



Vinh Long Outlaws Fall Newsletter

July-September .

The VLOA is a 501(c)(19) nonprofit, tax exempt war veterans' organization.

3rd. Quarter 2015

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National Director's Corner

By- **Larry Jackson**

Greetings to all Outlaws, Mavericks, Roadrunners, 28th Avionics Sig Det, B Troop 1-158th Outlaw Aviation and 175th Bushwhackers.

It is hard to believe that Fall is already here and that it has been a year since our 50th reunion celebration in Tyson's Corner, VA. I'm looking forward to some cooler weather as we had a really hot and wet summer. We had a lot of 105-110 heat index days and around 10" of rain in August and another 10" in September. We are hoping for some cooler weather for all of us this fall. It is my favorite time of the year with cool nights and warm days and Mother Natures beautiful show when the leaves turn to colors. I'm happy to report that we only had about 5" of rain last week when a majority of South Carolina suffered significant flooding that is still going on. Our thoughts and prayers go out to our members residing in these areas and to all others who are suffering.

It is with sadness that I received notice of the passing of Cullis Holub from Mobile, Alabama. On behalf of the members of the VLOA, we want to extend our deepest sympathy to Diane and the members of their family.

I want to take this opportunity to commend Jim Donnelly and Doug Wilson who have been on a mission to locate lost Outlaws and identify those members whom have passed away after their tours so that they can be added to our Honor Roll. Jim reported that they have had positive contacts with 121 members who served as members of the Outlaws, Mavericks

*Return to
Branson- 2016.*

Cont. from pg. 1. and Bushwhackers during their tours in Vietnam. Quite a number of them have become dues paying members and have shown an interest in attending our next reunion.

I received a call from Jack and Fran Konopka last month as they were coming to Hilton Head for a week at a time share that they have here. We were able to get together with them one afternoon. We had a wonderful visit with them and had the chance to really get to know each other. The great news is that they will be doing the Silent Auction for us in Branson. They did a wonderful job at our 50th reunion and I'm sure that will be the case for our Return to Branson reunion.

The reunion planning is coming along very well. We have selected Gathering Plus as our reunion planner and expect we will have a finalized itinerary and contract by the end of November at the latest. We will have the registration form in the January 2016 newsletter. We will be staying at a very nice hotel on the strip and will have outstanding entertainment planned. You will have all the details in the January newsletter.

Polly and I took a 23 day driving trip in August out west. We drove 5,000 miles on our odyssey. We drove the first day to Baton Rouge, LA and spent the night and then drove to Corpus Christy, TX to visit Polly's brother and sister-in-law. While there, we went to a minor league baseball game and one day drove out to the King Ranch. I had never had the chance to visit it and it is quite impressive.

Here is just a little history of the ranch. In 1853, Captain Richard King purchased a creek-fed oasis in the Wild Horse Desert of South Texas, sparking generations of integrity, preservation, and innovation called King Ranch. The Ranch now covers 825,000 acres—more land than the state of Rhode Island. Over the course of 150 years, King Ranch has led some of the first cattle drives, developed the Santa Gertrudis and Santa Cruz breeds of cattle, bred the finest quarter horses, and produced champion thoroughbreds—all under its iconic Running W® brand. Today's King Ranch has diversified into a major agribusiness with interests in cattle ranching and feedlot operations, farming (citrus, cotton, grain, sugar cane, and turf-grass), pecan processing and sales, commodity marketing and processing, luxury retail goods, and recreational hunting.



Cont. from pg.2.

They have significant holdings in Florida and now are the largest producer of orange juice in the state. In addition, they have holdings in Europe and Australia that are vineyards and wine making facilities. They have approximately 100 full time staff to manage all these activities. They also receive a royalty from Ford Motor Company for each King Ranch edition of the Ford F-150 pickup truck that is built.

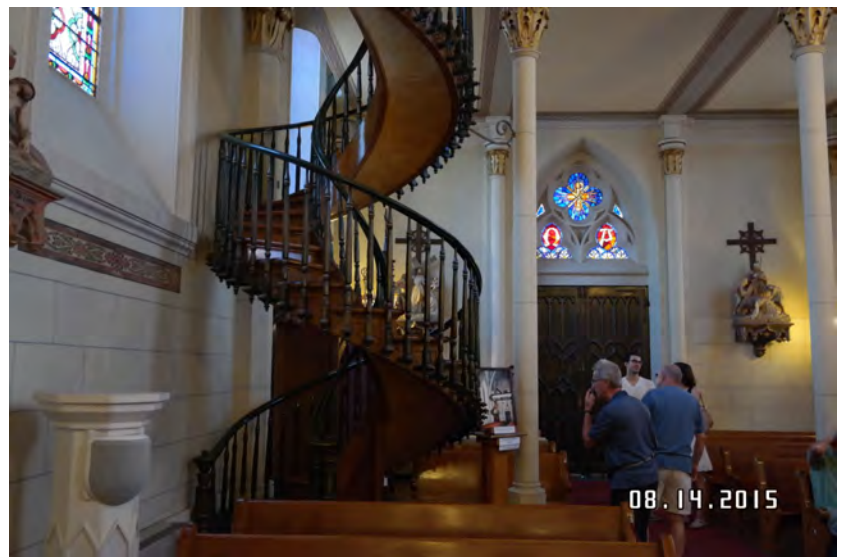
Our next journey was a drive through the Texas Hill Country and then through Dallas and on to Sherman, TX to visit Polly's sister and younger brother. From there we travelled to Santa Fe, NM where we met a number of Polly's cousins. They had decided that they wanted a reunion that would take the place of a funeral for a change.

Santa Fe, New Mexico's capital, sits in the Sangre de Cristo foothills.



It's renowned for its Pueblo-style architecture, and as a creative arts hotbed. Founded as a Spanish colony in 1610, it has at its heart the traditional plaza. The surrounding historic district's crooked streets wind past adobe landmarks like the Palace of the Governors, now the home of the New Mexico History Museum.

At the end of the Old Santa Fe Trail stands the Loretto Chapel. Inside the Gothic structure is the staircase referred to as miraculous, inexplicable, and marvelous and is sometimes called St. Joseph's Staircase. The stairway confounds architects, engineers and master craftsmen. It makes over two complete 360-degree turns, stands



Cont. on pg.4

Cont. from pg.3. 20' tall and has no center support. It rests solely on its base and against the choir loft. The risers of the 33 steps are all of the same height. Made of an apparently extinct wood species, it was constructed with only square wooden pegs without glue or nails. Lore has it that it was built by a shabbily dressed man who showed up on the steps of the church and told the nuns that he would build the stairway to replace the ladder they had to use to access the choir area. When it was completed, he mysteriously disappeared, and many believed that it was Saint Joseph who built it.

