



**For Immediate Release**

Mineral Wells, Texas  
November 7, 2005



**OH-6A 70-17331 at the Mineral Wells Airport awaiting restoration, after donation to The National Vietnam War Museum by Mr. Louis Rochat.**

In late September of this year, The National Vietnam War Museum received the gift of another major asset. An OH-6A, serial number 70-17331, was donated by Mr. Louis "Rocket" Rochat, a Vietnam veteran from Universal City, Texas. Rochat, a former helicopter pilot in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division had the aircraft delivered to Mineral Wells Airport and signed over to the museum. The aircraft will be displayed at the airport while it undergoes restoration, and will eventually become a static display at the museum.

The aircraft has a Vietnam history, having served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, first with D Troop, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, and then with C Troop 16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry between February and June of 1970. With the phasing out of U.S. Forces that began in 1969, C Troop was transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, part of the 164<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Group (CAG) based at Vinh Long, in the Mekong Delta. The aircraft was involved in a combat related accident on June 24, 1970 and classified as totally destroyed. After being rebuilt in the United States, the aircraft returned to the 164<sup>th</sup> CAG in October 1971 where it served with A Troop 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry until April 1972, when the unit stood down and departed Vietnam.

Thanks to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA), we have a fairly accurate record of the aircraft's history and a copy of the incident report for the accident on June 24, 1970. The pilot was WO1 J. V. Wisser, and the gunner was SP4 M. T. Burcham. The details of the accident, as stated in the report, follow:

#### Accident Summary:

The aircraft took off from Ca Mau and was working an area ten miles south of that location. After making a fragmentation grenade run, the pilot began his pull-out and struck a tree with his main rotor blades. The pilot started a left turn and again hit another tree with his main rotor blades and also the right side of his tail boom. The horizontal stabilizer "hooked" the second tree and bent the tail boom at a point half way between the "body" of the aircraft and the tail rotor assembly. The boom was bent approximately thirty degrees to the left of the center line of the tail boom when sitting in the pilot's seat facing forward. The pilot entered autorotation and successfully landed the aircraft. When the aircraft landed on the ground and the crew exited the main rotors again hit another tree which was sitting very close to the aircraft.

There was one injury, but no fatalities from the accident.

The OH-6A Cayuse, commonly referred to as a "Loach," was a light observation helicopter (LOH) used primarily in a scout role. The pilot, or pilot and gunner, working with a gunship team, would fly at low level over suspected enemy activity. The object was to draw enemy fire, at which time the scout would mark the target and depart quickly so the gunships could attack. Needless to say, it was one of the most hazardous helicopter missions of the war.

To honor the brave young men who flew these missions, the museum plans to restore the aircraft for display in the colors of one of the Cavalry units that employed these aircraft in Vietnam. What is needed now is a project manager to lead the restoration of the aircraft, volunteers to assist, and sponsors to fund the project. Ideally, sponsorship of the aircraft and its restoration would come from the units it served with, but any group or individual is free to participate.

To be involved with this project, contact The National Vietnam War Museum, P. O. Box 146, Mineral Wells, TX 76068, or online at [www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org](http://www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org).