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VIETNAM 1969

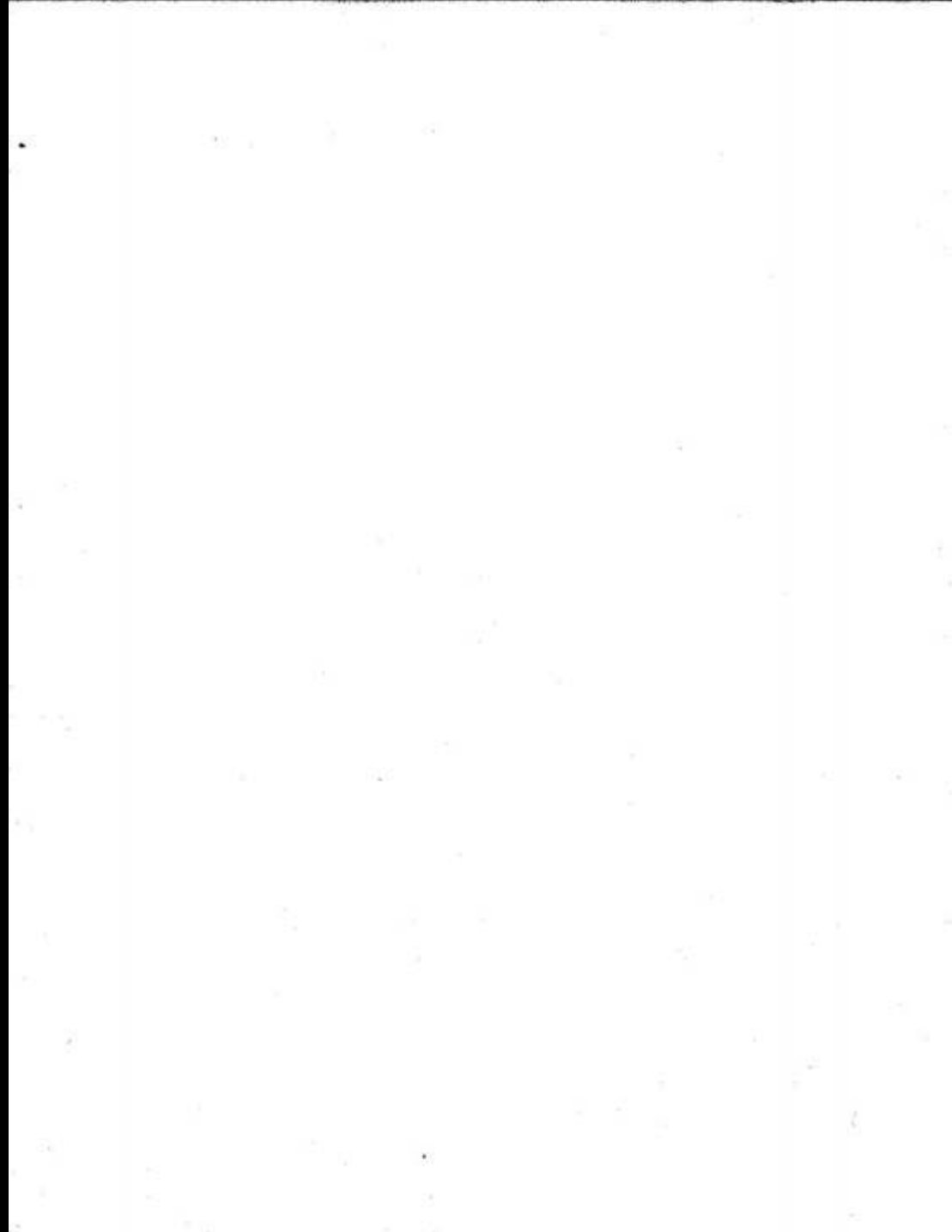
HMM-163



1951~196~







DEDICATION

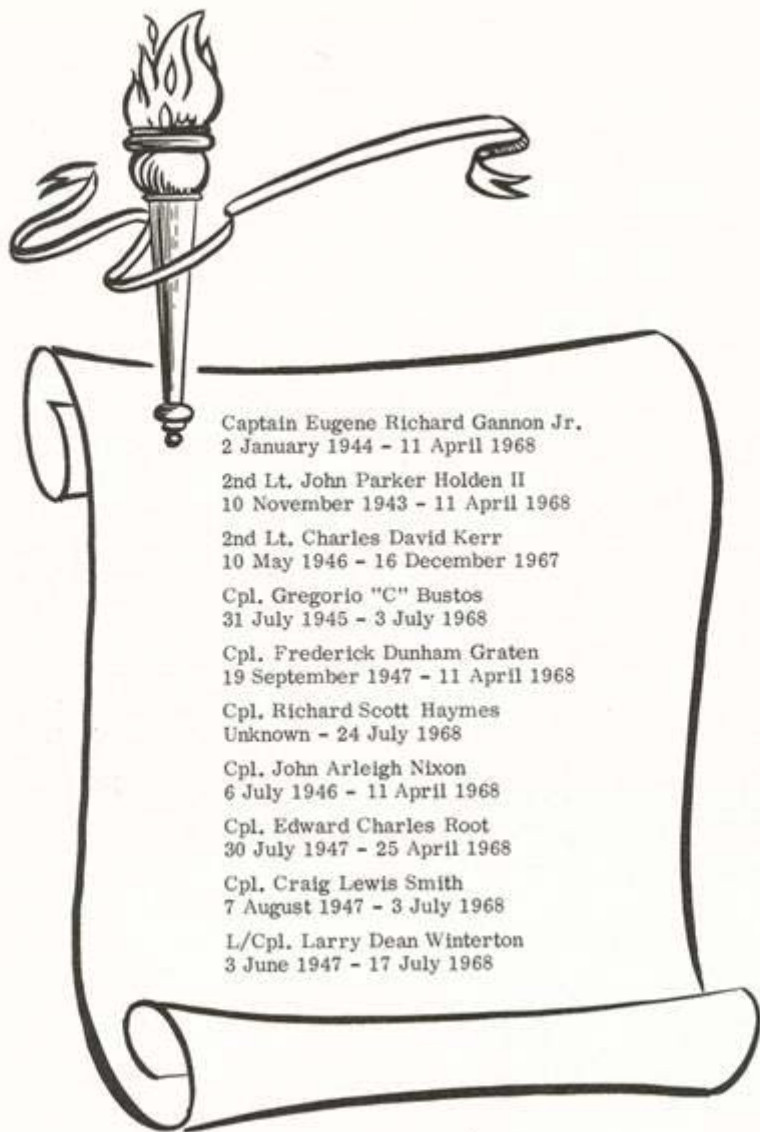
To the memory of the men of HMM-163,
who gave so much in sacrifice,
we humbly dedicate this book.



We flew with them,
We laughed with them,
We were scared with them,
We won't forget.



Eternal Father strong to save
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave,
Who bids the mighty ocean deep
It's own appointed limits keep,
Oh hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril on the Sea.



RIDGERUNNER HISTORY

Early in 1951 the Marine Corps formed its first West Coast Helicopter squadron HMR (L)-163, to help develop the "Force in Readiness" concept of helicopter support.

In September 1953, the squadron embarked aboard the USS BATAAN and sailed for Kobe, Japan. During October the squadron was at Hanshin conducting rescue and relief operations for the Japanese typhoon victims. During this operation, the squadron received the nickname "Ridgerunners".

In August of 1954, the Squadron sent a cadre force to Vietnam to aid the French. When the Geneva Accord divided Vietnam, there was an exodus of Vietnamese to the South. These refugees were assisted by a naval task force in which three HMR(L)-163 aircraft were involved. These helicopters, operating from offshore, also carried many villagers to Dr. Tom Dooley's Hospital north of the 17th parallel.

