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The Tiger Gazette

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From the Editor's Desk

Out of the ether-net, the very first edition of the Tiger Gazette appeared on my computer screen. How this happened I have no idea, as that was composed three computers ago, and is on a CD that is buried somewhere in a stack of CDs. It brought back memories of how and why this association came into being and why the Gazette was started. Four of us wanted an organization that was controlled by and responsible to the membership. We dug into our pockets and each came up with ¼ of the capital needed to start and charter the organization, and you responded by becoming members and attending reunions. Wanting you to have something more than a warm and fuzzy feeling out of your membership; I started the Tiger Gazette soon after I retired, and had some time to work on it. When I started, I thought that someone would suggest a different name for the publication, and that since I do not consider myself a great writer, I also thought someone would tell me that he could do a better job and take it over. Neither has happened, so I guess you members are content and happy with my efforts. I am truly humbled and grateful to be of service to you. I want to thank everyone who has contributed to the Tiger Gazette, and everyone who has supported our organization and our scholarship fund.

Our reunion is rapidly approaching, and along with it the incidence of Covid19 Delta is increasing. We are going to have the reunion, unless something catastrophic happens, so let us plan to be there and be safe. We saw a town hall meeting on local TV last night; the upshot is that masking while indoors will become the regular thing again. I know that the mask will not stop a bare virus, but it will stop the particles of mucus and saliva that we all spew out constantly that carry the virus. My suggestion is to stock up on masks while they are on sale. My sister died from Covid19, so I take it very seriously. We are free to use or not use masks, and get or not get the vaccine. As the "Priest" used to tell little Kung Fu: "Choose Wisely." I want to see all of you at this reunion, and I want to see all of you at next year's reunion.

Don Jackson

2020 – 21 Reunion – Finally a Reality

After COVID forced us to cancel our annual reunion – TWICE in 2020 and again in the spring of 2021, we are finally holding our 14th reunion on September 16, 17, 18, 2021.

We have to thank the Hilton Garden Inn – Columbus, Georgia for keeping our original room rates and catering costs the same as we originally negotiated over two years ago. There were no penalties imposed on us for cancelling, which could have happened according to the standard contract language in our agreement. But the Hilton Management understood our dilemma and waived all penalties and fines.

I know many folks planned to make the trip over to Fort Rucker to visit the Aviation Museum and the 121st monument that honors the 30 men who gave their lives while serving with the 93rd/121st. We also had planned a tour of Fort Benning, but the Department of Defense has still not opened the gates to “outsiders” to enter any military facilities. As of the date this is being written, civilians will not be able to get onto Fort Benning or Fort Rucker. Those of you with retired military ID cards may be able to get on to these bases, but I would advise that you call ahead to see what restrictions are in place.

(I have recently been informed that the National Infantry Museum will be open on Saturday and Sunday. Please check with the registration desk in the hospitality room if you plan to visit the museum.)

Our reunion this year will be like no other. When I checked a couple of weeks ago, the Hilton Hotels were requiring properly worn face masks in all the public areas. But advise everyone to be safe and take whatever precautions you feel comfortable with. The State of Georgia and the City of Columbus may have other restrictions in place at the time of our reunion. Obviously, we will be following any rules that are in place. We want everyone to be safe.

We will have our PX items available during the reunion. So, if you want a 121st or Viking Shirt, a Tiger hat or a Viking beret, they will be there. Also, we'll have Tiger and Viking patches, Tiger and Association bumper stickers, Tiger lapel pins and 121st challenge coins.

A group of our Ladies has volunteered to take care of the raffles that benefit our scholarship fund. They have six great items that you can purchase raffle tickets for, giving you a chance to win these great prizes. While many people have brought additional items in the past for our raffles, they will not be necessary this year. We will not be able to accommodate last minute items. Here is one of the unique items being raffled. This was donated by Tom Iloweicki before he passed away late last year. One of the last items he created – a beautiful wooden bowl with the 121st challenge coin embeded.