We also took a trolley ride around the city. They have approximately 250 art studios and almost as many sculpture businesses. A very artsy town.

Our next leg of the journey was to Colorado Springs, CO to visit my brother and his wife. We spent some time looking at houses on the Parade of Homes and my sister-in-law was looking for ideas for the renovation of her kitchen. My youngest brother from Pottsville, PA flew in to look for a place to live in the area. Polly and I and my two brothers were able to get in a round of golf as a warm up for an annual memorial tournament in honor of my sister and her husband. We also visited friends from our neighborhood in Virginia. He was an FBI agent and was the soccer coach of our son. It is always nice to renew an old acquaintance. We then went to Parker which is a far out suburb of Denver to stay with my nephew and his family.

We drove back to Colorado Springs to visit the Seven Falls which is a series of seven cascading waterfalls of South Cheyenne Creek in South Cheyenne Canyon. It is a privately owned tourist attraction since it was opened in the early 1880s.

Located in beautiful Colorado Springs, CO, they cascade 181 feet in seven distinct steps down a solid cliff of naturally carved Pikes Peak Granite (see picture). The area was purchased and renovated by the



Cont. from pg. 4.

Broadmoor Hotel at a cost of approximately 13 million dollars and just opened up for viewing that week. They had one viewing platform that could be accessed by a tunnel leading to an elevator which we rode up to get a good view of some of the falls. They also had 220 steep metal steps up to the top of the mountain. Polly and I climbed half-way up to a viewing platform while the rest of our group climbed to the top. The Broadmoor Hotel is a 5-star hotel built in 1902. As a child, we lived about 65 miles east of Colorado Springs and I was a member of a Cub Scout Troop. We had our Jamborees in the hotel and were allowed to swim in their indoor pool sans a swimsuit.

We had our golf tournament on a course in North Denver. My nieces and nephews put on the outing each year and it is always fun to get to see everyone and play golf and party with them. They host a barbecue with all the fixings following the tournament.

We started out on our final leg of our journey home. We drove to Kansas City, MO and spent the night and then drove down to Branson, MO the next morning. While in Branson we visited the hotels and were able to preview several shows. I can guarantee you that the entertainment that we saw was top notch. Al and Marguerite Iller drove over from Fayetteville, AR and we got together for lunch. It was great getting to see them and visit and talk about the reunion and what was going on with our lives. Branson has a lot more hills than I remember but they have built a lot of new roads so getting around was fairly easy. The old downtown area is very interesting. They have a 5 and dime store that is well worth the time to visit and browse. They have about anything you could imagine from old to new. They also have a free shuttle around the downtown area. Spending some time there will be well worth it.

We left on our final leg home. We arrived back at Hilton Head on August 30th. It was good to be home. I want to wish each and every one of you a pleasant and joyful fall season. I especially want you to enjoy Thanksgiving with all the blessings that we have and then Christmas and the New Years holidays.

Larry Jackson

The Back Pew

By: John Doyle



Remembering.



One Saturday morning, the pastor noticed little Johnny was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the church. It was covered with names and small American Flags were mounted on either side of it. The seven year old had been staring at the plaque for some time so the pastor walked up, stood by the little boy, and said quietly, “Good morning Johnny,” “ Good morning Pastor Ron,” replied the young man, still focused on the plaque. “Pastor, what is this?” Johnny asked.

“Well son, it’s a memorial to all the young men and women who died while in the service.” Soberly they stood together, staring at the large plaque. Little Johnny’s voice was barely audible when he asked, “Which one, Wednesday Night or Sunday Morning service?”

Sometimes it literally feels like it is going to kill you to get up and make the effort to go to church, but when you are there and listen to the message, you know, this is where you belong!!

Pastor John Doyle

3rd. Qtr.- 2015- VLOA Treasurers Report by Chester Voisin



	Balance <u> \$ </u>
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Cash Balance - 01/01/2015	31,667.76
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	2015 9 Months 9/30/2015	
Revenues:	\$	
Dues - Annual	325.00	
Dues - Lifetime	1,400.00	
Dues - Associates Lifetime	300.00	
Sale of Inventory Items	1,160.00	
Miscellaneous	-	
Total Revenues:	3,185.00	3,185.00

Expenditures:		
Newsletter Costs	1,149.98	
Inventory purchases & costs	370.00	
Administration	2,136.97	
Miscellaneous	70.85	
Total Expenditures:	3,727.80	3,727.80
Net Income (Loss) - 9 months 2015	(542.80)	(542.80)

Cash Balance - 9/30/2015	31,124.96
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Cont. from pg. 7 -Treasurers Report.

Details: 9 month period - 1/1/2015 thru 9/30/2015

Revenues

Inventory Sales	1,160.00	1,160.00
Miscellaneous - Donations	None	None
Annual Dues (AD): - 2015		
John Doyle	25.00	
Donald Palmer	25.00	
Fred Jacobs	25.00	
Verdis Don Sharp	25.00	
Raymond E. Novotney	25.00	
John N. Diamond	25.00	
Norris T. Marshall	25.00	
Paul F. Whitworth	25.00	
Dennis R. Smith	25.00	
William B. Sturtevant	25.00	
Cullis L. Holub	25.00	
Richard S. Golaszewski	25.00	
Thomas W. Stowell	25.00	
Total	325.00	325.00
Life Time Memberships (LTM): - 2015		
Walter Cieslak	100.00	
Daniel L. Greve	100.00	
Dwayne W. Williams	100.00	
Donald J. Kreshtool	100.00	
John H. Boysen	100.00	
Richard W. Keitner	100.00	
Dennis R. Smith	100.00	
Kendrick F. Bradley	100.00	
John W. Dye	100.00	
Richard M. Koenig	100.00	
Lawrence K. Miller	100.00	
Ernest W. Hunter	100.00	
Jimmy L. Montroso	100.00	
Donald Kent	100.00	
Total	1,400.00	1,400.00
Life Time Associate Membership (ALTM): - 2015		
Maranita Roberts Lopez	100.00	
Jeannette (Sanford) Smith	100.00	
Lynnette Williams	100.00	
Total	300.00	300.00
Total Revenues - 9 month period 2015		3,185.00

Cont. on pg.9.

Cont. from pg.8.