The Squadron rotated to the United States in 1959. It was reformed as HMM-163 in

July, 1961, and was equipped with the Sikorsky UH-34.

The "Ridge Runners" went to Soc Trang, Vietnam, in August, 1962, on Operation Shufly. The Squadron moved to Da Nang in September supporting the Vietnamese government forces and remained there until January 1963 when it embarked aboard the USS PRINCETON (LPH-5) for a seven month tour. In September 1963, the squadron was relieved of shipboard duties while in the Philippines and returned to the United States.

HMM-163 was reformed at the Marine Corps Air Facility, Santa Ana, where extensive training was conducted. In December 1964 the Squadron once again deployed to the Far East and the Republic of Vietnam.

During the ensuing tour at Da Nang, the squadron was to participate in one of the biggest battles of the Vietnam War, the evacuation of A Shau. On March 10, 1966, the A Shau Special Forces Camp came under violent enemy attack. HMM-163, under the command of LtCol Charles S. HOUSE, flew over 2000 hours during the ten days of this operation and carried over 190 of the survivors to safety. For his heroic leadership in this action LtCol House was awarded the Navy Cross.

It was the desire of LtCol HOUSE to leave his squadron with a different type of identifying mark. Out of this came the legendary "Evil Eyes" that are painted on all HMM-163 aircraft. The "Evil Eyes" are found today mostly on Vietnamese fishing sampans. It is the belief of the fishermen that the demon's stare of the eyes will frighten away evil spirits and result in a plentiful catch.

In August 1966, the squadron was moved to Okinawa for regrouping and Training. Upon completion of this training it embarked



aboard the USS IWO JIMA for off-shore operations, returning to Viet Nam in October.

On October 26th, 1967 the Squadron once more came ashore in Viet Nam, this time taking its place on the line at Phu Bai. The Squadron was split for over five months with ten aircraft operating out of Dong Ha and the remainder out of Phu Bai, until relieved of its Dong Ha commitment by HMM 361.

LtCol. Walter C. KELLY, assumed command of the Squadron on April 26th 1967 and was greeted by a mortar attack on the following night in which twenty-two of his twenty-four aircraft received battle damage. Within twenty-four hours, seventeen aircraft had been repaired and the Squadron was operational again.

In September 1967 the Squadron went aboard the USS OKINAWA in support of the SLF and on the 30th of October, the "Ridge Runners" came ashore again in Viet Nam. They were deployed near Quang Tri City at the Ai Tu Marine Air Facility, under the command of Major F. A. RUECKEL. On the 20th of November LtCol. L. W. SCHWINDT relieved Major RUECKEL.

During the siege of Khe Sanh, personnel of HMM 163 were on duty day and night at the beleaguered outpost. Bad weather and the constant bombardment of the base by NVA artillery caused constant pressure upon the Squadron. For their part in the support of the Twenty-Sixth Marine Regiment at Khe Sonh, HMM 163 was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

During this period, on 13 April 1968 LtCol. R. G. COURTNEY assumed command of the "Ridge Runners". Along with the very professional flying of VMO-6, the "Ridge Runners" continued their day and night operations in support of the Marine Units located at Kha Sonh and in the outposts along the DMZ from Laos to the Gulf of Tonkin. Despite constant harassment by mortars



and rockets hitting Quang Tri Marine Facility, the Squadron was able to maintain its daily commitment of helicopters to the Third Marine Division.

On May 18, 1968 with the arrival of HMM 161 from the States, HMM 163 was transferred to Marine Air Group 16 and moved to Marble Mountain Air Facility, Da Nang. The following day the "Ridge Runners" were fully operational and supporting Marine, ARVN and Republic of Korea Marine Corps units in the field.

LtCol. COURTNEY and the Men of HMM 163 have received the praise of almost every unit in the field, from MAG 16, First Marine Air Wing Commanding General, Republic of Korea Commanding General and countless ground units which have called upon and received support in every type of combat and weather conditions.

