



FLORIDA DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION



Rotor and Scalpel

WINTER/SPRING NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2019

FROM THE PRESIDENT

First and foremost, I am hoping this newsletter finds all my brothers and sisters doing well. It certainly has been a rough couple of years for many of us and again, I am looking forward to seeing all at the reunion.

Dustoff hosted The Vietnam and All Veterans State Coalition Meeting and Annual Banquet again this past January and will be hosting the meeting again next year. Dustoff was not only presented with a plaque (hosting a meeting in 2018) and a Certificate (participation), but we were honored by being selected as the coalitions Organization of the Year. In addition, Bob and Roberta Neitzel, Van and Kiki Carter, Tony and Mary Cartlidge, Ruari Voisey and I were also presented certificates for our contributions to the Coalition. Congratulations to Jason Althouse, Volusia County Service Officer for being selected as the Coalitions Veteran of the Year. I would like to thank Roberta and Bob, as well as Tony and Van for continuing to represent Florida Dustoff at these meetings after all these years.

For those of you that do not go to the State Coalition Meetings, they are very productive and quite informative. We had a great time and I would like to thank Roberta for a job well done. I would like to thank Michelle Wakefield, and Bobbi Jo & Jerry Stickles for their assistance to help pack up. The banquet was awesome, and the food was great. All in all the meeting was a wonderful success and a lot of information was disseminated. Bob Neitzel has been reelected at 1st Vice, Roberta Neitzel has been reelected as Secretary and Jacque Earrusso has been reelected as Treasurer of the Coalition. Van Carter and

Ralph Earrusso retained their positions as President and 2nd Vice President, respectively and I was honored as being appointed to Sgt at Arms of the Coalition.

Preparations have already been in motion for the Reunion. I am hoping that as many members of Dustoff will be attending as the turnout was good last year. Hopefully the “drama” of injuries will stay away from our campsite this year. **ALL MEMBERS OF DUSTOFF who served must provide their CERTIFIED DD-214.** As of now, Roberta has received only a small handful. The only offices up for election this year are secretary, treasurer and membership chair, currently held by Nancy Church, Roberta Neitzel and Chris Voisey.

On behalf of Dustoff, several packages were sent to our troops for the Holidays. The packages consisted of Holiday candies and homemade cookies, personal hygiene items and gifts for children that are stationed there with their families. We also made donations this past year to Wreaths Across America, Honor-Release-Return, The Ride Home and Trunk or Treat at the Edgewater YMCA this past October.

We will be making some minor purchases prior to the reunion this year as there are several much needed items. If there is anything that you remember we need, please contact me.

PLEASE remember to pay your dues if you are an annual member as *you must be a member in good standing to vote.* Please make sure that the dues are paid **prior to the start of our annual meeting.** If you would like to pay them now, please forward your payment in the amount of \$20.00 payable to Florida Dustoff Association to 2304 Woodland

Drive, Edgewater, FL 32141. If you join us for the meeting and have not paid your dues, you are not eligible to vote.

Our general membership meeting will be held 1 hour after the close of opening ceremonies at the campsite on May 11th and we will have our auction at that time. The auction is extremely important to our bottom line as the reunion is really our only source of fundraising and in order to keep this organization afloat, we need to have as many members present for this event and bidding on the items. In addition, if you have something you would like to contribute to the auction, please see Roberta or myself. We also will have our Dustoff T-Shirts, key chains and other items for sale. We will also be having another raffle for a "booze cooler" and the cooler (on wheels) filled with the booze will be in the campground on Saturday May 4th with Doc and we are going to ask all members to sell the tickets. The price will be \$5.00 each or 5 for \$20.00.

VERY IMPORTANT – Every year Roberta and Bob usually bring the trailer to Wickham Park the day before the Escort, which this year will be May 4th. Although doing better, his health is not the best and we are arranged to have the trailer brought to and from Wickham Park this year because he cannot do so. We are planning to set up most of the campsite on Saturday May 4th (awning, tents, cooking area). PLEASE...we really need your help !!!! Come to the campsite, Saturday the 4th between 1 and 2 to help us set up. We need at least 8 or so people in order to put up the awnings. If you can only be there for an hour or two to help out, it would certainly be appreciated as Bob will be unable to assist us much. After all, this is your campsite as well.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the 4th and the rest of you at the reunion.