Expenses

Bob Sharp - 4th Qtr 2014 and 1st & 2nd Qtr 2015 N/L	1,149.98	
Administration	2,136.97	
Inventory Expense	370.00	
Frank Estes - Nell Moist Floral Arrangement	70.85	
Total	3,727.80	3,727.80
Total Expenses		3,727.80
Income (loss) 9 month period ending 9/30/2015		(542.80)



Thanks For Your Outlaw Service !



Back in our Viet Nam days, every man in every Outlaw component shared the same conditions, dangers, challenges and hardships. For nearly nine years the Outlaws were a close-knit, cohesive unit which demanded that every man do his job to ensure the success of the entire unit.

It's worth remembering that, a half-century ago, dozens of young soldiers who served with the Outlaws would not always be recognized in a manner commensurate with their contributions. The more visible jobs..... pilots, crew chiefs, gunners, section leaders, platoon sergeants and the like, generally received deserved recognition.

Regrettably, there always seemed to be a tendency to fail to acknowledge the contributions of that young soldier who quietly, but skillfully, performed his behind-the-scenes job in a seldom-recognized, but vital, position. Specialties such as ammunition handlers, avionics repairmen, wheeled vehicle mechanics, air traffic control specialists, sheet metal repairmen, hydraulic specialists and many others in similar low-visibility jobs all contributed immensely to the success of our unit.

The VLOA has made such recognition possible, albeit in a different way. From the very beginning, the VLOA has adamantly maintained that our membership include every rank, position and MOS of every man who ever served in that great Outlaw organization. Even more specifically, the determination that every member be on a first-name basis, validates that feeling of equality, openness and comradeship at our reunions.

The time we spent in Viet Nam was a critical time in the lives of all of us. A young enlisted man contributed, in his own way, as much as did a general in his position. Both contributed to, and were vital to, the success of the war effort.

Fifty years later, VLOA reunions bring together all those who served, in any capacity, to enjoy the memories of our time together a half-century ago. It is not necessary to say "Thanks for your service" to each other because the VLOA continually thanks its members, regardless of former rank or position, by providing a warm fraternalism of friendship to our membership.



A Little Bit of History!

From time to time, we need to be reminded of our Vietnam Conflict history or we will forget it, someone will abuse it, or someone will change it. Thanks to Doug Wilson and Jim Donnelly, we continue getting snippets of Outlaw history via emails, Face Book, finding lost Outlaws, and other media sources.

One of the more recent descriptions of Outlaw history came from Doug's research of the former Outlaw Leaders. Here is a listing of former Outlaw Executive Officers, Operations Officers, and Maverick Leads, and their time in position:

Executive Officer:

Alfred J. Iller, 9/64-9/65
 Robert M. Williams, 9/65-1/66
 Hubert D. Merritt, 2/66-5/66
 George M. Baxter, 5/66-8/66
 Robert F. Blake, 8/66-2/69
 James T. McQueen, 2/67-7/67
 Charles R. Latta, 7/67-8/67*
 Joseph J. O'Neill, 8/67-unknown
 Carl E. Lloyd, unknown in 71
 Tomillo (first name unk.), unknown-9/71
 Steve Devault, unknown period **

*=deceased

**=last Executive Officer

Operations Officer:

Charles E. Humphries, 9/64-9/65*
 John Glenn, 5/66-5/67
 Hubert D. Merritt, unknown period
 Donald T. Casper, 1/67-1/67
 Robert F. O'Kane, 1/67-6/67
 Ray S. Leuty, 6/67-7/67
 Robert B. Weathersby, Jr., 7/67-7/68
 William J. Tomik, 7/68-6/69
 Roger Stallings, 1/71-6/71
 Tomillo (first name unk.), 9/71-9/72

Fred Rowe, 9/71-1/72
 Rick Taylor, 1/72-2/72**

**Last Operations Officer

Mavericks Leads:

Jackie W. Sanford, 9-64-6/65*
 Frank Estes, 6/65-9/65
 Bert L. Rice, 9/65-5/66
 Jerome G. Hileman, 5/66-2/67*
 Charles T. Gordon, 2/67-4/67
 Joseph V. Moffett, 4/67-12/67
 Richard M. Koenig, 12/67-unknown
 Chuck Goldmark, 1968
 Bill Callender, 68-2/69
 Paul Hanish, unknown
 Dave Wise, unknown
 William Walters, unknown*
 George Arnold, unknown-6/70
 Robert Smith, 69-70
 Jake Dye, unknown
 Miller (first name unk.), unknown
 Thomas Duff, unknown
 Roger Stallings, 70-71**
 Charles Edwards 1/71-3/71*
 Fred Rowe, 4/71-9/71
 Bo Hayner, 9/71-2/72***

*deceased

**Last Maverick Lead

***Last Bushwhacker Lead

If you know of any information that can fill in some of the "unknown" areas, please forward them to Frank Estes at estesf@troycable.net.

In future *Outlaw Newsletters*, we will provide names and dates of key positions of the rest of the Outlaw, Maverick, Roadrunner, Bushwhacker, and attached unit leaders.

Thanks again goes to Doug Wilson and Jim Donnelly for keeping the effort active to find lost Outlaws, and recover some of our history.



Welcome to New Comers! Roster Additions

Once again, Jim Donnelly and Doug Wilson have provided a massive addition to our roster. The following are the latest additions to our Outlaw Roster. Welcome aboard!

Joseby "Army" Armstrong, North Carolina
 Gary D. Aufderheide, Indiana
 Mark Brown, Texas
 Jerry L. Bean, Colorado
 Clyde E. Bixler, Pennsylvania
 Steve Vaston Brooks, Kentucky
 Mark Brown, Texas
 James R. Burns III, Kansas
 Donald T. Casper, Texas
 John T. "Tommy" Cato, Georgia
 William R. Coleman, Colorado
 Riley Cook, Tennessee
 William Smith Cutter, Tennessee
 Angus B. Desveaux, California
 Hank L. Devoll, Florida
 William H. "Bill" Diamond, Arizona
 Jake Dye, Florida **
 Matthew K. Flemming, Maryland
 Mark W. Fontenot, Louisiana
 Tony R. Gaultney, Georgia
 Richard S. Golaszewski, Pennsylvania *
 Gerald C. Green, Minnesota
 Robert "Gage" Guthrie, Florida
 Harry Harr, South Carolina
 Delbert Hashberger, Wyoming
 Michael T. Hershey, California
 Alan Holmes, Massachusetts
 Ernest W. "Ernie" Hunter, Minnesota **
 John C. Irwin, Kansas
 Donald Isenberg, Indiana
 Terry M. Jessup, Oklahoma
 James "Kitch" Keitchen, Florida
 Donald "Don" Kent, Illinois **
 James P. "JP" Klink, Maryland
 Glen F. Kluttz, North Carolina
 Richard M. "Dick" Koenig, Connecticut **
 Donald J. "Don" Kreshtool, Texas *
 Daniel Lassner, Illinois
 Anthony C. Law, Florida
 Ronald B. Mann, Florida
 Ronnie W. Marple, West Virginia
 Marshall D. Martin, Maryland
 Jim Martinson, Texas
 Robert N. Melton, Tennessee
 Lawrence K. "Larry" Miller, Texas **
 Jimmy Montroso, Ohio **
 Dusty Moseness, Georgia
 Jon Myhre, Florida
 Hans-Peter Naegel, Texas

