



# THE SCOOP SHEET

**Information For And About Members Of The First Marine Aircraft Wing Association – Vietnam Service**

Issue 28

[www.firstmaw.homestead.com](http://www.firstmaw.homestead.com)

Summer 2008

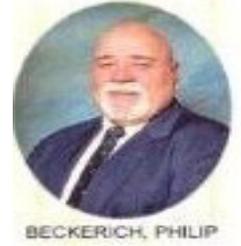


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**A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT ...**

To: ALMARFIRSTMAWASSOCIATION  
From: Association President  
Subj: Presidents Message



Presidents Letter: I hope this issue of the Scoop finds everyone doing well and enjoying their summer. Only fifteen months until our reunion in Beaufort. It should be great. You can make reservations now!! @ the Inn at Town Center. It is a smoking and pet friendly hotel. Only certain rooms will accommodate these desires so get you reservation in now. You can always cancel a reservation but once the cheap rooms are gone they are gone. The Manager's name is Ms. Kelly Pettus. The Office number is 843-524-2144 and the Fax is 843-524-1704. Please make your reservations now so I can get more rooms at a reasonable rate, if possible. When making your reservation use the code FMAWA to get our special Rate. This will be my last reunion as your President so come to wish me well or tell me to take a hike. Whatever the reason please come to the reunion and make your reservations now. The application for the reunion will be in the next Scoop. Take care my fellow Marines and friends.

*Semper Fidelis*  
*Phil Beckerich III*  
*Association President*



## MEMBERSHIP NOTES

### DUES RENEWALS

So far this year, the dues renewal rate continues to be **very** good! You guys are doing a great job! Please keep it up, and a **Thank You** goes out to all of you.. Later this year, the reminders will go out for the Life Members who are on the installment plan (a good deal!). But if this means YOU, you can help by sending in your installment payment ahead of time to save us some work.

### ELECTRONIC SCOOP

The Electronic Scoop list is growing. Any other members who desires to receive their "Scoop" electronically in order to reduce mailing and publishing costs please contact Wayne Cook at wayco@comcast.net and please cc Phil Beckerich at yw37@optonline.net and Al Frater at teanal@verizon.net. **THE SCOOP CAN BE ACCESSED FROM THE WEB SITE WWW.FIRSTMAW.HOMESTEAD.COM.** Those members who have requested an electronic SCOOP will be removed from the mailing list as requested.

### VOLUNTEER NEEDED - UPDATE

Volunteers are always welcomed for Veterans day at the wall. For those who live near Quantico VA and the National Museum of the Marine Corps The Heritage Foundation is seeking tour Guides for the Museum. Training will be provided. Contact the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation at 703-640-7965..

### EDITORS NOTES

Please email me any articles or noteworthy events about our members and Association (electronic pictures accepted). All articles and pictures become property of the association and cannot be returned.  
Al Frater teanal@verizon.net

### REUNIONS

Attention on Deck!!!  
VMA 225 Vagabond Reunion  
October 2-5 2008

Hotel: Holiday Inn Kilmanock Ph: 804-436-1500,  
VMA-225 rates are \$89.00/night and must be made by September 2, 2008.  
That when you call to make your reservation, please identify  
yourself as the VMA-225 October reunion.

If you know of squadron mate who may want to attend the reunion, please send their information (e-mail, preferably; snail mail address; telephone numbers) to Dan Yates, so we may update our records.

For More Info and Complete Particulars Contact:

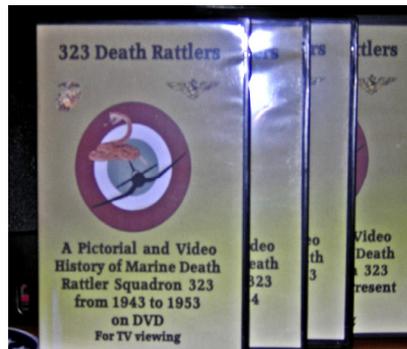
Spike Nunn: [SpikeNunn@aol.com](mailto:SpikeNunn@aol.com) Ph: 804-435-3704

Dan Yates: [yates.dan@comcast.net](mailto:yates.dan@comcast.net) Ph: 804-730-9702

## MEMBERSHIP NOTES

### VMFA 323 DVD

For all of you former members of VMFA323 may be interested in a DVD set put together by a former Death Rattler Thomas Crouson. This is "A pictorial and Video History of Marine Death Rattle Squadron 323". At the current time there are 4 DVD's 1943-1953, 1953-1964, 1964-1982, and 1982-Present. These are a collection of pictures and videos from former Rattlers, put together with music. I have a set it is well worth it. If you have any pictures or videos you can send them to Tom and he will add them in. If you are interested in a set send an email to Tom at [tc@inreach.com](mailto:tc@inreach.com) and he will send you a set. A \$20 donation to cover his costs would be appreciated but is not required.