DUSTOFF FOREVER
Ron (Doc) Custer

FROM THE EDITOR

I am sure it has been a very busy year for all and I hope a healthy one. The reunion is just around the corner and I am certainly looking forward to seeing everyone. It has been a better year for Bob and myself, as his health has been improving somewhat. There are still many issues he has been having due to the Parkinson's. We make the best of it and continue on.

For years I have been attempting to keep our membership information up to date, but to no avail – not only do I have invalid e-mail addresses, but I also have invalid physical addresses. I really need people to update their information with me as it is much easier to e-mail the newsletter than to send it by mail, please e-mail your up to date information to me at Hdwizrd8@aol.com and please indicate Dustoff in the subject line.

As always, we will have our general membership meeting on Saturday approximately an hour after the end of the massing of the colors. After this, we will be having a

birthday cake/party for Ruari's 9th birthday. She has been talking about having her party at the reunion since January's coalition meeting. If you plan on attending the reunion this year, please contact Roberta Neitzel at (386) 424-1989 or by e-mail (Hdwizrd8@aol.com). We will need to know if you need a campsite and how many people will be attending with you. At this point in time, we know of one wet site and one dry site that have been reserved (we were advised of this last year), but we would appreciate everyone reconfirming. Also, please remember at the meeting last May it was decided to reduce our campsites by one, so we only have three going forward (B69-B71) It is quite difficult to plan a dinner (as usual, Friday and Saturday nights) without having an idea of a head count. The reunion dates are May 9th – 12th at Wickham Park. The VVB already has most of the reunion info posted at www.vietnamandallveteransofbrevard.com.

If you can also attend the week prior, you may also wish participate in the Vietnam And All Veterans Reunion Memorial Walls Motorcycle Escort on Sunday April 15th at Eastern State College Cocoa Campus, Clearlake Road at 10 am (formerly Brevard Community College). Line-up is at 9:00 am and they will leave 10:00 am. Arrive at Wickham Park, Melbourne, About 11:00 am. For those who want to help set up the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall Other Memorials and Displays. It is well worth the experience if you are able to do so, ask Doc Custer, Snake or John Patton and Nancy Church as they have participated in the escort before.

Please take a look at the reunion website page at VVOF.ORG and there is a link to the reunion home page, or go right to the source at the VVB website.

I have been given the tentative schedule of events for the reunion already and have attached a copy for all of you as part of the State Coalitions newsletter, the Florida Veteran. Some of the info contained in it may be a duplicate as I am the newsletter editor for both. I look forwarding to seeing all at the Reunion!!!

Roberta Neitzel

Meals for the Reunion: The cost for dinners this year will be \$6.00 for Friday Dinner and \$7.00 for Saturday Dinner. The meals being served will depend on the amount of people attending. As I have done in past years, I will make some salads and will leave them in the coolers so anyone can help themselves to it as a side for their lunch. ***I am not aware at this time of any plans for breakfast, however, if breakfast is provided donations need to be made for the meal so at least the cost of the food is covered...***

CAMPSITE FEES FOR 2018

WET SITES: \$45.00 per night per motor home, camper or tent
DRY SITES: \$35.00 per night per motor home, camper or tent

To remind all everyone *should* contribute and bring two 12 packs (beer, soda, water, etc.) to donate to the coolers at

reunion. It has worked out great for the past few years and I for one did not hear any complaints.

Hopefully we will be presenting colors at the opening ceremonies again and if anyone is interested in participating, please contact me at hdwizr8@aol.com or by phone to let him know in advance. As the flight suits we have are rather "slim" in nature, we would like at least one or two to present in the flight suits and all others to be in BDU's, and would like all to be in boots. Bob will not be able to present at massing of the colors this year and we really would like to have an honor guard present, so please consider doing so.

We will be having our raffle and auction as well as a 50/50 and if anyone would like to donate any items please see Doc Neitzel, Doc Custer or Bert at the campsite.

Important Information to Pass On

We try to forward as much information as possible throughout the year that we received which we deem important. Some though, do not have a computer, therefore are not receiving a lot of information. I would like to note here several items that I felt were worth sharing:

For all our women veterans, there is a new website designed specifically for them <https://womenvetsusa.org/>. It is full of information pertaining to benefits specifically for woman veterans and has numerous links. Please, pass this information to all the female vets you know.