Frank L. Nauseda, Minnesota
 Michael A. Nord, California
 James C. Notgrass, Florida
 Edwin G. Odell, New Mexico
 James David Phenicie, California
 Edward R. Plucinski, Illinois
 Russ Prentice, Georgia
 Erick Ragsdale, Arizona
 Douglas L. Raper, Kentucky
 David A. Rogers, Arizona
 Gary A. Roulier, Oregon
 John Schuster, Virginia
 Vance Shearer, Texas
 Jim Sheridan, Washington
 William R. Simmons, Georgia
 William T. "Bill" Skavdahl, Nebraska
 Robert W. "Bob" Slick, Maryland **
 Robert Smith, Missouri
 Ronald G. Smith, Nevada
 Donald F. Spade, Pennsylvania
 Richard E. Spradlin, Washington
 William Stahl, Alabama
 Roger J. Stallings, Florida
 Charles H. Stirewalt, North Carolina
 Thomas W. "Tom" Stowell, Georgia *
 George A. Storer, Pennsylvania
 Enoch C. Sturgill, North Carolina
 William B. "Bill" Sturteant, Florida *
 James H. Such, Texas
 John R. "Rick" Taylor, Texas
 Richard D. Waldo, North Dakota
 Ron Walsh, South Carolina **
 George W. Williams, North Carolina
 David R. Wise, Pennsylvania
 Larry R. Wolf, Minnesota
 Wayne M. Wooten, Florida
 Thomas Wulf, Florida



We owe Jim and Doug a great deal of gratitude for finding the Outlaws and getting in touch with them. Some of these listed have also joined the VLOA by paying Regular (*) and Life Member (**) dues. Thanks to all who did. Your dues help keep the quarterly newsletter alive and distributed, and the web-site in operation. If you know of anyone who served with the Outlaws, Mavericks, Roadrunners, Bushwhackers, and attached units,, please ask them to visit our website: www.vinhlougoutlaws.com, complete a membership form, and submit it with their appropriate dues to our Treasurer. **And** join us in Branson, MO for our September 2016 reunion.



Open Letter to On-the-Fence Outlaws



I've been writing articles similar to this one for several years. Once again, my purpose is to encourage you old Outlaws to give very serious thought to attending the VLOA reunion in Branson, MO next year. I am talking to all of you who have never attended or those of you who are on the fence about attending the 2016 Branson reunion.

In the last issue of this Newsletter, you (hopefully) read my thoughts on how we are rapidly fading into history; how most of what Americans know about Viet Nam is now from history books; how we are inexorably heading toward being the proverbial "Last Man" organization. But, that won't happen soon! The VLOA has many years ahead to continue as a unifying vehicle for the nine years of Outlaws who make up the Vinh Long Outlaws Association.

The VLOA continues to exist, no, the VLOA continues to thrive, for the primary purpose of holding an Outlaw Roundup every two years. Secondly, the VLOA keeps the hundreds of former Viet Nam Outlaws informed of what the Association is doing through both our fantastic web site as well as this wonderful Newsletter.

During the past year, Deputy Director Jim Donnelly has made personal contact with literally dozens of former Outlaws, many of whom have already become dues-paying members of the Association. Additionally, some have already said that they plan to participate in the Branson reunion. This bodes well for the future of the VLOA. From the original members, (1964-65) all the way through to the "tail-end Charlies" (1971-72), the Association is more united and more relevant now than ever before. Nothing brings out the best in old memories more than sharing them with others who can relate to the bonding formed in Viet Nam.

Because of the success we have had with our past reunions, there's always a feeling that the next reunion could not possibly equal the last reunion. And, it never does because each reunion has always exceeded the previous gathering! Moreover, Branson is the ideal location for a veteran's reunion. The city takes great pride in, and focuses directly on, ensuring that military groups are treated with first-class attention.

Those who have not yet experienced the warmth, friendship and bonding at the Outlaw Roundups, usually have several self-limiting reasons for choosing not to attend. I don't want to bring up old memories. It costs too much money. I don't like to travel anymore. I won't know anyone. Any one of these, and a dozen other excuses, could be quickly overcome simply by resolving to say. . . "Dammit, I'm gonna do it!"

You'll find that it's rewarding and comforting to share, with others, where your lives have gone. Plus, wives, girlfriends, children, grandchildren, are all a part of our reunions. Bring them! They'll find that it was truly a magical experience. And, they may see a side of grandpa that they may have never known.

The VLOA's agenda is simply to provide the means to bring together those old soldiers who have gone through the same Viet Nam experiences. Exercise your "Dammit, I'm gonna do it!" resolution and join your Outlaw friends in Branson!

Tom Anderson

Ladies Love Outlaws

I have always been a great fan of Country Music. But Country Music has now lost its soul with the shouting, steel guitar-shrieking, noisy rubbish that is now called Pop Country. Give me the old-time county songs about mama, and driving trucks, and doing jail time, and lost loves, and cowboys and other soul wrenching words that were once sung by REAL Country Music people like Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, George Jones, Spade Cooley, Kris Kristofferson, and Waylon Jennings.

Over the years I've heard a Waylon Jennings song about OUTLAWS and I thought it ought to be brought to your attention. It hints that Outlaws may have an air about themselves that would be the envy of other mere mortals. The words, of course, could not possibly apply to any of us old "Vinh Long Outlaws" nor would we ever admit to it. But the words to the song suggest that Outlaws may have an unintentional, subliminal aura that members of the opposite sex just can't ignore or escape from.

So, as a break from some of the other erudite articles in this issue of the Newsletter, I thought I'd outline for you the words to that song – Ladies Love Outlaws!

