



P. O. Box 146 Mineral Wells, TX 76068

For Immediate Release

22 August 2008
Mineral Wells, Texas

Vietnam Veteran UH-1D Takes Final "Flight"

On August 16, 2008, aided by an Army surplus mobile crane, a Bell Helicopter Model UH-1D took its final "flight" to the top of a post 16 feet above the North Texas prairie. The aircraft, serial number 65-10068, served 3 tours in Vietnam during the war, and is now the property of The National Vietnam War Museum. Because the "Huey" is arguably the most recognizable symbol of the Vietnam War, the museum felt it was important to have it visibly displayed on the property, both to mark our location, and to honor all the men and women who served. The aircraft will serve to represent the over three million veterans to whom this aircraft meant so much.

This particular aircraft served in Vietnam with the 71st Aviation Company; Company C, 101st Aviation Battalion; and the 1st Transportation Battalion (Seaborne). During the Vietnam era, it also served with units in Thailand, Germany, the United States, and was on loan to NASA for six months.

The "Hoist the Huey" party, as it was labeled by the museum, drew a crowd of over 1,000 people to the museum property on an unusually mild August morning. An honor guard of twenty-two riders from the Patriot Riders motorcycle club attended and stood tall, holding American flags at the back of the crowd during the entire ceremony. Other groups in attendance included the Corvette Club of North Texas, and a special contingent from the 71st Aviation Company.

During its first tour in Vietnam, 65-10068 served with the "Rattlers," the lift platoon of the 71st Aviation Company. On December 8, 1966, during an 8-ship lift of troops from the 5th Mechanized Division, the aircraft began taking fire from a small schoolhouse near their landing area. This was located in the notorious HoBo Woods region northwest of Saigon, a known hotbed of enemy activity. The escorting "Firebird" gunships did not return fire because they could see a number of small children in and around the schoolhouse. On the third trip from the pickup zone, while flying low level, the flight took heavy automatic weapons fire from the same area. This time the gunships opened fire and silenced the enemy automatic weapons. However, 65-10068 had taken two hits, and both struck SP4 Ernest Palmieri, the aircraft Crew Chief. Captain Doug Hopkins, Aircraft Commander, and Major George Jackson, Pilot, immediately notified the other aircraft in the flight that they were breaking out of the formation and proceeding directly to the field hospital at nearby Cu Chi base. They radioed ahead and had an ambulance waiting, but Specialist Palmieri had died instantly. To honor him, his name and the date of the incident are stenciled on the left hand cargo door of the aircraft. Representing the 71st Aviation Company at the days festivities were former pilots Paul Beverung, Doug Hopkins, the aircraft commander on that fateful day, and Chuck Carlock, the Firebird pilot who provided the details of the incident. Accompanying them was former Crew Chief Ron Seabolt..

Another Crew Chief from Vietnam was Jerry Staggs, the project manager for the "Hoist the Huey" project. Jerry was assigned to the 282nd Assault Helicopter Company, "Blackcats", in Vietnam and restored 65-10068 in his unit's markings. While the aircraft never served with this unit, it was the project manager's prerogative to select the restoration scheme, and the aircraft will serve as a representative of all the Huey's and units that served in Vietnam, honoring all the men and women who served in that war.

While the other current museum projects move forward, this aircraft will sit silently overlooking U.S. Highway 180 as a symbol of the museum to come to all who pass by. With the Huey now raised, the museum is planning for our next event, the dedication of the Camp Holloway wall replica on November 8.

Members of the 52nd Aviation Battalion have already begun booking hotel space in Mineral Wells for this event, and are expecting another large turnout. The wall itself is complete, and in September, volunteers will begin affixing the plaques honoring members of the battalion lost in Vietnam, in preparation for the formal dedication. In addition, the museum is working to try to complete and install our replica of the Vietnam Memorial prior to year's end. Both the Camp Holloway Wall, in the Contemplation Garden, and the Memorial replica, in the Vietnam Memorial Garden, will be finished off with plantings to complement the currently open Meditation Garden.

The National Vietnam War Museum is a 501 (c) (3) organization incorporated in the State of Texas. For information about the museum, and donation opportunities, visit our website at www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org, or contact us at P.O. Box 146, Mineral Wells, TX 76068-0146.



(L to R) Paul Beverung, Doug Hopkins, Chuck Carlock, Ron Seabolt – 71st Avn Co



Information honoring SP4 Palmeiri



A portion of the attending crowd backed by the Patriot Riders motorcycle club.



65-10068 being set in place

Edward T. Luttenberger
Communications Director
The National Vietnam War Museum