On 1 September 1968 HMM 163 Squadron Colors and Bible were returned to the United States leaving behind, both men and aircraft, some of who will never return. There are however, countless others that are alive today because the "Ridge Runners" were there when help was needed.

The officers and men of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 163 were a proud, courageous and determined unit. Each was proud to be a member of the "Ridge Runners". All were courageous in accomplishing assigned tasks whether it was a night medevac in marginal instrument conditions, or helping a wounded man to the dispensary during a rocket attack. Each was determined to accomplish the units assigned mission in spite of obstacles such as bad weather, lack of necessary supplies and equipment and inadequate working facilities. Their professional knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to get the job done enabled our squadron to enjoy an outstanding reputation

for support to the ground units both ARVN and Marines.

We accomplished a great deal during our tour, but it was not without sacrifice. We humbly dedicate this book to the memory of those who paid the supreme sacrifice for their country, and freedom of choice for the people of the Republic of South Vietnam.

I am most grateful for the opportunity to have been your commanding officer. I'll remember each of the "Ridge Runners" with admiration and pleasure. I pray that the souls of those who died rest in peace, and that God Blesses each of you with good fortune in all your endeavors.

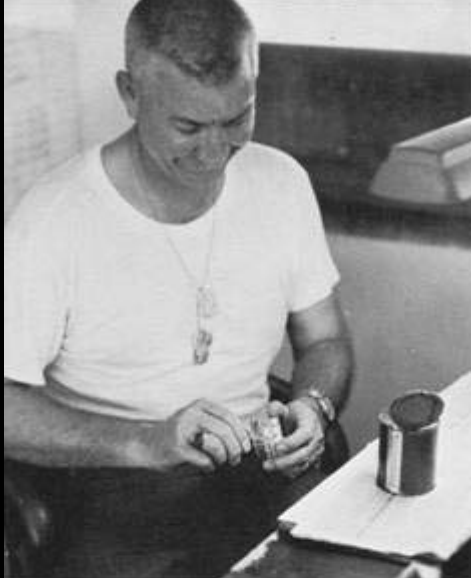
Richard S. Courtney



Richard G. COURTNEY
LtCol. USMC
Commanding



Clarence L. SMITH
Major USMC
Executive Officer



CWo2 R. O. FLORENCE
Admin Officer

A D M I N S H O P



1st Lt. G. P. TETU
Admin Officer

The "S-1 Shop" is the personnel records and orders department of the Squadron. From here the Squadron receives, sends and assigns men. Run by the Officer in Charge and "the Gunny" the "Admin Shop" also controls security and classified material, legal problems, special services functions, civic action programs and a variety of other odds and ends that are common to everyday life in the Marine Corps.



GySgt. J. C. PADELETTI
Admin Chief



Cpl. J. A. BRAGAN
Admin Clerk





Major J. R. CIVELLI
Operations Officer

S-2 and S-3

S-3 is the nerve center of a Squadron. In supporting the Commanding Officer, "Ops" has the responsibility of scheduling and coordinating the Squadron missions. "Ops" keeps track of pilot and crew qualifications, gives ground training to Officers and Enlisted. Aviation safety is also a function of the operation section.



Sgt. J. J. OLIVER
S-2 NCO

Sgt. G. E. MOORE
S-3 Clerk



SSgt. K. R. MORGAN
Operations Chief

Combat intelligence and counter-intelligence is of vital importance to a war zone Squadron. Of prime importance to pilots is current information of the enemy situation, their tactics, and location of their anti-aircraft weapons. This is provided on an hourly basis by constant addition to the Squadrons situation maps. Intelligence briefings and debriefings can mean Marine lives saved and make it much harder for enemy operations.



SSgt. W. J. GARRETT
NATOPS NCO





Capt. D. C. WEBER
Supply Officer

M E T E R I E L



SSgt. M. A. BOROFF
Supply Chief



Sgt. R. V. VIGIL
Property NCO



Cpl. C. G. SOAMES
Supply Clerk



LCpl. D. R. PARISH

A Squadron supply system is the logistics support of any combat Squadron. That which is necessary to run men and machines comes from "S-4". The individual Marines

clothing and weapon, office supply, tools, parts and a great variety of other necessities are the responsibility of the materiel Officer.