Bessie was a lovely child from West Tennessee

Leroy was an Outlaw, hard-eyed and mean

One day she saw him starin', and it chilled her to the bone

And she knew she had to see that look on a child of her own

*'Cause ladies love outlaws
Like babies love stray dogs
Ladies touch babies like a banker touches gold
Outlaws touch ladies somewhere deep down in their soul*



Linda was a lady, blonde and built to last

Billy was a no-good guitar picker runnin' from his past

Listenin' to his songs she heard nothin' but bad news

Still she made her mind up to get him win or lose

*'Cause ladies love Outlaws
Like babies love stray dogs
Ladies touch babies like a banker touches gold
Outlaws touch ladies somewhere deep down in their soul*



Jessie liked the Cadillacs and diamonds for her hand

Waymore had a reputation as a lady's man

Late one night her light of love, finally gave a sign

And Jessie parked her Cadillac and took her place in line

*'Cause ladies love outlaws
Like babies love stray dogs
Ladies touch babies like a banker touches gold
Outlaws touch ladies somewhere deep down in their soul*



By: Tom Anderson.



25th Infantry Division Door Gunners

William (Bill) T. Kelley

Colonel, US Army (Retired)

November 19, 2013



It's been nearly 50 years since we flew with the Outlaws and Mavericks. Viet Nam Veterans have a common trait – we rarely discuss our experiences, even between other Veterans. A year ago, four of us formed a panel that shared our experiences with some young students at California State University - Monterey Bay. More than one voice caught during the telling, but after it was over, we found the experience to be, surprisingly, a good one. The 25th Infantry Division Door Gunner program was a unique program from 1964 to 1965. Turns out I was the last of the Door Gunner Platoon Leaders from September 1965 to December 10, 1965.

I arrived at Schofield Barracks in March 1964 as a brand new 2nd Lieutenant and was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry. One of the first things my sponsor described to me was the Shotgun Program. Each Battalion in the 25th Infantry Division was sending a Platoon with 1 Officer and 25 Enlisted Men for a 3-month Temporary Duty (TDY) tour to Viet Nam to augment the Aviation Companies assigned there. Seemed like a great adventure, so I signed up; but, I had to wait my turn as virtually every Bachelor Lieutenant in the Battalion wanted to go. My turn finally came in August of 1965.

The 1/35th Infantry allowed one SSG (E-6), three SGT (E-5) and 26 Specialist 4 or Private First Class to volunteer, and gave us 30 days to train on our own schedule to get ready to deploy. That meant I had to select 5 of the 30 to return to the battalion when we deployed. We were allowed one Huey flight for each man to make one pass to fire on a live fire gunnery range in the hills around Schofield Barracks. The rest of the time, we did our own Physical Training, and became intimately familiar with the M-60 Machine Gun.

The M-60 was a superb weapon, weighed 23.15 pounds, and could fire 7.62 mm rounds at 500-650 rounds per minute out to a range of 1,200 yards. Army Regulations were very clear on just how far (6 major groups) assigned personnel, who were not a school-trained unit Armorer, could disassemble the M-60. However, little-old-ladies in tennis shoes write Army Regulations and we were training for combat, so our goal was to have every man learn how to completely disassemble and assemble, know the name of every part, know how each part functioned, know which parts were likely to wear out, know immediate action in case of a malfunction, and know how to care for and clean the M-60. Eventually, we wound up having disassembly and assembly races, and just about every man could do it in less than 60 seconds.

Finally, it was time to deploy to Viet Nam. During training, one soldier would not keep two hands on the M-60, but tried to fire with one hand while holding on to the helicopter with the other. Back in those days, there were no gun mounts on the Huey and we were flying B Models as Slicks and C Models as gunships. The only thing that kept the rest of the crew from receiving friendly fire was a Door Gunner with a steady two hands on the M-60. That soldier was easy, but selecting the other four to stay behind was very, very hard. Along with another Shotgun Platoon, we loaded a C-124 Cargo Plane for the 48-Hour trip to Viet Nam. Seemed as if we landed to refuel at every island in the Pacific – Wake, Midway, Guam, and Japan for sure, and probably some others. Guam is particularly memorable, because we roared down the runway, roared down the runway some more, and then taxied back to try again. At that time, I tried to forget the story about how someone had mathematically proven that the C-124 could not possibly fly.

Finally, we arrived at Ton San Nout Airport, but had no idea what unit we were joining or where to go. Someone pointed out some helicopters, and we flew the short trip down to Vinh Long in the Mekong Delta, only to find our unit, A Company, 502nd Aviation Battalion, was up North at a place called An Khe. After processing, we loaded a Twin Engine Medium Transport (Caribou) the next morning for a flight to An Khe, which seemed to take all day. The Caribou had no windows, so the only view was through the cockpit at the clouds. After landing, we met the Company Commander, Major Sam Vincent, got the platoon married up with their flight crews, and found space in some GP Medium Tents. The company was supporting the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne, which was securing An Khe for the imminent

Cont. from pg. 14

arrival of the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

Within a few days of arrival, Outlaw 27 crashed and burned on September 11th injuring one of the pilots and the crew chief, but their Door Gunner, Dennis Abella, was not hurt. That day I first learned how incredibly good the Outlaw/Maverick pilots were. Major Vincent lowered his UH-1B down through the trees near the burning ship in a space that was virtually the same diameter as the main rotor. All that was left of Outlaw 27 were some smoldering puddles of melted aluminum, which was a rude awakening.

Just one week later, we got word that 2nd/502nd Airborne Infantry was going to conduct one of the first airmobile assaults by an American unit in an operation called Gibraltar. Both Outlaw Platoons, and 7 or 8 borrowed Marine H-34's would provide the lift. With the crew, we could only carry 4 Soldiers in each ship, so the First Lift totaled about 100 men. Not wanting to ask my men to do something I wasn't willing to do myself, I flew with the lead Outlaw ship. First Lift landed without incident, and we headed back to An Khe to load the Second Lift. As soon as we landed the second time and the troops scrambled off, the NVA opened up. We had no idea what the sound of an AK-47 round hitting an UH-1B would be like, but there was no mistaking what was happening, and it was like listening to a pop corn popper going full blast. I couldn't see anything out my side of the ship – no Americans, no muzzle flashes, no bunkers, no NVA, nothing. As we lifted off, a round came through the floor and splattered the back of both calves with tiny pieces of HUEY that stuck in my fatigue pants and calves; I stopped firing almost as soon as I started, because I realized I didn't know where the Americans were, but by that time we were clear of the LZ. As I recall, every one of the 16 Outlaw ships was hit, and most multiple times; miraculously, we had 2 pilots WIA, and no one else hurt.