Roberta, for the coalition, has updated a list of establishments that give a discount to veterans. Some are only for active duty, while others are for anyone with a military/VA ID. It is several pages long and it is attached to this newsletter if you are receiving it my e-mail. She will make copies and have it available at the Reunion if anyone is interested in obtaining a copy.

Support Florida's Veterans and Our Mission by Supporting the Walk of Honor

The Florida Veterans Foundation's main mission is to provide [emergency assistance](#) to Florida veterans and their families who are having financial difficulties which cannot be resolved by the veteran or other veteran service organizations. Most of these situations will develop into a catastrophic situation such as homelessness, if the situation is not solved promptly. Many cases that the Foundation handles involves Service Connected Disabled Veterans. Read more about our emergency assistance program go to <http://www.floridaveteransfoundation.org>. After receiving a bona-fide [application for assistance](#) from a veteran, the Foundation responds to the emergency within 24 to 48 hours with a solution as warranted by the facts of the situation. Last year, the Foundation expended well over \$200,000.00 helping Florida's veterans and their families, and assisted over 700 Florida Veterans by providing financial support to those who fit Foundation guidelines, or by providing information on veteran resources such as;

available benefits for disability claims, benefits to widows, education resources, housing, etc. Because of the vast amount of services we provide, the Foundation needs your help. You can help support our efforts to Serve, Support and Advocate for our Florida Veterans by [donating](#), [volunteering](#) or by [purchasing a brick](#) to honor a loved one. Please help us make a difference in our Florida heroes' lives.

The Florida Veterans Walk of Honor will accommodate 25,000 engraved bricks. There are presently 1.5 million veterans residing in the State of Florida. Your engraved brick will be placed on a first come, first serve basis. Therefore, the first 25,000 engraved bricks will be the ones placed in the Florida Veterans Walk of Honor at our State Capitol. *On November 12, 2014*, Governor Scott placed the first memorialized engraved brick into the Florida Veterans Walk of Honor. The Veterans Walk of Honor measures 12 feet wide by 500 feet long, and connects both the old and new Capitol buildings, the House and Senate Buildings and the Florida Veterans Memorial. The heart of the Veterans Walk of Honor will consist of engraved bricks which are being offered to veterans, families and friends of veterans. The proceeds from the sale of the engraved bricks will go to the Florida Veterans Foundation, the Direct Support organization to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs to help further the Foundation's mission to Serve, Support and Advocate for our Florida Veterans. To order your brick to go <http://www.floridaveteransfoundation.org>.

The Florida Veterans Foundation is composed of all volunteers, with the exception of one (1) Executive Assistant to the volunteer Chairman. The majority of the Foundation Directors are retired military disabled veterans who volunteer their time to provide aid and assistance to our Florida Veterans who are less fortunate than themselves. Most of our Directors work more than 48 hours per week on the Foundation's mission.

We urge you to help the Foundation get the word out to all of our brave Veterans and military personnel who have, and still are, putting their lives on the line each and every day to protect our citizens. These brave men and women signed a blank check, up to and including their lives. Many Florida veterans that we assist have debilitating injuries, have PTSD or other service related injuries, with some who are having difficulties re-integrating back into society. It is the Foundation's mission to ensure that none of our Florida Veterans are left behind or forgotten. We need your help.

If our office can answer any questions on the Walk of Honor program, please call (850) 488-4181 or email ridleyr@fdva.state.fl.us

Hidden VA Money

VA Programs You May Be Eligible For

Below are some programs or rules within the VA that could pay you and your surviving spouse in all matters financial. As you explore these programs, keep in mind, it may be in your best interest to see an accredited VSO or a qualified attorney familiar with VA law should you elect in pursuing any of the programs:

- Any veteran who is a senior citizen or his/her surviving dependents may be eligible to receive over \$2,000 per month (\$24,000 per year) in tax free income. The payments include annual cost of living increases.
- A veteran can easily qualify for a VA Pension even if his annual income exceeds the limits set by the VA. For this program, a veteran may need a highly qualified VA attorney to help.
- Recurring, non-reimbursed medical expenses of a veteran and the surviving spouse are deductible from gross income.
- Veteran family members can be paid as caregivers, which is also a tax deductible expense.
- If a veteran resides in an Assisted Living Facility the entire amount paid for the service is a deductible expense.
- Veterans 65 years-old or older, are presumed to be disabled. It does not have to be proven.
- There are many federal VA nursing homes, and private nursing homes with a federal VA Contract who will admit veterans for care even if the veteran does not meet the service connected disability requirements.
- Veterans who are 100% service-connected IU may be eligible for an additional monthly entitlement of \$62.50/mo. for catastrophic injury.
- DMAVA and the department of education jointly launched a program on October 5, 2002 to honor world war two era veterans who left school to join the military and have never received a high school diploma.
- If the veteran is deceased and the surviving spouse is applying for low income pension, the spouse can be of ANY age and does NOT have to be disabled.
- Reports indicate that a pension with aid and attendance is easier to obtain than Household Benefits.
- A veteran who is healthy but has a spouse who is disabled, may be eligible for Improved Pension (Low Income Pension).
- In order to receive service-connected disability rating a veteran's disability does not have to be related to combat.
- A VA rating of 70% or higher will allow a veteran-claimant to reside in a federal VA nursing home, at no charge. Other stipulations may arise resulting in minimal fees.
- When a veteran is rated at 100% disability or if rated as Individual Unemployability (IU), the veteran will receive the highest rating and the highest pay. Additionally, if a veteran is in need of additional aid of another person to help with activities of daily living (walking, bathing, dressing, toileting, etc.) there is an added supplemental compensation called "aid and attendance".

Source: <http://www.veteranprograms.com/resources7.html>

VA Appeals Update

Veterans rejected for disability benefits will have a new slate of appeals options starting next month, when federal officials will put in place an overhaul the review process with hopes of dramatically cutting down on wait times for the complicated cases.

Department of Veterans Affairs officials announced they will implement new appeals modernization rules starting Feb. 19. Work on the effort has been underway for more than 18 months, since lawmakers passed sweeping reform legislation on the topic in August 2017.

Under the new rules, veterans will be given three options for their benefits appeals. All three are designed to streamline the complicated existing process for cases, which can languish for years as new evidence and arguments are introduced throughout the timeline.

Now, VA leaders are hoping the most difficult reviews can still be completed in under a year in the vast majority of cases. Their target for cases which don't go before the Board of Veterans Appeals is an average of about four months for a final decision. A successful appeal can mean potentially thousands of dollars in monthly benefits payouts for veterans who have previously been turned down for what they believe are service-connected injuries and illnesses. VA and Capitol Hill leaders hailed the changes as a long-overdue fix. "(This) is the most significant reform in veterans' appeals processing in a generation and promises to improve the timeliness and accuracy of decisions for our nation's veterans," said House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA). He promised close oversight of the work ahead, but also hope about the potential rewards for veterans.

Committee ranking member Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN) last week visited a regional office in his home state that will be involved in the new appeals process and left feeling confident in its success. "The VA staff feel really good about this," he said. "They've worked out the hiccups they've had, and are ready to move ahead. Getting all the training and experience is going to take time, but I walked away optimistic."

Veterans groups largely supported the appeals overhaul, although a few groups have expressed concerns about the new system limiting veterans options for future reviews in favor of getting faster answers.

Under the first of the three new appeals processes, veterans can file a supplemental claim where they introduce new evidence backing their case. The appeal is handled by specialists at a regional office, who render a final decision on it. In the second option, veterans can request their case be reviewed by a senior claims adjudicator instead of the regional office. Those experts will review cases for clear errors or mistaken interpretations of statute. If they find mistakes, they can mandate corrections for the cases. Finally, veterans will also be able to appeal directly to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Those cases are expected to take the longest to process, because of the legal prep work involved. Veterans can get a direct decision or request a hearing before the board.

Portions of the new process have been implemented as pilot programs at select sites in recent months.

Previously, cases involved a combination of all three options, with cases reset and repeating steps with every new submission of case evidence. Veterans with cases currently pending in the system can opt-into the revamped processes starting next month, or remain in the current system if they believe it will better benefit them. More information on the changes is available through the Veterans Affairs benefits website.

Purple Heart Recipients Will Get Top Priority For Their Claims, VA Announces

WASHINGTON – Veterans awarded the Purple Heart medal for wounds in combat will receive top priority for their claims with the Veterans Affairs Department, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie announced Tuesday.

