



# The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration



## FIRST QUARTER 2012 COMMEMORATION NEWSLETTER

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- I. To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.
- II. To highlight the service of the armed forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the armed forces.
- III. To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.
- IV. To highlight the advances in technology, science and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.
- V. To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

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Vietnamese Marines wait to be picked up by U.S. Army CH-21 "Shawnee" troop-carrying helicopters during a recent operation in the Plain of Reeds area. Photo circa April 1963. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Allan W. Galfund, from NARA files)

### Upcoming Events:

**Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day  
CEREMONIAL OBSERVATION**  
March 24, 2012, 12-4 p.m.  
55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041  
RSVP: 212-693-1476 or  
[unitedwarveterans@gmail.com](mailto:unitedwarveterans@gmail.com)  
More details at: [www.uwvc.org](http://www.uwvc.org)

**Vietnam Veterans Homecoming  
Celebration 2012**  
March 31, 2012  
Charlotte Motor Speedway  
More details at:  
[www.charlottemotorspeedway.com/welcomehome](http://www.charlottemotorspeedway.com/welcomehome)  
[www.facebook.com/vetshomecoming2012](https://www.facebook.com/vetshomecoming2012)  
[www.twitter.com/vetswelcomehome](https://www.twitter.com/vetswelcomehome)  
[www.youtube.com/user/vetshomecoming](https://www.youtube.com/user/vetshomecoming)

**Tribute for Rolling Thunder's 25th  
Anniversary**  
May 26, 2012, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
Henry Bacon Dr. and Constitution Ave. NW,  
Washington, D.C.  
More details at: [www.cammomusic.org](http://www.cammomusic.org)

**Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans**  
March 31, 2012, 7 p.m.  
Governor William A. O'Neill Armory,  
Hartford, CT  
More details at:  
<http://www.ccsu.edu/pageprint.cfm?p=9996>  
For tickets call Timothy Jones at (860) 832-2978

**Florida's 25th Annual Vietnam and All  
Veterans Reunion**  
April 26-29, 2012  
Wickham Park  
More details at:  
[www.floridaveteransreunion.com](http://www.floridaveteransreunion.com)  
or 321-501-6896

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Please send contributions and  
corrections to our email:  
[vnwar50th@wso.whs.mil](mailto:vnwar50th@wso.whs.mil)



Diane Carson Evans caresses the face of artist Glenna Goodacre's memorial sculpture in 1993. (Photo by Dirck Halstead/Getty Images)

## Faces of War Haunt Vietnam Nurse

By Thom Wilborn

Former Army nurse Diane Carlson Evans is haunted by the faces and the wounds of the Vietnam War. The memories can return at any time. "I was watching a tennis match with a young blond man who was playing against my son, and the face a young soldier who died came back to me," she said. "I had to leave because of my tears. I was right back in Vietnam.

"I vividly remember the faces of the men I cared for," she said. "Some more than others. Some I just remember their wounds."

Evans volunteered for Vietnam and served in the burn unit of the 36th Evacuation Hospital in Vung Tau and with the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku from 1968 to 1969, caring for the soldiers who fought with bravery and all-too-often died of their wounds.

"Diane's story is much like many other veterans who have served our nation," said National Service Director Randy Reese. "Their honorable service has inspired our nation, but they have paid the price with their sacrifices."

"When I landed at the air base at Ben Hoa, I saw the big holes in the tarmac," Evans remembered. "I was one of two nurses and 248 other soldiers. We were met by a door gunner who told us to keep our heads down, and he escorted us to the bus. The guards had bandoleers of ammunition around them, and here we arrived in uniform with

purses, nylons and high heel shoes.

"We got on a bus with blackened windows and draped in chicken wire," she said. "I realized I'm in a war zone now. The realization really hit. I felt silly that I wasn't dressed properly."

In Vietnam, Evans treated the injuries, cared for the wounded and bore the brutality of war silently. "We really didn't sleep at night, we were always alerted to sound," she said. "It could be shrapnel or a helicopter coming. When more than two came, we knew there were mass casualties."

Once one of the nurses was screaming, *(Continued on next page)*



Army nurse Evans, right, with South Vietnamese servicemembers and children at an orphanage.



Loreen Otto and, right, Diane Carlson Evans at the Vietnam Women's Memorial, Washington, D.C. (Photo by Christian Science Monitor/Getty Images)

sorts of triggers.”