## A Close Up Look at the National Museum of the Marine Corps By David H. Hugel

By now most Marines have heard about the National Museum of the Marine Corps at Quantico, Virginia, which opened on November 10, 2006. The museum sits on a 135-acre site just off Interstate 95 near the front gate of the Quantico Marine Corps Base, a short drive south of our Nation's Capital.

The Museum's focal point, known as "Leatherneck Gallery", is a tall glass atrium with aircraft suspended overhead and action packed exhibits including ground level exhibits featuring lifelike figures of Marines around a WWII landing craft and disembarking from a Korean War era helicopter. A 210 foot steel spire extends skyward through the atrium giving the museum it's distinctive exterior profile reminiscent of the Iwo Jima flag raising immortalized in Joe Rosenthal's award winning photograph.

Among the most engaging exhibits are ones taking visitors through realistic recreations of places where Marines actually fought from the landing at Iwo Jima, to Korea's Chosen Reservoir, and Hill 881 South near Khe Sanh in Vietnam. The latter two exhibits are climate controlled to provide some idea of the weather extremes Marines faced at those two desolate battle sites. In addition to the Hill 881 experience there is an extensive exhibit on Vietnam chronicling Marine Corps involvement beginning with Operation Shufly in 1962 through the 1975 evacuation of the US Embassy in Saigon, which will stir many memories for those who served in Vietnam. Other exhibits provide a wide variety of photographs, art work, displays and hands on exhibits of the Marine Corps' more than 232 years of history in defense of our Nation.

The Museum is open every day of the year except Christmas Day from 9AM to 5pm. Admission and parking are free.

The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation provided critical financial support for building the National Museum of the Marine Corps and is currently gearing up to support an exciting expansion of the Museum over the next several years. For information on how you can join the Heritage Foundation contact its web site [www.marineheritage.org](http://www.marineheritage.org). The Heritage Foundation has also created a unique way to commemorate your service or to honor a relative, former comrade or friend by purchasing a brick along one of the many walkways surrounding the museum. Details can be found by visiting the Foundation's website [www.marineheritage.org](http://www.marineheritage.org) under the heading "Get Involved" sub heading "Engraved Bricks."

in World War II were drafted. [Westmoreland] Approximately 70% of those killed were volunteers. [McCaffrey] Many men volunteered for the draft so even some of the draftees were actually volunteers.



## Marine veterans rebuild Vietnam-era helicopter

It had flown in combat in Vietnam, its floorboards occasionally awash with the blood of wounded and dying soldiers. When the war ended, it lay in a bone yard for abandoned aircraft, discarded and forgotten after eight years of service.

Today, it has been resurrected, painstakingly rebuilt in a [North Fork](#) potato barn by the hands of dedicated men with their own histories of service in Vietnam. It is now flying again. As they have redeemed the chopper, these veterans say their project has helped them reclaim their own war stories and renewed old friendships. In the process, it helped some come to terms with the past and dispel emotions that had long plagued them.

Appropriately on a Memorial Day holiday weekend, the Sikorsky UH-34 Seahorse helicopter is serving as a museum to the Vietnam War and as a memorial to the living and the dead. It has been on display in a number of parks in the area.

It kept me occupied, kept my mind focused," said Alan Weiss, 60, of Cutchogue, who in 2001 organized a restoration project for the helicopter as a memorial to those who fought during the Vietnam War.

"I had been suffering from flashbacks about things about the war that bothered me, had trouble sleeping, was irritable and short-tempered," said Weiss, who before the project began had sought treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder at the Northport VA Medical Center. "My doctor said to me that working on it was probably the best thing I could have done for myself."

### Repairing a warbird

At the beginning of what sounded like an impossible task to rebuild the chopper and fly it again, Weiss enlisted the help of dozens of fellow Vietnam veterans. The men put in some 20,000 hours of labor, raised \$300,000 in donations and endured hundreds of weekends away from their families.