Beginning in April, veterans with the Purple Heart medal will be placed in the department's top-priority category for disability benefit claims, along with Medal of Honor recipients and those with severe, service-related disabilities.

"I will be announcing that for those who hold the Purple Heart, the recognition of wounds taken in battle, that we will now place those who hold that decoration at the front of the line when it comes to claims before the Veterans department," Wilkie told a House Appropriations Committee hearing.

Veterans with Purple Heart medals are now assigned to the third of eight priority groups. The third group includes former prisoners of war, and those with a service-connected disability of between 10 percent and 20 percent.

Purple Heart recipients are exempt from copayments for their medical care, according to the VA.

"The VA's mission is to take care of America's wounded, ill and injured servicemen and women," said Joe Davis, a spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. "Despite some questions regarding implementation, the VFW sees this as VA honoring its assigned mission by ensuring those who shed blood defending our nation receive priority service."

The Purple Heart is the oldest U.S. military decoration. General George Washington awarded the first version to wounded soldiers in the Continental Army during the American Revolution.

The Pentagon does not maintain a record of the number of troops who have received a Purple Heart medal, according to a report by the Congressional Research Service in January. The report cites estimates of more than one million by military historians.

BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO FLORIDA VETERANS

Most of these benefits have already been in this newsletter before at one point or another, but we felt they are certainly worth mentioning once again:

Basic Property Tax Exemptions

Eligible resident veterans with a VA certified service-connected disability of 10 percent or greater shall be entitled to a \$5,000

property tax exemption. The veteran must establish this exemption with the county tax official in the county in which he or she resides by providing documentation of this disability.

The un-remarried surviving spouse of such a disabled ex-service member, who on the date of the disabled ex-service member's death had been married to the ex-service member for at least five years, is also entitled to this exemption. (FS 196.24)

Additional Property Tax Exemptions

Any real estate owned and used as a homestead by a veteran who was honorably discharged and has been certified as having a service-connected, permanent and total disability, is exempt from taxation if the veteran is a permanent resident of Florida and has legal title to the property on January 1 of the tax year for which exemption is being claimed. (FS 196.081(1))

Any real estate owned and used as a homestead by the surviving spouse of an Armed Forces member who died from service-connected causes while on active duty is exempt from taxation if the member was a permanent resident of Florida on January 1 of the year in which the member died. (FS 196.081(4)(a))

If, upon the death of the veteran, the spouse holds the legal or beneficial title to the homestead and permanently resides there, the exemption from taxation carries over to the benefit of the veteran's spouse until such time as he or she remarries, sells, or otherwise disposes of the property. If the spouse sells the property, an exemption not to exceed the amount granted from the most recent ad valorem tax roll may be transferred to the new residence as long as it is used as the primary residence and the spouse does not remarry. (FS 196.081(3))

Any partially disabled veteran who is age 65 or older, any portion of whose disability was combat-related, and who was honorably discharged, may be eligible for a discount from the amount of ad valorem tax on the homestead commensurate with the percentage of the veteran's permanent service-connected disability. Eligible veterans should apply for this benefit at the county property appraiser's office. (FS 196.082)

Any real estate used and owned as a homestead by any quadriplegic is exempt from taxation. Veterans who are paraplegic, hemiplegic, or permanently and totally disabled who must use a wheelchair for mobility, or are legally blind, may be exempt from real estate taxation. Check with your local property appraiser to determine if gross annual household income qualifies. The veteran must be a resident of Florida. (FS 196.101)

Service members entitled to homestead exemption in this state, and who are unable to file in person by reason of such service, may file through next of kin or a duly authorized representative. (FS 196.071)

VETERAN BENEFITS: MOTOR VEHICLE LICENSING AND FEE EXEMPTIONS

"V" for Veteran Designation on Driver License

Florida's veterans can add a veteran designation to their driver license or identification card. To add the "V" to a license or ID

card, veterans can visit any Florida driver license office, to include those operated by county tax collectors. Requirements:

1) present a discharge document which shows an honorable discharge from active duty; 2) pay a one-time \$1 fee, in addition to the replacement or renewal fee. If it is too soon to renew your license, you can pay a one-time \$2 fee plus other applicable service fees; 3) visit www.GatherGoGet.com to ensure you have all other documents. Veterans who need to obtain a copy of their DD-214 may request it online at www.archives.gov/veterans.