Several years later, an American unit captured the NVA After Action Report for Operation Gibraltar. The NVA unit was actually training to defeat American Air Assault Operations, even as the 1st Air Cavalry was arriving in country. We were going to be fighting a very clever, innovative and determined enemy. They had established a classic L-Shaped Ambush and dug in around the chosen Landing Zone (LZ). At the time the First Lift landed, all of their unit leaders were conducting a Command Post Exercise. The NVA soldiers had no instructions, so they didn't fire at the first lift. While we were returning for the second lift, the US guys on the ground saw what turned out to be the NVA unit leaders running back to their unit positions. When the second lift landed, they were ready. Incredibly, the American Unit chose a LZ that was outside of the range of their supporting artillery unit; that mistake was never repeated.

Two days later, we weren't scheduled for any lifts, so I went back to flying with Major Vincent. We orbited the LZ for a while, and then started to land. I hadn't heard the radio call, so didn't know why; but as soon as we landed 4 Soldiers started carrying a heavily loaded poncho towards me, so I knew what was about to happen. They placed the dead American KIA on the floor just inboard of my feet, and we did almost a vertical departure. The air stream pulled at the poncho, and I was terrified that it would fly off, because I didn't have anything else to cover this man with; but it stayed. The man's left hand was out, and I found myself staring at his wedding ring. All I could think about for that long, long flight back to An Khe was that some poor woman is about to get the worst news of her young life. We landed at the hospital pad, and the Medics laid our KIA on a stretcher on the ground along side about 10 others. After we hovered over to our pad, I got out and was standing next to my seat, and was, basically, not functioning. I didn't realize it at the time, but now know, I was in psychogenic shock, which is brought on by emotional stress, and sitting for a long time without moving, especially in hot environments. Major Vincent saw me standing there staring off into the distance, came over, put his arm around me, got me moving, and told me: "C'mon Bill, you're going to be all right." To this day, I am still grateful for Sam Vincent's kindness, understanding, and leadership; and am very sorry that I never had a chance to thank him before he died.

That night it took a long time to fall to sleep. Tossing and turning, I did some serious growing up. I'd been in Viet Nam for about 10 days, saw a helicopter burn up, had an AK-47 round pass between my knees, and saw my first American KIA. War was no longer an adventure; war was not a John Wayne movie, where the Director calls "Cut," and the dead guys get up laughing and go have a beer. War is a dirty, ugly business. In war, the dead guys stay dead – forever. I knew that I had to get back up on that horse and go flying the next day; and decided that if I was going to get shot at, I wanted to fly with the crews that did some serious shooting back, and went flying with the Maverick Armed Gun Ships.

The next day, I gave one of the Maverick Door Gunners the day off, and went flying with his crew. With no lifts

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scheduled, the Mavericks flew 2-Ship Reconnaissance Missions, basically, looking for trouble. An Khe is in the Central Highlands; so all flying was low-level, nap-of-the-earth within feet of the treetops or a streambed. As a kid, I was never fond of roller coasters or similar rides. With the Mavericks careening around at about 120 Knots inches from disaster, you are either going to be terrified or exhilarated. I had such confidence in the skill of the pilots that I was hooked. I made up my mind that day, that as soon as I got back to Hawaii, I was going to apply for flight school to learn how to fly gun ships.

We spent the rest of that month at An Khe without incident; however, one day I just happened to look up as a Caribou was landing. A 1st Cavalry Huey was parked along the side of the runway, running up and just about to lift off. The Caribou Wing barely clipped the Huey rotor, and the impact sent about ½ of that rotor flying; the other rotor, now seriously out of balance and traveling in slow motion had enough momentum to make one more half-turn, rotate down, chop off the helicopter tail section, and pull the transmission and engine to the ground. Miraculously, no one was hurt, but it took those pilots a few minutes to realize they weren't going anywhere that day and release their grip on the controls. Welcome to Viet Nam 1st Cav.

For the trip back to Vinh Long, now that the 1st Cavalry Division was operational, I flew with Major Vincent. We were a single-ship mission, so we flew East to Quin Nhon on the Coast, and then flew just offshore South down the coast. It was the first time I got to see just how large Viet Nam was and what a beautiful country it was – at least from 5,000 feet. The forests were immense, and every 50 miles or so, the coast had beautiful white-sand, crescent-shaped beaches that went on for miles. The sun was setting just as we flew over Saigon on our way to Vinh Long. To this day, the sunset reflecting off those rice paddies was one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. In recent years, I learned that Viet Nam is about the same size as California; while California is covered with about 40% in forest, Viet Nam is 80% forest. Makes you wonder who the Pentagon genius was that provided a 1960 estimate of 19 battalions (2 Divisions) to win the war.

The next day, I went for a walk around the Vinh Long compound to get familiar with my new home. Every one in the unit realized we had a pretty good deal with the Officer's Club, clean sheets, hot showers, and someone to shine our boots and take care of the laundry. There are a lot of Infantrymen, who don't want to hear my complaint that the only way I could sleep in that hot, humid climate was to keep a fan blowing on me all night. Continuing the walking tour, I noticed this female soldier in a fatigue uniform slowly backing down the steps of the Infirmary saying goodbye. She was not wearing her fatigue hat!!!! As I prepared to read her the riot act and give her a lesson on wearing a complete uniform, she turned around revealing that she was a Lieutenant Colonel (LTC). Now, First Lieutenants never want to be around a LTC; if you see one, you've either already done something wrong, or you are about to. So, I immediately shut my mouth, snapped to attention and executed a crisp hand salute. She didn't return the salute, just broke out in a big, wide smile. I glanced down at her nametag to discover I had just saluted Martha Raye, the famous Comedian and Singer. She wiggled her fingers at me, and walked off, leaving me wishing I were still a Second Lieutenant, where stupidity is both expected and accepted. Years later, I was on a bus tour of Fort Bragg; as we drove past the Post Cemetery, the tour guide mentioned that Martha Raye was the only civilian to be honored by the Special Forces with burial in the Fort Bragg Post Cemetery. I immediately gave her a second salute.

The Door Gunner Platoon Leader position was a strange one -- an officer in a Company without a role or being in the Chain of Command. If the company had operations meetings with the Platoon Leaders, I wasn't aware of it and was never invited to one. Since I wasn't a rated pilot, I wasn't an asset the company could use to accomplish their missions. When I look back on it, I always felt responsible for my men; but, in reality, I was responsible for that 30-day training period in Hawaii and the travel to Viet Nam. Once we got to Vinh Long, all of my men were assigned to crews, and they reported to their Aircraft Commander (AC). Trying to maintain two different Chains-of-Command, especially in a combat situation, would have been ugly and not fair to the soldiers. Fortunately, the members of my platoon did an outstanding job, and there were no issues. Not a single Aircraft Commander ever complained about his door gunner. Since I didn't have a real job, everyone left me alone to do what I wanted. Could have spent my time working on my tan, but I was the only extra Door Gunner in the Platoon. For one of the Door Gunners to get a real day off, I had to fly in his place.