To honor his wife, Beverly, Weiss had the name "Gracious Lady Bev" painted near the cockpit, a small acknowledgment of all the nights and weekends spent away from her.

Weiss found the carcass of the chopper in a scrap yard in Cochise, Ariz., paid \$2,500 to claim it and another \$8,000 to have it hauled to an empty potato barn in Jamesport, not far from Weiss' home in Cutchogue. It needed pretty much everything - windows, rotor blades, an engine, a transmission, tires, hundreds of yards of electrical wiring, and patches where bullets had pierced its hull.

The farm's owner, Stanley Zaweski, took one look at Weiss' battered prize and thought the task of rebuilding it was surely hopeless, wondering out loud where he would find a hole big enough to bury it. "He never thought we would finish it," Weiss said.

Of all the seemingly impossible tasks, finding parts for an aircraft that had not been produced since 1970 was among the most daunting. Weiss enlisted the support of fellow Vietnam-era aviation mechanics, some of whom came for days at a time from as far away as [California](#). They'd work in the barn, swapping Vietnam stories - how it felt to fly home and be met by protesters throwing tomatoes at them, or even spitting on them in airports.

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Bit by bit, they rebuilt the aircraft, poring over old manuals with an intensity that sometimes resulted in near-monastic silence in the bar.

John L. Griffin, 74, of Southampton, was among the first of Weiss' volunteers to work on the project. He never served in Vietnam but lost friends to air accidents while he was training as a pilot in [North Carolina](#) as a recovery specialist for [NASA's](#) Mercury space program. He declined to talk about the men who were lost, saying the memories remain painful.

"I got the satisfaction to contributing what I could for a flying memorial for all services, not just the Vietnam War," Griffin said of his work on the restoration. "If you take it seriously, and feel those who didn't make it did something worthwhile, it is a tribute to them."

This chopper was built by the Sikorsky Aircraft Corp. in [Stratford](#), Conn., and was put into service by the U.S. Marines on Oct. 28, 1963. It came from a line of piston-driven helicopters introduced in 1954. The UH-34 model was so trusted in combat that troops asked for it by name when more technologically advanced turbine helicopters were grounded.

At the height of war, the phrase "Give me a HUS" came over Marine radios so frequently that it came to connote a special favor, according to Lt. Col. William Fails, author of "Marines and Helicopters, 1962-1973.

Weiss dreamed up the project in 2001, after attending a reunion of Vietnam veterans. He had served as a crew chief with the Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361, known as the "Flying Tigers," which was stationed south of the demilitarized zone in Da Nang. Although Weiss worked on turbine helicopters during his service in Vietnam, he chose a UH-34 to restore because the blunt-nosed chopper had been a symbol of salvation since the war's early years, taking wounded troops out of harm's way.

In Vietnam, the craft could be depended on to pick up soldiers wounded in jungle ambushes, to deliver ammunition and reinforcements to embattled Marines in mountaintop posts, or pluck downed pilots from the South China Sea. Its nine-cylinder supercharged, air-cooled piston engine could be depended upon when turbine engines - which by the mid-1960s were still a novelty in helicopters - would quit.

Ben Cascio, a former Marine pilot who assisted with the restoration, said the rebuilt helicopter reminds him of a young crew chief who came from humble beginnings in [Ohio](#), fought valiantly in Vietnam, and then disappeared from Cascio's life for more than 30 years. Cascio said he owes the man his life.

### Steady co-pilot

Cascio was flying a UH-34, similar to the one he helped restore, on an April 30, 1968, night mission from the aircraft carrier Iwo Jima. Four Marines had been so badly injured near Da Nang that they would not survive the night without medical aid. As the helicopter was picking up the wounded men, it was attacked by North Vietnamese soldiers. During the fight, all five crew members were wounded. One of Cascio's eyes had been destroyed by a bullet, the other temporarily blinded by shrapnel.

Blind, and with the motor weakened by gunfire, Cascio could not pull the helicopter more than a few feet off the ground, and only for short hops. The chopper's crew chief, Robert E. Bush, talked him to a safe landing while firing the door gun to keep the helicopter from being overrun.

"He said, 'Bush, I can't see,'" recalled Bush, now a prosecutor for Mahoning County in Ohio. "Everybody in the plane, including the wounded, got hit again. I'm telling Ben, 'Left, right, up, down.' You could see the tracers, so I would try to steer him away from where the tracers were coming from."