Note: The word "Veteran" will replace the "V" on future editions of the driver license and identification card.

100% Disabled Veteran State ID Card

A disabled veteran ID card may be issued by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs to any veteran who is a permanent resident of the state and is determined by the VA or Department of Defense to have a 100% service-connected, permanent and total disability rating. (FS 295.17) The card may be used as proof of eligibility for any state benefit except exemption of homestead property taxes. For more information, call (727) 319-7440.

Driver License & State ID Fee Exemptions

Any honorably discharged veteran who has a valid FDVA disabled veteran ID card or who has been determined to have a 100% total and permanent service-connected disability and is qualified to obtain a driver license is generally exempt from all fees. However, a fee may be applied to drivers seeking to reinstate a license. (FS 322.21(7))

The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or a county tax collector may issue or renew a state identification card to a person who presents evidence that he or she is homeless without payment of the fees required.

A \$6.25 fee may apply in offices operated by county tax collectors. Homeless veterans may prove their status with a letter from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that establishes eligibility in the HUD-VASH program.

Disabled Veteran Motor Vehicle License Plate

An honorably discharged veteran who has been a resident of Florida continuously for the past five years or who has established a domicile in Florida, as provided by FS 222.17, may apply for one free disabled veteran "DV" license plate for an owned or leased vehicle. The veteran must provide proof of a service-connected 100-percent disability rating or that the vehicle was acquired through VA financial assistance. Note: Free license plates with a wheelchair emblem are available for those veterans permanently confined to a wheelchair and who otherwise qualify for a DV plate. Service charges may apply. (FS 320.084) For eligibility requirements and more information, call (850) 617-2000 or visit <http://www3.flhsmv.gov/dmv/Proc/rs/RS-17.pdf>.

Handicapped Toll Permit

Licensed drivers who operate a vehicle specially equipped for the handicapped, and are certified by a licensed physician or the VA as having permanent upper limb impairments/disabilities

substantially affecting their ability to deposit coins in toll baskets, shall pass free through all toll gates. A window sticker from the Florida Department of Transportation must be obtained and displayed. (FS 338.155(3))

Disabled Veterans' Exemption from Fees

Total and permanently disabled Florida veterans are exempt from county and municipality building license or permit fees when making certain improvements to their residence in order to make the dwelling habitable or safe. Restrictions apply. (FS 295.16)

Florida State Park Discount Passes

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection provides a 25-percent discount on annual passes to Florida's State Parks for all active duty and honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, National Guard or Reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard. The pass is available for purchase at any Florida State Park staffed ranger station. Veterans with service-related disabilities, surviving spouses and parents of members of the U.S. military who have fallen in combat, and law enforcement officers and firefighters who have died in the line of duty, will receive a free lifetime family annual entrance pass. The free annual pass can only be obtained at a staffed ranger station. For specific details, call (850) 245-2157 or visit www.FloridaStateParks.org.

Hunting and Fishing

The Military Gold Sportsman's License is available for a reduced fee of \$20 to any resident who is an active or retired member of the U. S. Armed Forces, U. S. Armed Forces Reserve, National Guard, U. S. Coast Guard, or Coast Guard Reserve upon submission of a current military ID card. For more information, visit <http://myfwc.com/license/recreational/military-gold/>. The license is only available at tax collector's offices.

State hunting and fishing licenses and permits shall be issued without fees for five years to any veteran who is a Florida resident, certified or determined to be 100% totally and permanently disabled by the VA or the U.S. Armed Forces, or who has been issued a valid disabled veteran ID card by FDVA. For more information, visit <http://myfwc.com> (FS 379.353).

The Division of Forestry has designated areas of state forests as Operation Outdoor Freedom Special Hunt Areas. Active duty members and veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces with combat-related injuries have access to specialized hunting areas that are adapted to assist their needs. For more information, visit www.OperationOutdoorFreedom.org (FS 589.19).

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission makes it easier for Florida veterans to enter the commercial fishing industry. Applicants should visit www.MyFWC.com/Licenseand click on Commercial Saltwater Products or call (850) 487-3122.