That was when Evans turned to the Disabled American Veterans for help with her claim for service-connected disability compensation. “After a series of frustrations with the [Department of Veterans Affairs], the DAV successfully processed my claim,” she said. “They were terrific; prompt and knowledgeable. DAV National Service Officers are very well trained. I felt like I was in good hands — they knew the process and stayed on top of it.”

Proud of her service in Vietnam, Evans is also “proud of my sister veterans and the men I’d taken care of,” she said. “I had seen how men suffered and how they died. They had so much courage and rarely complained. I was always concerned more about the other guys rather than myself.”

*“Today, women serve in many combat operations adding a whole new dimension to the fighting... I think women are coming home with some very serious issues.”*

To honor the service women service members, in 1984 Evans helped organize the drive to build a memorial to the American women who served in Vietnam. Nine years later, the Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated on Nov. 11, 1993.

A member of Chapter 20 in Faribault, Minn., Evans turned to the DAV for help in building the memorial. “The DAV jumped right in there with us — testifying and lending support in every way,” she said. “They donated almost \$100,000. At every legislative hearing there was DAV representation. The DAV has helped fund every single anniversary event for the memorial.”

“We are grateful to the DAV as a women veterans’ advocacy group, and I am personally grateful for their support during my own claim,” said Evans.

“Our National Service Officers are the finest veterans advocates around,” said Reese. “It is always good to hear from someone they have helped with their claims to reaffirm that.” Today, our nation is again at war, and combat nurses are  
*(Continued on next page)*

## Faces of War (Cont'd)

and I thought it was another sapper [enemy soldier],” said Evans. “I ran to the nurse, and there was this big rat on her arm, biting her.”

At Pleiku and Vung Tau, Evans learned that the bright red crosses on the tents and buildings were more like targets for the enemy than protective symbols recognized by the international code of war. “And there was more danger than shelling. Whenever there was danger, we ran towards it rather than away from it. Every time I heard a gunshot, I ran toward it.”

When a lull in the war permitted rest, her thoughts were of home and family. “I thought about my brothers,” said Evans. “I never thought about going home. At Pleiku, the war was so much different there, and the epicenter of the fighting, and we had huge numbers of casualties. I would lie in bed and I’d be exhausted. And I taped music. That was what saved me.”

“I don’t remember thinking or being afraid of my own death,” she said. “I would think about short supplies and doing something good or something wrong. I would think about my patients and how to best care for them.”

“I never really slept in Vietnam. I was always a little on edge. I wondered if I would be quick enough, brave enough and

smart enough. And I think I was. I think a lot of the young nurses who were in charge. We were so on our own. We didn’t have enough equipment, we didn’t have enough supplies. And we had to improvise.”

Evans was 23 years old when she returned home and tried to put her memories away. “I tried so hard to put it into the past,” she said. “No one wanted to talk about it anyway. There was so much animosity directed toward Vietnam veterans. It was painful for the nation to turn its back on us. There was apathy and animosity — apathy from the government and animosity from the people. Somehow the disenchantment from the war turned on us.”

So the horrors and suffering she witnessed got pushed to the back of her mind, until the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982.

“Up until 1982, I was fine,” Evans said. “I didn’t know what post-traumatic stress disorder was. I was having flashbacks, and I didn’t even know what flashbacks were. I was isolating myself.”

“At the [dedication] ceremony, I could remember only one name of a soldier, and I went to find his name,” she said. “When I found it, it was the first time I had really thought about him and his death, and I sat down and cried. I had never cried for him or anybody before.”