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The two men next saw each other at a squadron reunion in [Oklahoma](#) in 2002. Three years later, as a way of repaying Bush, Cascio traveled to Youngstown, Ohio, to help him campaign for his party's nomination for mayor, a contest narrowly lost.

For his part, Weiss said he became determined to fully restore the UH-34 after seeing how moved fellow Marines were at the prospect. "I saw grown men crying," he said. "I was bawling myself."

Weiss said restoring such a revered icon allowed him to confront troubled feelings about the war that he had bottled up. "I never talked about it with my wife," he said. "I just put it behind me for 30 years."

About the chopper

The Sikorsky Aircraft-built S-58 was originally designated the HSS-1 Seabat.

Under the U.S. Army's system, it was redesignated the H-34.

In 1962, it was redesignated the UH-34 Seahorse.

It could carry 12 to 16 troops and was used for troop transport, search and rescue and evacuation of the wounded, among other tasks. It was used by both the Army and the Marines.

The expression "Get me a HUS" entered the Marine Corps vernacular in Vietnam.

The chopper is 65 feet in length and 14 feet, 4 inches in height. When empty, it weighs 7,900 pounds. It can reach 122 mph at top speeds, with a range of 550 miles.

### Photos from Fleet Week in NYC when the bird was airborne again



**The Bird**



**Pilot Ben and Rick**



**Copter 1**



**Bob Gay back in the Saddle**



**Inside**



**View of Manhattan**

## **SCHOLARSHIP**

The First MAW Association will award five scholarships of \$500 each during Reunion '09. To qualify for a scholarship, applicants must meet the following qualifications:

Be a FIRSTMAW ASSN. regular member in good standing (i.e., dues are up to date), their spouse, dependent, or direct descendent. Further, the member must have a minimum of one-year membership as of June 1, 2009.

**-OR**

Be a spouse, dependent, or direct descendent of a deceased member of the First MAW Assn.

**-OR**

Be a spouse, dependent, or direct descendent of a Marine or member of another military service, who lost his/her life while serving in Vietnam with the First Marine Aircraft Wing.

Applicant must be presently enrolled in an accredited college, university, or trade school and be in good academic standing.

Applicant will be required to submit an essay of 300 – 350 words. The applicant can choose one of the following topics:

- 1. What the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Means to Me.**
- 2. What all Americans can do to solve the energy crisis**
- 3. How I plan to use my education to aide society**
- 4. Why I support our Marines who are in harms way**

To compete for a scholarship, applicants must submit their essay in accordance with the following instructions:

The essay must be typed. Do not include applicants name on the essay. Attach a separate sheet of paper containing applicant's name, member's name and membership number, address, and phone number. A letter from a counselor or other school official verifying that applicant is currently enrolled. The letter must be on school letterhead.

A copy of student transcripts

The essay must be postmarked no later than June 15, 2009.

Mail the essay to:

First MAW Association – Vietnam Service  
PO Box 3532  
Allentown, PA 18106-0532

## PX News

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The First Marine Aircraft Wing Association – Vietnam Service PX is online so you don't have to wait until the next reunion to get any of the items we sell. We have some new items that I hope everyone will look at and buy. Listed are some of the new items and some of the other items for your review. This is just a sample of what is on the website: [http://1stmaw.wamarinesmc.us/mawpx/index.php?main\\_page=index](http://1stmaw.wamarinesmc.us/mawpx/index.php?main_page=index)

### New Items:

Challenge coin \$7



FMAW Logo Hat \$18



Hat Doober \$5



Vietnam Necklace \$11



18" or 24"

POW Necklace \$11



18" or 24"

Vietnam Ribbon \$3.50



Vietnam Vet \$3.50



Vietnam Pin \$3.50



Flag Set \$3.50



Marine Corps Pin



Semper Fi Pin \$3.50



Marble Mountain \$3.50



Da Nang Pin \$3.50



Natural Death hats \$18



1st MAWAVNS Pin \$3.50



SM Combat Aircrew Pin \$4



Crew Chief Pins \$3.50



Pilot Pin \$7



Navy Flight Off \$7



U.S.M.C. Pin \$3.50



## Vietnam Photos



**Napalm bombs explode on Viet Cong structures south of Saigon in the Republic of Vietnam. 1965**



**Vietnam. Marine Corps flame thrower tank in action. (January 1966)**



**Dong Ha, Vietnam. Operation Hastings - Marines of Company H, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment take to the water as they move to join up with other elements of their battalion.**