We have a couple of exciting things planned for our reunion. First of all, would you like to take a nostalgic trip back about 50 or more years? You will be able to take a ride on a UH-1-D model!! Friends of Army Aviation will be flying our reunion attendees out of Inouye Field, adjacent to the National Infantry Museum. You may purchase tickets online by following this link: <https://friendsofarmyaviation.org/foaa-event/soc-trang-tigers-121st-reunion/> . You may also

purchase tickets on the day of the event; however, those that have pre-purchased tickets will have preference. All the information about the flights, cost, and times are on that web site.

Also, on Friday after dinner, Chris Henry of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, will be our guest speaker. EAA recently added one of our old B-Models (38733) to their museum and it is prominently displayed in its own setting. Chris is very excited and passionate about having one of the iconic Hueys in their museum.

Hope to see you in Columbus!

John Schmied

Scholarship Awards for 2021

The Board of Trustees was able to give scholarship awards of \$1,000 this year to each of the 4 applicants. John Schmied, the Scholarship Coordinator verified that all the applications were complete and met the requirements of the of the scholarship program.

We congratulate the following lucky recipients of the scholarships from the 121st Avn Association, Inc. on having been awarded scholarships from: Academic Financial Assistance Program:

Hope E. Hamilton – Granddaughter of Member Lee Stuart

Julia Babun – Granddaughter of Member James D. Rhodes

Carver Kasper – Grandson of Member Ralph W. “Bill” Bourn

Paul Riley Anderson – Grandson of Member Powell Sigmon

These scholarships are only made available because of the generosity of our members through donations and the purchase of raffle tickets at our reunions. The members of the association should be proud to be able to help our young folks continue their education.

Scholarship Committee Editor’s Note:

Acting on Allen’s Hull’s suggestion, John Kennedy created the scholarship program and guided it to its final form. He directed it from its inception to 2009, when John Schmied assumed the scholarship program duties. Including the 2021 scholarships, the association has awarded \$26,500 in scholarships to our deserving youngsters who want to continue their education.

2021 Historian’s Report

Since we are only a few weeks from our reunion, I want to bring you up to speed on what has been going on during this pandemic period. According to my memory, we were told to stay at home in March of 2020. Coincidentally, Version 10 started this same month (the first entry was on 3/31/2020). Twenty-seven items were logged in during this period through 3/12/2021. Since that time, I have only logged one item in Version 11, on 7/9/2021.

There has been other activity, however. I’ve learned a lot about copyright law. I have always known that no published works can go into the archive without permission from the publisher, but I did not know that photographs were also covered by copyright law. Needless to say, there are a lot of photographs in our archive. Based on my discussions with Amy from Texas Tech University’s Vietnam Center and Archive (TTUVCA), currently they will only store and provide data to researchers who come to their campus for items for which they do not have clear ownership. So, even though I have signed a “deed of gift” for each version of the 121st Avn. Assoc. Archive, they do not consider they have full ownership of every copyrighted item in our

archive. Therefore, my challenge is to get as many “deeds of gift” as I can from those of you who have given me their photos. This involves each of you, if you choose, to submit a “deed of gift” giving TTUVCA ownership. One of the best times to do this will be at our forthcoming reunion. I will be able to tell you how to identify your photos, and will collect and forward your “deeded of gift” to TTUVCA. So I will come equipped with lots of blank forms and, of course, my copy of the archive so that we will be able to correctly identify each of your photos.

Now as to why I am undertaking this task. I’m hopeful that if I get enough photos turned over to TTUVCA they will allow us to have on-line access to our archive. Allowing public access to our archive would be worthwhile for all. I recognize this will not be easy. Many of our guys have passed, so we will have to ask next of kin to sign. Actually, I have already done this. Ernie Miller’s sister has already signed and provided all Ernie’s negatives and back-up materials. Besides, I’m only eighty-five, so what’s the problem! In closing, I would like to express my thanks to Mike Law of the VHPA for helping me work on this task.