Capt. T. V. BURNS
Maint. Officer



CWO2 J. M. DOMINGUEZ
Ass't. Maint. Officer



MSgt. R. D. SHANE
Maint. Chief

FLIGHT SUPPORT

No Squadron can continue to function without the many hours of work that all individuals in the flight line support shops put in each day. For every hour a pilot and crew fly a helicopter in combat it takes approximately ten hours of maintenance to keep the UH-34 operational.

The flight support personnel include a variety of skills. Mechanics react to even the smallest malfunction of an engine while the hydraulics men insure that the complicated flight control systems function perfectly. Avionics men keep an array of radios

and complicated navigation equipment in operating order. Metalsmiths quickly mend and repair holes in the plane as well as other damage. Along with these men it also takes personnel to run the tool room, the armory, ground support equipment and a paraloft. Quality control personnel inspect all maintenance. Reliability is the key word when one and others lives are at stake. Everybody's thanks go to these men who work long hours day after day, in cold rainy weather as well as under the hot summer sun to keep planes in the air every day.





GySgt. A. C.
WOJTANOWSKI
GySgt. K. E. SMITH
GySgt. W. E. HOLLIS



SSgt. G. C. MAYNE
SSgt. P. D. PACE
SSgt. R. S.
SHERWOOD





Sgt. L. C. FOLEY
Sgt. J. A. SITTERLEY



Sgt. S. RAMOS
LCpl. M. E. GROWE

Before



After



AVIONICS



GySgt. H. T. BUMGARNER



SSgt. L. M. HUBER



SSgt. J. R. JEFFERS



Sgt. J. J. DALTON



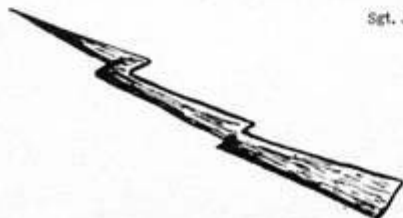
GySgt. L. D. RATHBUN



Sgt. T. S. KUCZERO



Sgt. E. E. HODGE





LCpl S. W. STEWART



LCpl R. W. HUGHES



Cpl. L. W. HARPER Jr.