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Well, it's not a perfect world, and there was one incident that was a humbling experience. One day, one of the Maverick Door Gunners was showing a new Crew Chief how to operate an M-60 Machine Gun. In spite of all those hours of training, apparently, I neglected to emphasize one aspect of that magnificent weapon. If you load the weapon, and pull the trigger, it doesn't matter if you hold on to the operating rod handle, and slowly, slowly let the bolt ride forward into the grooves in the barrel. Once the bolt locks in, the bolt spring pushes the firing pin forward, and the weapon does what it was designed to do. Fortunately, the round missed every one, went in one cargo door, out the other and impacted in the berm. I was too mad, too embarrassed, and too relieved to worry about the political implications of not conferring with the AC, and just took care of it myself by grounding him for a week. Besides, that was one more week for me to fly with the Mavericks.

For the rest of my two months in country, I continued to fly with the Mavericks, and flew a lot of mission with the Platoon Leader, Captain Bert Rice, in the Hog, or Aerial Rocket Artillery ship armed with 48 2.75" rockets. Trying to get that overloaded beast to fly was a challenge, and we seemed to spend a long time in ground-effect dragging the front of the skids along the runway before we finally made it up, but we always did. That time is mostly a blur, but pretty typical for anyone else – flying cover for Air Assaults by the Vietnamese Army, flying race track patterns against targets and firing suppression fires to protect my crew when we broke left, night missions, scrambles to react to incoming mortar rounds, and eventually getting that coveted Maverick Pin to wear on my fatigue hat. It seems as if we flew every day; perhaps we had some Sundays off, just don't remember those details. I know I flew with a lot of different crews with incredibly gifted pilots, but their names escape me.

For an officer, flying as part of a Maverick crew was a unique experience; within a few months, the introduction of the Cobra Helicopter eliminated door gunner positions on gun ships altogether. On a lot of crews, I may have been the senior man while we were standing on the ground, but as soon as we lifted off, I was the junior guy behind the AC, Co-pilot, and Crew Chief. Early on, I realized that if I wanted to continue flying with these crews, I had to forget about being a First Lieutenant, and do my job as a Door Gunner. Some of my fellow officers may cringe at the thought, but I didn't feel it was fair to fly around all day, expend hundreds of rounds of ammunition, and then expect the Crew Chief or the assigned Door Gunner to clean six M-60 Machine Guns, while I retired to the O-Club.

Shortly before we were scheduled to return to Hawaii, we got the word that the Shotgun Program was being terminated, and that I had to return to the 25th Division, but the enlisted men could choose to stay, or return with me. I was very proud of the fact that 23 of my 25 men volunteered to stay. To this day, I believe that reflects great credit on the leadership and esprit de corps of the Vinh Long Outlaws and Mavericks. Had that many not volunteered to stay, the unit would have had a tough time trying to integrate that many new people, especially when there was no Army Door Gunner Training Program.

For the trip to Hawaii on 10 December 1965, I got to ride on a real commercial jet charter airplane. I should have realized that something was going on with the 25th Infantry Division, but did not. I was very proud of the job my men had done, elated that none of them had gotten hurt, relieved that I had survived a tour in Viet Nam, had absolutely no plans on ever returning to that country, and was focusing on my own plans. I was going to formalize our engagement with my girl friend, take a leave back to Ohio to pick up my new Corvette, get married, finish my tour in Hawaii, and be off to flight school. My Battalion Commander had promised me the Reconnaissance Platoon, a job I treasured, as soon as I returned, and was looking forward to that challenge. Well, life sometimes takes strange twists. I did get to buy my future wife an engagement ring, and stand one Reveille Formation with the Recon Platoon. But, the Brigade Commander volunteered me for the Brigade Headquarters Company Executive Officer job, and 10 days later landed at Pleiku as part of the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division Advanced Party. At least I got there in plenty of time to enjoy the traditional Christmas Turkey Dinner ala Mess Kit sitting on the ground with a loaded M-16 balanced on my lap.

William T. Kelly

Col. US ARMY (Retired)

From the editor: Bob Sharp

Custer South Dakota.

I had a wonderful birthday trip this year that I would like to share with you. We loaded our mules, Sassy and Jericho and departed for S.D. on 12 Sept. with our destination as French Creek Horse Camp, Custer, S.D. It was a 10-hour trip w/stops and very nice weather. We hit it at the perfect time as it was in the high 70's all week with one evening with scattered showers. They had timely rains since May and everything was green and lush. The wildlife was awesome as there were babies of every kind everywhere! We rode with Gloria's brother Todd, and wife, Cindy, and we rode anywhere from 15 to 20 miles everyday and the views that you can't see from a car are awesome. The Black Hills are beautiful and the elevation changes are drastic! Last year we rode up to the fire tower on Harney Peak and it was 7,242 feet! It was exciting at times as you were riding down a trail and the mules ears would be straight ahead and down the trail towards you would come a huge buffalo! So, back and around we would go, as our animals were very weary of them! They are huge when you are close to them!

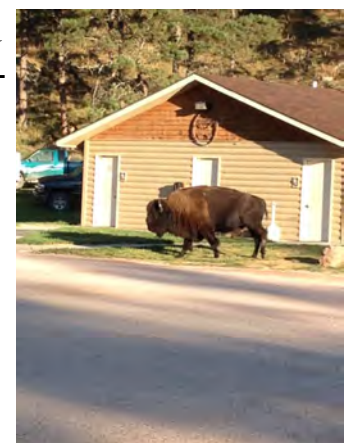
We traveled towards evening in my truck sightseeing south around the Wildlife loop and were able to see hundreds of buffalo in herds moving with bulls, cows, and the calves, to evening pastures. The antelope, deer, whitetail and mule deer were all there. We did not see the elk herds but when we rode up in the Black Hills searching for them we found where they were bedded down hours before among the young pine growth.

We went to Deadwood one evening and up to Boot Hill to see Wild Bill Hickock and Calamity Jane's grave sights. They are definitely buried on the side of a hill! Very interesting history the town has. Like how the Chinese labors/servants were not to be seen and worked the businesses through tunnels under the streets and buildings. They were buried in a private part of the cemetery but in the later years their remains were sent back to their home country.