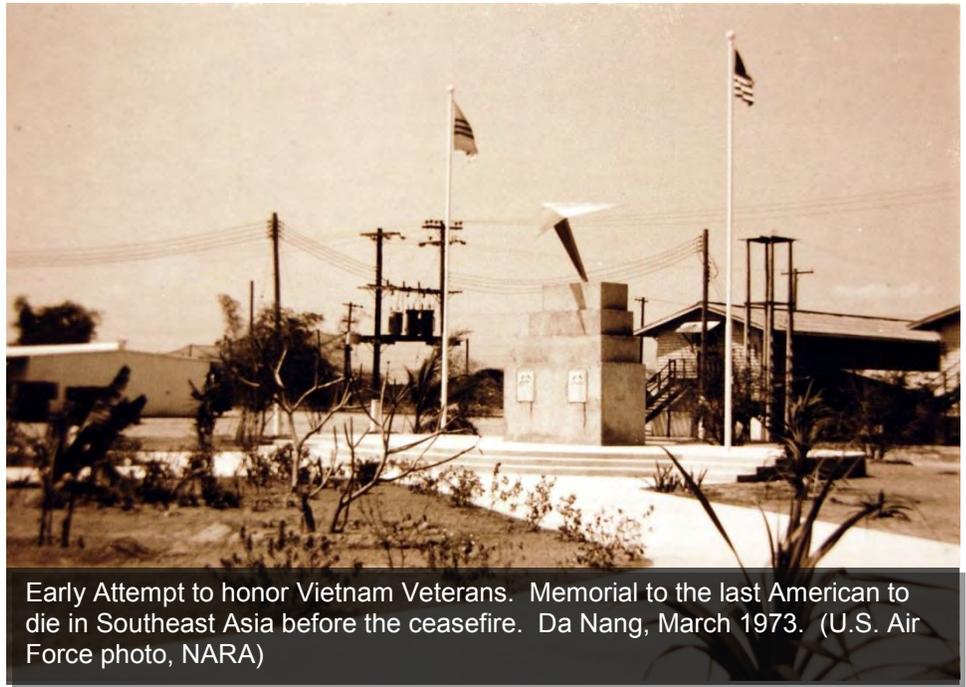
Then the faces started coming back one by one. “Many of them would come back in dreams and sometimes during the day,” she said. “It was like a river overflowing and coming out at all

**Faces of War**

right there helping to care for the wounded and ease the suffering of war. “There is a complete bond between Iraq nurses and Vietnam nurses,” Evans said. “Their experiences are the same. Their emotions and feelings are all alike.”

“Today, women serve in many combat operations,” she said. “That adds a whole new dimension to the fighting. I think women are coming home with some very serious issues. More are dying. Eight women died in Vietnam and Iraq more than 100. There’s the emotional trauma. They have extra weight to carry.”

“The moral and ethical issues faced by women today are enormous – far more so than for the nurses who preceded them,” said Evans. “All of us women have faced danger, but I don’t think it’s fair to make comparisons from previous wars. We are all the same.”



Early Attempt to honor Vietnam Veterans. Memorial to the last American to die in Southeast Asia before the ceasefire. Da Nang, March 1973. (U.S. Air Force photo, NARA)

**First Quarter 1962 Chronology**

**1 January: USN creates SEAL teams**



Republic of Vietnam... Members of U.S. Navy Seal Team One move down the Bassac River in a Seal Team Assault Boat (STAB) during operations along the river south of Saigon. (Photo: NARA, J.D. Randal, JO1, Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, Naval Photographic Center)

**3 January: Ground broken for Houston Astrodome**



The newly completed Houston Astrodome. (Photo: Public Domain Clip art)

The History and Education Branch continues to develop a variety of educational materials and programs as we ramp up to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration and we are receiving immense support and assistance from a variety of recognized academic institutions and production companies.

One of the most frequently asked questions about our Commemoration program is “What is the official start date for U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War?” It is unlikely that anyone will achieve a consensus among historians as to the actual start of “official U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

Some will argue that the US became officially involved when MAAG-I assumed responsibility for training South Vietnamese on 12 February 1955, while others suggest

that the official period of involvement began during the period between Nov 1961 with the Rusk-McNamara report to JFK, through Feb 1962 with the establishment of MACV. And yet others will say that the Gulf of Tonkin incident and subsequent Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964 marked the start of the U.S. official involvement.

We have asked the OSD history office to provide us a DoD perspective on the start of the Vietnam War, but it is important to understand we are not commemorating the “start” of the Vietnam War. We are commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam War and our number one objective is to thank and honor the service, valor and sacrifice of all Vietnam War veterans and their families, irrespective of an official start date.