LCpl. M. L. VARLOW



LCpl. W. B. INGERSOLL II



LCpl. W. E. SHARON



Cpl. D. F. SMITH



METAL SHOP



GySgt. G. WILLIS



Sgt. J. C. HYATT



Cpl. C. H. PETERSON



Cpl. L. W. THOENEN



Cpl. D. N. ADAWAY



LCpl. J. R. KENDALL



HYDRAULIC SHOP



Sgt. D. D. DORAN



Cpl. C. W. EATON



Cpl. C. E. HENDERSON



LCpl. S. B. PUGH



LCpl. C. W. PIERCE



ARMORY



SSgt. R. CORCORAN



Cpl. H. L. GIBSON

PARALOFT



Sgt. F. L. CLISHAM



Cpl. K. S. POGORZELSKI



Pvt. B. D. TOWART



Cpl. J. F. DAWSON
Tool Room



Sgt. B. F. JAMISON
Ground Support



FSgt. G. B. CARDWELL Jr.
Squadron First Sergeant



Gysgt. E. E. IRELAND
Career Advisor



SSgt. W. J. GARRETT
NATOPS NCO



Cpl. G. L. FOULK



LCpl J. R. USZENSKI



First shirt's hutch



Will be back tomorrow

FLIGHT LINE

GySgt. A. G.
STOFFERAN
SSgt. J. F. BOSWELL
SSgt. T. P. JUDGE



SSgt. J. R. BALL
SSgt. D. G. LASSLEY
Sgt. D. G. PADGETT



Sgt. V. W. WALTON
Sgt. R. W.
ROTHSTEIN
Sgt. A. MARTIN





Sgt. V. E. GOODWILL
Sgt. G. E. MOORE
Sgt. F. W. SPHERE



Sgt. J. L. HUDSPETH
Sgt. R. F. STOGSDILL
Sgt. J. R. SETTER



Sgt. J. O.
STRINGFELLOW
Sgt. H. E. BEAM
Sgt. G. M. FERRIS

Sgt. F. E. REINHARDT
Sgt. F. H. DEAN
Sgt. A. B. MORTON



Sgt. B. M. DAVIS
Cpl. J. E. DAVIS
Cpl. J. T. CALDWELL



Cpl. M. A. WEILER
Cpl. R. M. MLAC
Cpl. K. B. SCHAFFER





Cpl. L. E. PRINGLE
 Cp. C. W.
 HENDELBERG
 Cpl. M. T. SIMMONS

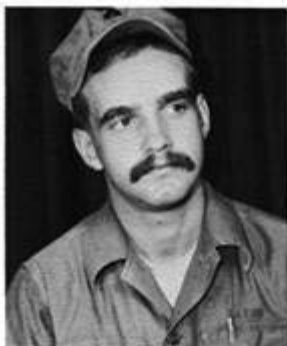


L.Cpl. R. J.
 HARRINGTON
 Cpl. D. L. PAYNE
 Cpl. C. E.
 NORTHRUP



Cpl. R. S. SPOERL
 Cpl. J. R. EGGENA
 Cpl. R. C. BIRON

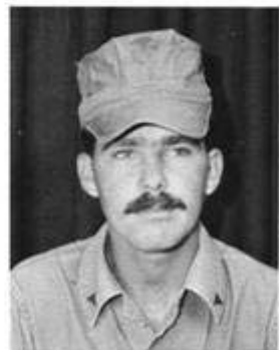
Cpl. O. R. WHITED
Cpl. M. R. SELLEERS
Cpl. S. A. RING



Cpl. Z. H.
DONALDSON
Cpl. F. A. DECKER
Cpl. R. L. WELER



LCpl. A. J. HARMON
LCpl. D. A.
BEZANSON
LCpl. M. E. TAYLOR





Cpl. R. L.
BRASHEAR
Cpl. R. D.
GEARHART
Cpl. R. W.
HILBORN



Cpl. R. L.
FREEMAN
LCpl. C. N. BYRD
LCpl. R. O. MAZUR



LCpl. E. L.
DZIERSON
LCpl. G. I. HICKS
Pfc. J. E. MILAM

LCpl. M. H. HESS
Cpl. R. E. VINNING
Cpl. D. P. DISANTO

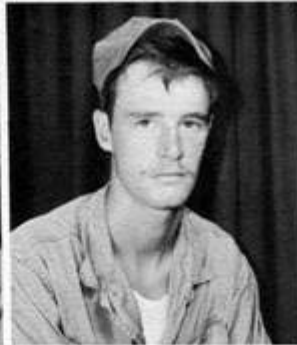


Cpl. G. V. SKINNER
Cpl. J. H. HANNA
Cpl. G. A.
FENWICK, Jr.