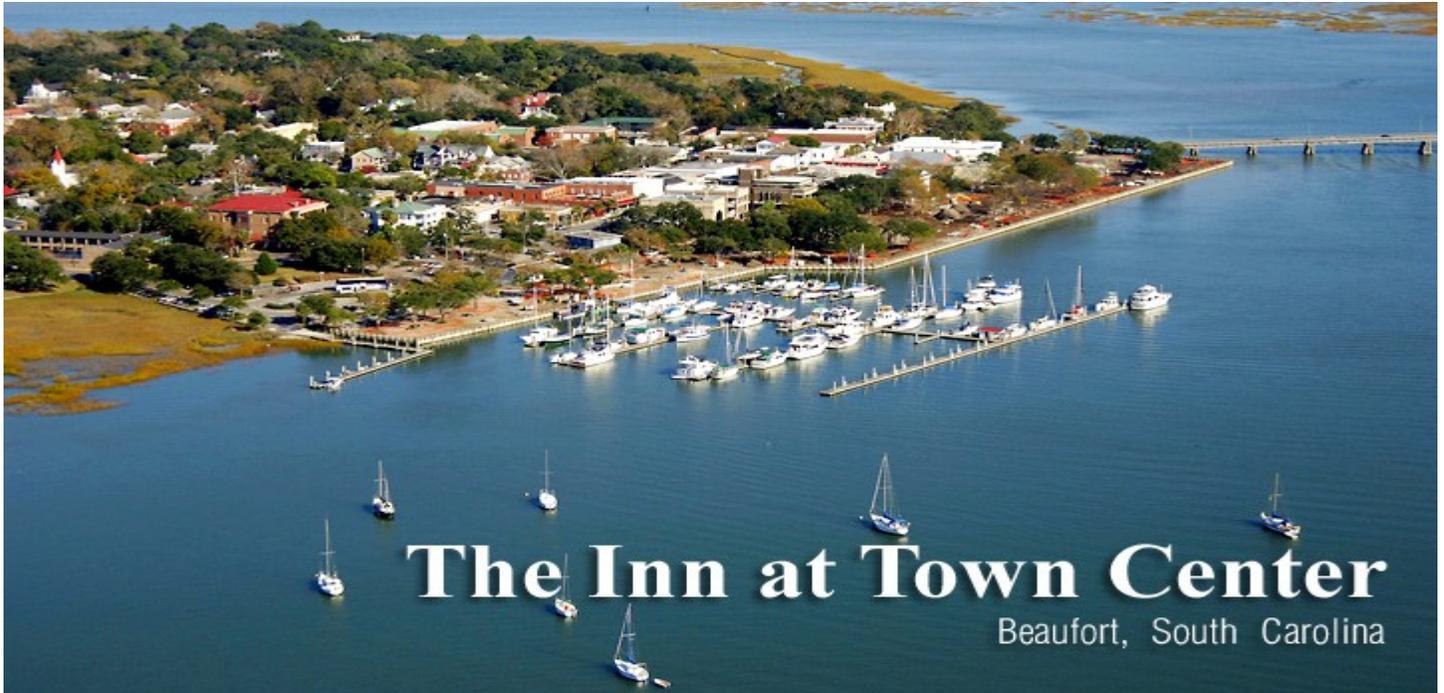
**Vietnam. Marines of E Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines, riding on an M-48 tank. 1966**



**HMM-163's UH-34D landing at Khe Sanh combat base July 1967 Photo provided by POP A SMOKE**



**Unknown Squadron CH-53 brings water to marines on Hill 749 April 1969. Photo provided by POP A SMOKE**



## REUNION 2009 PROPOSED SITE

**First Marine Aircraft Wing Association –  
Vietnam Service  
PO Box 2124  
Woodstock, GA 30188**

We are a fraternal organization of Marines and others who were attached to or supported First MAW units serving in the Vietnam War. The organization was founded in 1986 and incorporated as a not-for-profit entity in New York State in 1988. Our purpose is to reunite members of the First MAW either through scheduled reunions or by means of our newsletter, web site, or other various functions. The organization strives to disseminate information about our history as well as about legislation, entitlements, and welfare involving First MAW members.