will be including them as written.

Also, please remember, if you want to submit a recipe you copied from a website or book, change up the directions (they’re the copyrightable content). Or let us know that they need to be changed; and please give attribution to the author. (This just keeps us safe.)
This C-130 had troop seats, so I didn’t have to sit on the cabin deck, back to back with another soldier while a cargo tie down held us in place, like I did on the flight from Saigon to Phu Bai a year before. I guess it makes it easier to find the bodies after a crash, I said to myself that time. This time I had a seat belt and by chance, was right beside a cabin window, as the aircraft climbed out from Phu Bai’s only runway. As it turned to head south I had a last look at my Chinook company’s short runway and the big helicopters parked in their revetments alongside it, knowing I would never see this scene again.

One day you are the company’s Standardization Instructor Pilot (SIP), the man who gives check rides to all the other pilots, the man who gets the hardest, most dangerous missions because the CO knows you can handle them, the man who trains the FNGs so that they are safe to fly with the rest of the aircraft commanders (AC), and then the next day you are a ghost, still there, but no longer relevant to the mission of the company. That day came for me a week before I boarded the C-130 to Cam Ranh and home.

In 1971 in “Playtex,” (official motto “Support Extraordinaire”, unofficial motto “We Give Living Support”), also known as C Company, 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Mobile), one of the jobs of the SIP was to keep a close watch on the ACs, particularly as they neared the end of their tour. The SIP would occasionally fly with the ones within a month of DROS (Date of Return from Overseas) and would casually talk with the copilots back from missions, asking indirectly how the AC was doing. After watching and talking, and depending on how many ACs the company had and the mission load, the SIP would recommend to the operations officer that it might be good if a certain AC stopped flying and decompressed for a while before his DROS came up. I knew that moment was coming for me when the missions assigned suddenly became the easy ones. The final one was an easy mission that suddenly turned very hard when I had to recover a Cobra from a ridge line very near the DMZ, with F-4s dropping bombs and Cobras shooting up everything in sight as I lifted the broken helicopter. When I returned from it the operations officer and another of the instructor pilots were waiting for me. As my rotor blades stopped turning it was time for me to stop flying.

I spent the next week turning in flight gear and weapons during the day. In the evening I sat with another short timer pilot on top the officer’s club in a couple of lawn chairs. We had a pair of binoculars and a cooler of beer for our self-assigned mission of “counter mortar” watch. Our theory was that by being up there we deterred the Viet Cong from shooting at our little base. Must have worked because no rounds came in that week.

At Cam Ranh I had a reunion of sorts with several men I had met the year before at the replacement center in Saigon. Six of us, four infantry (Grunt) RLOs (real live officers) a captain and three lieutenants, and two Warrant Officer One’s (WO-1, aka Wobbly Ones) helicopter pilots, found that we were assigned to the 101st, up in the northern part of Vietnam. All of us were on our first Vietnam tours, so we hung together and...
bonded over flat, tinny tasting beer at the officer’s club. We flew to Phu Bai in the same C-130, strapped to the floor and we rode the flat car trailers armored with sand bags from Phu Bai the 40 miles to Camp Evans for the 101st own pre-unit assignment training at the Screaming Eagle Replacement Training Center, SERTC.

The graduation exercise from SERTC was a real combat assault, where the FNGs leaped from the back of a Huey in full combat gear, M-16 locked and loaded. We six jumped too, because the 101st wanted everyone to get at least a small idea of what it was like to be a grunt, cooks, typists, and helicopter pilots alike. Later at the bar we three Wobbly Ones agreed that two thoughts had been going through our minds as we sank knee deep into the rice paddy: One, please God, don’t let there be any VC or NVA out here – surely they would not send FNGs into combat led by only a couple of experienced Grunts, and Two, please God, don’t let there be any punji stakes in this rice paddy, because helicopter pilots didn’t get the jungle boots with the steel plate in the sole, only the leather boots we would wear flying. Nothing happened on our “combat assault”, except some kids herding buffalos bugged us to give them cigarettes. Of course they wouldn’t send FNGs into a real combat assault where there might actually be bad guys, would they? That night we watched air strikes going into where we had just been.

We graduated from SERTC and went to our separate units. Over the course of the next year I never ran into one of them again, but now here we were, all back at Cam Ranh and on our way home. We had all been promoted, the second lieutenants were now first lieutenants and the Wobbly Ones were now Chief Warrant Officers Two. But the captain was not there. One of the lieutenants told us that he took a burst of machine gun fire out in the mountains and was dead before he hit the ground. We drank a beer in his honor and moved on. All of us had lost friends over the last year and now had one more to add to the total.

The barracks where we waited for the flight that would take us home were egalitarian, with company grade officers, warrant officers, and enlisted men all sleeping in bunk beds in the same room. Sleeping was all that happened there because when not out-processing, everyone was at their respective clubs, drinking beer and celebrating being alive. Some were trying to drown out what they had seen and done, others glad just to be somewhere other than the jungle. All around the room there were signs warning that everything you brought on the plane would be searched for weapons, ammo, grenades, drugs and so on. The signs warned that you WILL be caught, so better use the conveniently located “Amnesty” boxes spread throughout the area. Every morning those who left that day must have taken the signs to heart, because around the room would be weapons; pistols, AKs and grenades; heroin, and so on. Every morning the staff would come around and collect all the leavings, only for the same amount to be there the next morning.