Cpl. R. L.
BERGMAN
Cpl. M. D. PAYNE
LCpl. J. S.
WHITAKER





Cpl. D. L. SHARPE
Cpl. E. P.
BALCEWICZ
Cpl. K. E. SMITH



Cpl. M. E.
GONZALEZ
Cpl. D. R. MULLINS
Cpl. H. P. HILL



Cpl. B. L. HANAVAN
Cpl. A. L. DAVIS
Cpl. R. A. SEAT

Sgt. L. C. BAXTER
Cpl. L. W. HALL Jr.
Cpl. A. A.
AFFLERBACH



Cpl. M. E. STREPY
Cpl. D. J. Lyons
L/Cpl. D. E.
WHITMAN



Pfc S. L. McEWE
L/Cpl. A. J. FLORES
Cpl. S. B.
KENECHTEL





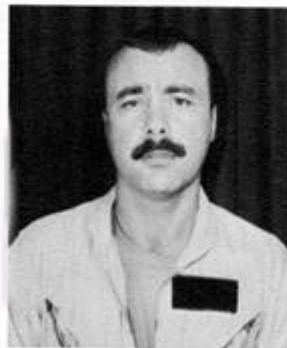
Capt. R. H.
ANDERTON



Capt. D. D. DELAIR
Capt. R. H. BLUHM
Capt. E. EGAN



Capt. J. K. TRAINOR
Capt. D. UNDERWOOD
Capt. W. R.
WISNIEWSKI





Lt. J. GIDDINGS USN
1stLt. R. MOSS
1stLt. R. W.
McILVAIN



1stLt. N. COSIMANO
1stLt. B. J.
PINSCHENAT
1stLt. M. J. ROGAL



1stLt. G. F.
HALLIDAY
1stLt. R. W.
GUILFORD
1stLt. F. R. FATO

CWO 2 R. O.
FLORENCE
1stLt. G. P. TETU
1stLt. E. F.
SEARING



1stLt. T.
BUSCEMI
1stLt. J. L. MILLS
1stLt. J. C.
ROBERSON



1stLt. D. C. HUFF
1stLt. B. M.
GORDON
1stLt. R. W.
KIRKPATRICK





1stLt. J. S. WARNER
1stLt. D. TROYER
1stLt. D. J. SEELEY



1stLt. R. W.
GILLEWSPIE II
1stLt. C. R.
STENMETZ
1stLt. R. W. ZEHMS



2ndLt. J. A.
KELLEHER
2ndLt. J. F.
NORMAN
2ndLt. R. G.
WARREN

MEDIVAC



LT. J. GIDDINGS USN



Into the Zone



HM-1 E. M. STREHLAN



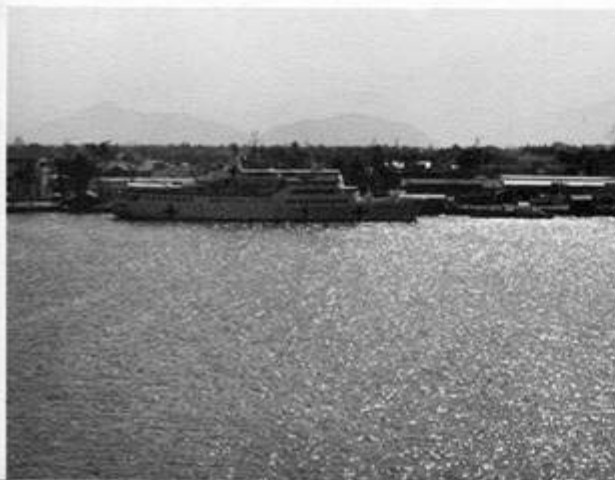
HM-1 D. A. MARTINEZ



P
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The Marine wounded in the field in Viet Nam has an efficient, prompt ambulance service in the medivac aircraft from HMM-163. He is guaranteed treatment within minutes after the "Ridge Runners" are notified of his plight. The air team composed of an aircraft commander, his co-pilot, crew chief, gunner and a hospital corpsman coordinate with the ground unit involved in making a quick safe pick-up. While entering and leaving the zone, the UH-34 is most vulnerable to hostile fire. The particular skills of the entire crew must be utilized fully in getting the aircraft and wounded in and out safely. The casualty is then taken to one of several hospitals, or if his condition warrants, to one of the two hospital ships that are off shore.