Bob

In Memoriam

We are not always notified when one of our Brothers passes on to the big LZ in the sky. Often times we are only aware of a death when mail is returned. While the date of death may seem like a long time ago, we were only made aware of these deaths since the last time we listed the obituaries in the Tiger Gazette.

Joe F. Craig, CO 80th Trans, 65-66, D. o. D. 2/26/21

Marvin Escareno, 121st 64-65, D. o. D. 11/1/19

Ronald T. Garrison, 121st Viking Pilot, 64-65, D. o. D. 8/25/20

Levi J. (Jim) Hebert, 93rd Maintenance Officer, 61-62, D. o. D. 5/20/20

Leland Huber, 121st Pilot/Plt. Leader, 67, D. o. D. 5/1/2021

Thomas Iloweicki, 121st Pilot/Pay Officer, 64-65, D. o. D. 8/7/20

Charles S. Kettles, 121st CO/Pilot 69, D. o. D. 1/21/19

Awarded Congressional Medal of Honor

John Loper, 121st Supply/Armor, 67-68, D. o. D. 6/30/21

Carl Lorence, 93rd/121st, Pilot/Club Officer, D. O. D. 12/18/20

Rodney Marakowits, 80th Trans, Maintenance Mechanic, D. o. D. 6/13/19

Roland (Sonny) Mayer, 121st, Pilot 66-67, D. o. D. 8/2/20

Robert McCreary, 121st, Pilot, 69-70, D. o. D. 1/1/20

Timothy McCullough, 257th Signal, Avionics, Tech 66-67 & 67-68, D. o. D. 4/11/20

John Menor, 121st, Door Gunner (HOG) Vikings, 64-65 & 69-70, D. o. D. 3/25/19

Joseph, (Moon) Mullins, 93rd/121st, Pilot, 62-63, D. o. D. 4/6/19

William (Bill) Walgren, 121st, Viking Pilot, 67, D. o. D. 9/9/20

RIP Brothers.....

Stories by John Grabski

First night:

My first night at Soc Trang I was assigned a hooch with another guy. He told me not to worry about the artillery going out. So I laid in the rack and listened for the artillery and I could barely hear it when they fired, saying to myself: “That’s not going to wake me up.” A couple of nights

later they turned the guns directly over the hooch. When they fired I jumped up, grabbed my rifle and pistol belt and ran outside looking around. Then I heard all the laughter from behind me and the guy said: "I told you about the artillery, and not to worry." And they continued to laugh. I just went back to bed, a little wiser.

The Great Watermelon Raid:

Sometime before Tet of 1968 we were flying back from a mission. I don't remember who suggested it, but we decided to get some watermelons from this farm we were flying over. We had two gunships circling the field. Then we landed. The gunner and I jumped out of the helicopter and started picking watermelons while the pilot had drawn his pistol and pointed it at the farmer while we continued to appropriate his watermelons. After we loaded the helicopter we flew back to base and had a watermelon bash.

P.S. I am ashamed of it today because I realize now it was costly to the farmer.

A new guy learns a lesson:

One day in 1968 or '69 three of us were sent out to the flight line to change a skid shoe on one of the ships. Two of us had been in Soc Trang for a while and the new guy hadn't been there very long. We jacked the helicopter up on the right side. As we removed the skid shoe, water came pouring out of the skid. It took a while to replace the shoe, so when we were done the other old guy and I sat in the shade of the revetment. I sent the new guy to the hangar for a bucket of water and when he returned I told him to go ahead and fill the skid back up with water. He said "How do I do it?" I said: "God Damn, don't they teach you anything in school?" I told him that the step on the front of the skid has a latch to open up and pour the water in. The new guy got down on his hands and knees looking for the latch. At this time both my friend and I started laughing and he knew he had been had.

John Grabski

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