We stayed in our trailers with living quarters in the front, in French Creek Horse Camp and it was the nicest camp we have stayed in, with the Black Hills spruce trees and the creek running right through it. We had pens for our mules and one morning we had a bull buffalo cross the creek and wander right through the camp and Gloria had told me that she was headed up to the bathhouse and this buffalo was heading the direction of the bathhouse so I took my camera out and followed it and it made a swing through some pens and past the bathhouse and I was ready to take a picture of the expression on her face when she opened the door and he walked by! Well, the joke was on me as she was already back to the trailer. RAT'S!! She later told me that she did not think that would have been so funny.



Cynthia on left, Gloria on right, and her brother Todd in the lead crossing French Creek. We crossed it 20 times on our 18 mile ride out that day and the same returning to the Horse Camp.



Cont. on pg. 19.



Left: Everyone in camp had their eyes and EARS on the buffalo when he walked through camp that beautiful early morning! He was the talk of the camp!

Right: Gloria's brother Todd standing with the mules on a rest stop in the Black Hills and the mules are always on alert to what is lurking in the trees. Coyotes, cougar, and wolves. We found a buffalo carcass this day out.



Left: What an awesome sight to see that you would never see from a car and all you hear is the birds and the creek rushing thru the rocks heading down through the Hills and gullies.

Right: This is the way to see beauty, lined up in the crosshairs of my mule Jericho's ears.

HAPPY TRAILS!!!



What is an Air Assault Division?

An indefinite number of unassigned organizations tailored to varying passionate and conceptual missions of experimental intensity, density, altitude and magnitude which only need to be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt as a feasible development designed to improve tactical mobility by employment of an old dimension and provide a quantum jump into the day after tomorrow, yesterday.

Anonymous

GROVER CLEVELAND 'CLEVE' MARTIN

ROCK SPRINGS — Grover Cleveland "Cleve" Martin, 75, of Rock Springs died on Monday, July 20, 2015, at the Memorial Hospital of Sweetwater County following a brief illness. He was lifelong resident of Rock Springs.

He was born April 11, 1940, in Rock Springs, the son of LaFayette and Fairyl Martin.

Mr. Martin attended school in Rock Springs and Casper.

He was in the United States (USAR) and served in the Vietnam War.

Mr. Martin owned and operated several businesses throughout his lifetime and later in life he became the head of maintenance for the

Sweetwater County Sheriff's Department. He served as the pastor of Shiloh Full Gospel Fellowship in Rock Springs.

He married Brenda Woodard on May 3, 1972, in Rock Springs.

His interests included hunting, fishing, camping and spending time with his family especially his grandchildren. He loved to share his faith with people.

Survivors include his wife Brenda Martin of Rock Springs; three daughters Darcy Saner of Denver, Tracy Martin of Pocatello, Idaho, and Kaycee Larson and husband, Shannon, of Rock Springs; one brother Claude Martin of Casper; one sister Chandos

L. Martin of Casper; four grandchildren C.J. Martin, Cody Larson, Bo Larson all of Rock Springs, and Cache Zaffree of Denver.

He was preceded in death by his parents LaFayette and Fairyl Martin; a brother Clyde Martin who died in infancy; and a sister and brother-in-law Pansy Prough and husband, Dr. Gene Prough.

Following cremation, graveside services and inurnment will be at 1 p.m. Thursday at the Rock Springs Municipal Cemetery in Rock Springs. A memorial service will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at the Vase Funeral Chapel, 154 Elk St., Rock Springs.

Condolences may be posted at www.vasefuneralhomes.com or attached to the obituary at www.rocktminer.com.

"Cleve" Martin, also known by his friends as "Martie", was a Crew Chief in the 502nd.

A man was driving through an intersection when he saw the flash of a traffic camera. He figured that his picture had been taken for exceeding the speed limit, even though he knew that he was not speeding. Just to be sure, he went around the block and passed the same spot, driving even more slowly, but again the camera flashed. Now he began to think this was quite funny. So, again he drove even slower as he passed the area again, but the traffic camera again flashed. He tried a fourth time with the same result. He did this for the fifth time and now was laughing when the camera flashed as he rolled by at a snail's pace. He then headed on home thinking how hilarious that had been.

Two weeks later, he received a letter in the mail, inside were five tickets for driving without a seat belt!!!!!! You can't fix stupid!!!

Vinh Long Outlaws Association (VLOA)
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Fall -2015

Vinh Long Outlaws Association (VLOA)
Membership Application/Renewal Form

Memberships in the VLOA is open to any person of any rank who served with any lineage unit known as the “Outlaws” (and “Mavericks” and “Bushwhackers” armed platoons) or any affiliated unit at any time between August 1964 and the present. These units include the 62nd Aviation Company, A Company 502nd Aviation Battalion, 175th Aviation Company, B Troop 1-158th Aviation Regiment (Iraq), 150th Transportation Detachment (“Roadrunners”), 28th Signal Detachment, and 25th Infantry Division’s “door gunners.”

Active (with vote) or Associate (without vote) Membership is \$25.00 annually, payable each January. A Lifetime Membership (with vote) is a \$100.00 one-time fee. A Lifetime Associate Membership (without vote) for spouses and relatives is available for a \$100 one-time fee. Higher levels of Lifetime Memberships are available; contact the National Director at: jackson3605@roadrunner.com. To pay initial or renewal membership dues for this calendar year, please complete and forward this form, with dues payment, to:

VLOA; c/o Chester Voisin, 1657 Dr. Beatrous Road, Theriot, LA 70397.

First Name _____ MI ____ -- ____ Nickname _____ Last Name _____

Telephone # (home) _____ (work) _____ Spouse’s Name _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Rank (while assigned to unit) _____ E-Mail address _____

Dates assigned in Outlaws/attachments (Mo/Yr to Mo/Yr) _____ to _____

Unit/plt/sect/position _____ Radio Call sign _____

- Please initiate ___ or renew ___ my Active ___ Associate ___ VLOA membership. **Make \$25.00 check payable to VLOA.**
- Please initiate my Lifetime ___ Lifetime Associate ___ VLOA membership. **Make \$100.00 check payable to VLOA.**

____ Please do not renew my VLOA membership, but keep my name on the VLOA roster. I understand I may not receive any future issues of the VLOA Newsletter unless I am a current dues paying VLOA member.

____ I know a former Outlaw/Maverick/Roadrunner or other affiliated unit member and have indicated his/her name, address, and phone number on this form.

Comments: _____