After three days it was my turn to leave. We took a bus to the flight line where the Freedom Bird waited. As promised we had to lay all our baggage on the tarmac so that the MPs could go through it and the dogs sniff it for drugs before we could board, then it was onto the plane. Announcements, seat belts checked by the stewardesses, engines started and we were taxing. Feel the rush as the pilot put the four throttles to full power and the old Stretch DC-8 is rolling fast down the runway. The nose comes up and the struts clunk as they go to full extension, meaning the aircraft is flying, and a cheer comes up from every seat in the cabin. Even if the aircraft crashes now, we didn’t die in Vietnam.

One year, 960 combat flight hours and heaven knows how many missions, one Distinguished Flying Cross, one Purple Heart, and 23 Air Medals later, CW-2 Curtis is coming home from ‘Nam, quite a different man than the WO-1 Curtis of 12 months before.
Returning the MIA Bracelet
Jay Brown

This is an article I wrote a few years ago but I don’t think I ever published it. Submitted here for your reading enjoyment.

On 18 Oct, 1995 the remains MSGT Paul L. Foster were identified and later that year repatriated. I didn’t hear about it until a few months later and when I did I immediately recognized the name as being the same as the name on the POW/MIA bracelet I’d been wearing for the last 18 years. After spending the next few months trying to locate a family member of MSGT Foster to return his bracelet with no luck and not a lot of help from the Pentagon, I gave up and placed his bracelet in my flight school mug for safe keeping.

Then I got the word that the 2006 Blaise’n a Trail group would be riding to Washington, DC for Rolling Thunder XIX. What a grand opportunity. On the one hand I would be able to ride to honor the memory of CW2 Mike Blaise, for whom the annual ride was named, and CW4 Matt Salter, the honoree of the 2006 ride. On the other I would have an opportunity to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and leave MSGT Foster’s bracelet at the bottom of his panel. So after getting a few things taken care of and getting a few other things arranged, on 24 May I sat out on my ‘99 Harley Softail Custom from my home at 9200 feet MSL in Divide, CO.

Day one found me eastbound, rolling down through the east side of Ute Pass, through Waldo Canyon and Colorado Springs toward the flatlands of Kansas. I took US 24 east to Limon, CO and rolled onto I-70 for my first stop in Salina, KS. The next day I took I-70 to Topeka, KS then rode northeast toward St. Joseph, MO and across to Macon, MO, where I would link up with the riders from Macon; Kate, Terry and Cheryl Blaise and Michael Clarke the next morning. Departing Macon we rode out to the final resting place of Mike Blaise and shared a morning beer and a few personal thoughts before heading out for a long day of riding. We mounted up and headed across the farmlands of MO toward our next stop, Pickerington, OH. Along the way we linked up by pure chance with two other riders coming down from Milwaukee, WI, literally joining up on the move. Once we reached Pickerington we were hosted by Bob and Shanda Durosko for a late cookout.

The next day was a relatively short ride into Chantilly, VA where I made arrangements for a small buffet for the riders for the next day and then left the group to join some local friends for dinner. The next morning at 0645 I was back in Chantilly where we linked up, 30 riders strong, for a rumbling roll through Washington, DC and into the north parking lot of the Pentagon where our 30 became many thousands. After the ride through Washington we parked near the FDR Memorial and I broke off from the group to visit with old friends at The Wall. That’s where I took off MSGT Paul Leonard Foster’s bracelet for the last time and left it at the base of panel 32E with a prayer of thanks and a quiet “Welcome home.” Then I left to enjoy a few minutes with friends in the Virginia suburbs before joining the Blaise’n a Trail group at the Chantilly Holiday Inn for drinks, toasts, good food and comradeship that can only be enjoyed by warriors. We were joined by CHPA National President Steve Reilly and his lovely wife Larri. The gathering formed a perfect end to a perfect day.

The next day I loaded up and left solo down I-95 and across South Carolina on I-20 to visit my family in Blythe, GA. Mom didn’t know I was coming and she was surprised beyond words. A day off from riding allowed me to enjoy being with Mom, sisters, son, daughter, nieces, nephews, greats and grans. The food was the best in the grandest southern tradition and the beer was cold. But this too had to come to an end.
The next three days took me through overnight stops in Murfreesboro, TN; Columbia, MO; and Hays, KS before rolling back into the Rockies and my own driveway eleven days and 4100 miles later. The Softail performed flawlessly with the only problems being I had to add a quart of oil and replace a turn signal in Georgia.

My heartfelt thanks to Mike Clarke for heading up the Blaise’n a Trail effort and to Mike, Kate, Terry and Cheryl for making me feel welcome from the outset. Thanks to all those who rode with us for being a part of our remembering. It is a memory that will stay with me forever.