**13 January: U.S. begins herbicide spraying in Vietnam (USAF photo)**

**4 February: 1st U.S. helicopter shot down in Vietnam**



**8 February: Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) established**

**Cont'd First Quarter 1962 Chronology****20 February: John Glenn becomes 1st American in Orbit****27 February: Presidential palace bombed in attempt to assassinate President Ngô Đình Diệm**

Left: Remains of one of the two planes, flown by dissident South VNAF officers that bombed the Presidential Palace in Saigon

**15 March: 1st official campaign, Vietnam Advisory Campaign, begins**

## Shufly- The Marine Corps' first deployment to Vietnam

By David H. Hugel

Americans who lived through the 1960s may recall seeing news stories and television coverage of Marine Corps combat ready troops landing on a beach north of the South Vietnamese city of Da Nang in early March 1965. They were members of the 9<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Brigade, the first U.S. combat unit dispatched to Vietnam to provide enhanced security for Marine Corps aviation units at the nearby airfield. What is not as well known to the American public is that a Marine Corps helicopter unit arrived in Vietnam nearly three years earlier, in April 1962, to provide airlift support for South Vietnam's armed forces.

The chain of events that resulted in the deployment of the first operational Marine Corps unit to Vietnam began early in administration of President John Kennedy. When Kennedy took office in January 1961, he faced numerous foreign policy challenges around the world, none more troubling than the escalating aggression against the government of South Vietnam by communist guerilla forces. As he searched for a solution to the dilemma he faced in Vietnam, Kennedy sent numerous high ranking officials to confer with Vietnam's president Ngo Diem and other Vietnamese officials, directing them to report back to him with recommendations for stabilizing Vietnam's precarious situation.

Former Army Chief Staff General Maxwell Taylor, then serving on Kennedy's personal staff, headed the most notable of these missions. Taylor, along with an entourage of White House, State Department and Pentagon officials, visited Vietnam in late October 1961. A report of the Taylor mission was presented to the president upon Taylor's return to Washington in early November. The report recommended increased military aid to South Vietnam in several areas, including providing aerial reconnaissance and air transport support, both fixed wing and helicopter, for the Vietnamese armed forces. The most far-reaching recommendation, however, was for the U.S. to offer to send military troops to Vietnam.



The USS Princeton (LPH-5) from which HMM-362 deployed to Vietnam in April 1962. (Photo provided by the Marine Corps University Archives)

Reluctant to commit U.S. combat troops to Vietnam, Kennedy instead signed a National Security Memorandum in which he authorized a number of actions the U.S. would undertake. Among the most significant of these was providing fixed wing and helicopter airlift support to the Vietnamese armed forces. With the decision made, the task of implementing it was referred to the Pentagon. In mid-March 1962, the Joint Chiefs of Staff endorsed a plan to deploy a Marine helicopter squadron to Vietnam. The base for this Marine Corps operation would be an abandoned airfield, used by the Japanese during WWII, near the village of Soc Trang in Vietnam's Mekong Delta. The deployment was scheduled for mid-April.

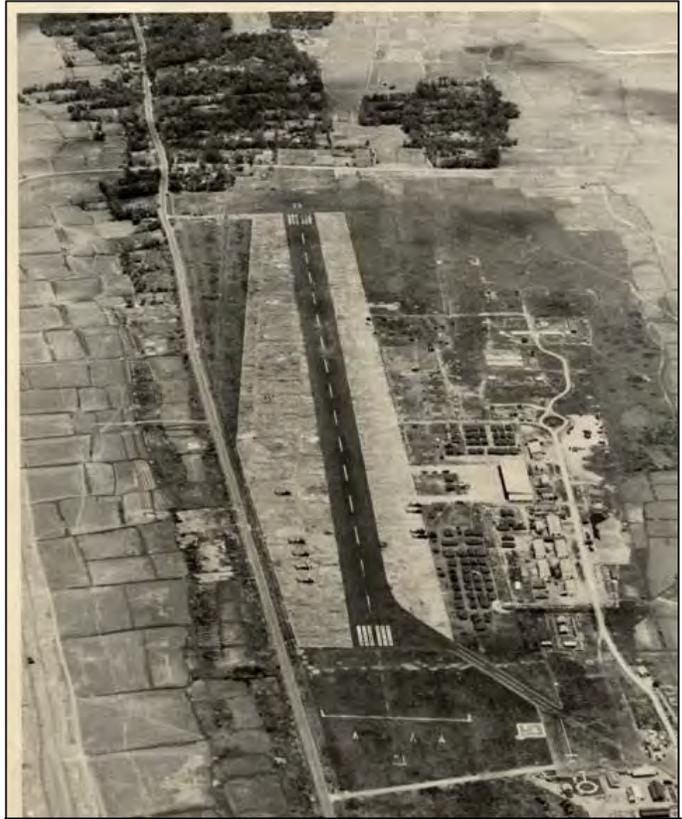
Once the decision was made to deploy a Marine Corps helicopter unit to Vietnam, First Marine Aircraft Wing commanding officer, Major General John Condon, was notified to begin planning for the mission. Condon tasked Marine Medium Helicopter squadron 362 (HMM-362) commanded by Lt Col Archie Clapp, then participating in SEATO exercise TULUNGAN in the Philippines, with the historic mission. The helicopter squadron would be reinforced with additional personnel, to meet the anticipated increased maintenance needs the squadron would face in Vietnam. Their aircraft included, 24 Sikorsky HUS helicopters, three Cessna single engine observation planes, and one R-4D transport. *(Continued on next page)*