KHE SAHN and THE PUC



The "RIDGE RUNNERS" support Khe Sahn day and night



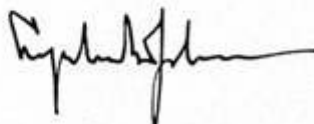
The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the
PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to

TWENTY-SIXTH MARINES (REINFORCED),
THIRD MARINE DIVISION (REINFORCED)

for service as set forth in the following

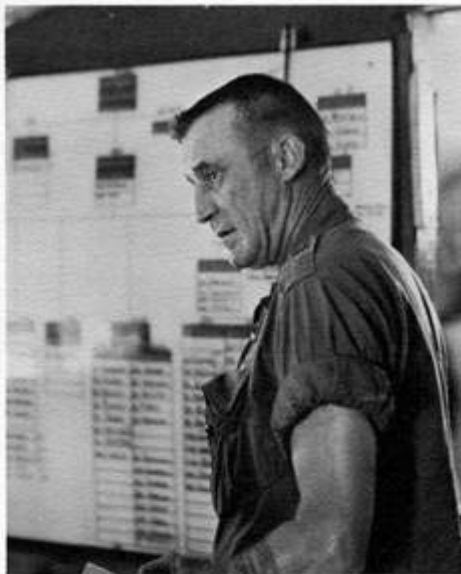
CITATION:

For extraordinary heroism in action against North Vietnamese Army forces during the battle for Khe Sanh in the Republic of Vietnam from 20 January to 1 April 1968. Throughout this period, the 26th Marines (Reinforced) was assigned the mission of holding the vital Khe Sanh Combat Base and positions on Hills 881, 861-A, 558 and 950, which dominated strategic enemy approach routes into Northern I Corps. The 26th Marines was opposed by numerically superior forces - two North Vietnamese Army divisions, strongly reinforced with artillery, tank, anti-aircraft artillery and rocket units. The enemy, deployed to take advantage of short lines of communications, rugged mountainous terrain, jungle, and adverse weather conditions, was determined to destroy the Khe Sanh Combat Base in conjunction with large scale offensive operations in the two northern provinces of the Republic of Vietnam. The 26th Marines, occupying a small but critical area, was daily subjected to hundreds of rounds of intensive artillery, mortar and rocket fire. In addition, fierce ground attacks were conducted by the enemy in an effort to penetrate the friendly positions. Despite overwhelming odds, the 26th Marines remained resolute and determined, maintaining the integrity of its positions and inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. When monsoon weather greatly reduced air support and compounded the problems of aerial resupply, the men of the 26th Marines stood defiantly firm, sustained by their own professional esprit and high sense of duty. Through their indomitable will, staunch endurance, and resolute courage, the 26th Marines and supporting units held the Khe Sanh Combat Base. The actions of the 26th Marines contributed substantially to the failure of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army winter/spring offensive. The enemy forces were denied the military and psychological victory they so desperately sought. By their gallant fighting spirit and their countless individual acts of heroism, the men of the 26th Marines (Reinforced) established a record of illustrious courage and determination in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.



A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to the President of the United States at the time of the citation.

THE RIDGE RUNNERS AT WORK



I want this area clean!



Well he IS the HONCHO



It will never work



*#(&** Cable tension



He thinks it's funny



Moch's Break everything



SAP it, MAF it, Hang it



No, the other way



Plan it



Brief it



Man it



Refueling hot



Drop em off



Pick em up



Giving a lift



Getting a lift



Make a what?



OK Gunny? ok? ok?



Now what was her name?



Big Max



Congratulations Capt. Jackson



I guess it goes there



How many copies?



My hands stuck



Ok, wind the rubber



Gee this is fun



Ya left your wrench where?



Take me to the beach



Come in Lieutenant



Leave Captain



Congratulations



Lets down all of them



Now back in the old Corps!



I need a bigger hammer



Ship me over



Go to work?



He thinks it's funny



I think it's upside down



Ain't this fun



No R&R?



Transferred to where?



Golly thats interesting



Go to Chu Lai again?



and we didn't need an FHA loan



No mail for you



you don't have any?



Late again



Gosh only 12 months to go



those damn termites



leaving early?



it was here a little while ago



now lets see

- FOR MEN ONLY -





AT RANDOM













AT THE BEACH







R&R HONG KONG



PHILIPPINES



JAPAN



TAIWAN