Condon selected his Chief of Staff, Col John Carey, to head the Marine Corps contingent going into Vietnam, designated Task Unit 79.3.5, code-named SHUFLY. Lt Col. William Eldridge was selected to be the commanding officer of a sub unit of Marine Air Base Squadron-16 (MABS-16) based in Okinawa, responsible for preparing the old airfield for operations and providing all the services needed to support the Task Unit and helicopter operations. The total number of U.S. forces headed for Vietnam on the deployment was 534 officers and enlisted men, including Navy medical personnel.

In the pre-dawn hours of April 15, 1962, HMM-362 lifted off the deck of the USS Princeton (LPH-5), an amphibious assault ship from which they were operating, for the short flight to the Soc Trang airfield. The landing was uneventful and Marines soon began flying combat support missions for Vietnamese Army (ARVN) forces in the area. After a week of intelligence briefings and familiarization flights to acquaint Marine pilots with the often difficult to navigate the monotonous flat terrain of Mekong Delta, HMM-362 launched its first mission on Easter Sunday, April 22, 1962. It was the first of many successful missions the Marines of HMM-362 would fly out of Soc Trang until relieved by HMM-163 in August. In September HMM-163 relocated to Da Nang in Vietnam's most northern "I" Corps military region where Marines would operate until U.S. troops were withdrawn in 1973 under terms of the Paris Peace Accords that ended U.S. combat operations in Vietnam.

During its deployment to Soc Trang, the pilots and men of HMM-362 acquitted themselves well, fulfilling their mission under often trying circumstances, developing new tactics, and modifying equipment to meet the challenges they faced. It is a tribute to them that many of the helicopter war fighting tactics they pioneered were used throughout the Vietnam War, and into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*DAVID HUGEL served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1960-64, including nine-month tour in Vietnam as a combat photographer. Today, he is a freelance writer based near Annapolis, Md.*



Soc Trang airfield, SHUFLY's base of operations during the early days of the Vietnam War. (Photo provided courtesy of Joseph Eke, who served as HMM-362s senior S-2 clerk)



HMM-362 helicopters transport ARVN Soldiers into a landing zone during operations near Soc Trang in 1962. (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Shirley Clapp from Col. Archie Clapp's personal collection)



One of HMM-362s helicopters, with supplies slung beneath, flies from the USS Princeton into the Soc Trang airbase on April 15, 1962. (Photo courtesy of Thomas Hammack from his personal collection)



Maj. Gen. John Condon, 1st MAW CO, at the time HMM-362 was deployed to Vietnam in April 1962. (Photo provided by Marine Corps University Archives)



HMM-362 returns to the Soc Trang airbase following a mission during its 1962 deployment to Vietnam. (Photo provided courtesy of Thomas Hammack from his personal collection)

### Examples of Vietnam War Unit Symbols



U.S. Coast Guard Activities - Vietnam



11th Marine Artillery Regiment



1st Air Division Republic of Vietnam Air Force



USS Ashtabula (AO-51)



44th Medical Brigade



10th Transportation Battalion



Royal Australian Air Force



307th Strategic Wing



XXIV Corps



11th Marine Engineer Battalion



834th Air Division



101st Airborne Division



Republic of Korea Capital Division aka: Tiger Division



1st Marine Aircraft Wing



7th Fleet



Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN)



III Marine Amphibious Force



3rd Naval Construction Brigade



7/13th Air Force



11th Armored Cavalry Regiment