Military and Veteran Discounts

Military and veteran discounts lists from national brands, chain locations and online stores to local area mom and pop, single location establishments. For a complete up to

date list, please visit <https://militarybenefits.info/military-and-veteran-discounts/>. There, you can locate discounts in various categories

CALLSIGN: DUSTOFF

Published online in Solider of Fortune

Maj. C. Kelly was killed in Vietnam. His call sign, DUSTOFF, would later be used on medevac flights

On the morning of 1 July 1964 Kelly received a mission request from an ARVN unit in combat near Vinh Long. An American sergeant, the adviser, had been hit in the leg by shrapnel from a mortar round. Several of the ARVN infantry were also wounded. Kelly and his crew flew to the area. The Viet Cong were close in to the ARVN soldiers and the fighting continued as Kelly's helicopter came in to a hover. Kelly floated his ship back and forth, trying to spot the casualties. The Viet Cong opened fire on his ship. The ARVN soldiers and their American advisers were staying low. One adviser radioed Kelly to get out of the area. He answered, "When I have your wounded." Many rounds hit his aircraft before one of them passed through the open side door and pierced his heart. He murmured "My God," and died. His ship pitched up, nosed to the right, rolled over, and crashed.

Air Ambulance Vietnam Army.mil

The lay of the land and the guerrilla nature of Viet Cong warfare in South Vietnam demanded that the American forces stationed there from the early 1960s through March 1973 again use the medical helicopter. In a country of mountains, jungles, and marshy plains, with few passable roads and serviceable railroads, the allied forces waged a frontless war against a seldom seen enemy. Even more than in Korea, helicopter evacuation proved to be both valuable and dangerous.

South Vietnam consists of three major geographic features. A coastal plain, varying in width from fifteen to forty kilometers, extends along most of the 1,400 kilometers of the coast. This plain abuts the second feature—the southeastern edge of the Annamite Mountain Chain, known in South Vietnam as the Central Highlands, which run from the northern border along the old Demilitarized Zone south to within eighty kilometers of Saigon. The Central Highlands are mostly steep-sloped, sharp-crested mountains varying in height from 5,000 to 8,000 feet, covered with tangled jungles and broken by many narrow passes. The southern third of the country consists almost entirely of an arable delta.

These three geographical features helped shape the four military zones of South Vietnam. The northern zone, or I Corps Zone, which ran from the Demilitarized Zone down to Kontum and Binh Dinh provinces, consisted almost entirely of high mountains and dense jungles. At several points the Annamites cut the narrow coastal plain and extend to the South China Sea. II Corps Zone ran from I Corps Zone south to the southern foothills of the Central Highlands, about one hundred kilometers north of Saigon. It consisted of a long stretch of the coastal plain, the highest portion of the Central Highlands, and the Kontum and Darlac Plateaus. III Corps Zone ran from II Corps Zone southwest to a line forty kilometers below the capital, Saigon. This was an intermediate geographic region, containing the southern foothills of the Central Highlands; a few large, dry plains; some thick, triple-canopy jungle along the Cambodian border; and the northern stretches of the delta formed by the Mekong River to the south. IV Corps Zone consisted almost entirely of this delta, which has no forests except for dense

mangrove swamps at the southernmost tip and forested areas just north and southeast of Saigon. Seldom more than twenty feet above sea level, the delta is covered with rice fields separated by earthen dikes. During the rainy season the paddies are marshy, making helicopter landings and vehicular troop transport extremely difficult. Hamlets straddle the rivers and canals, and larger villages (up to 10,000 people) and cities lie at tile junctions of the waterways. Bamboo brakes and tropical trees grow around the villages and usually extend from 50 to 300 meters back on either side of the canal or hamlet.

The entire country lies below the Tropic of Cancer, between the 8th and 17th parallels. The climate is generally hot and humid the year round. In winter the country lies under a high pressure system that causes a dry season in the south. In the summer, however, rains fall heavily, varying from torrential downpours to steady mists. The northern region of South Vietnam has the most rain, averaging 128 inches, while the Saigon region averages 80 inches. In the northern region and the Central Highlands, where most of the fighting by U.S. troops during the war occurred, dense fog and low clouds often grounded all aircraft. About ten times a year, usually between July and November, typhoons blow in from the South China Sea, soaking South Vietnam with heavy rains and lashing it with fierce winds.

Although the climate and terrain exacerbated the technical problems of medical evacuation by helicopter in South Vietnam, the air ambulance pilots who worked there worried as much or more about the dangers that stemmed from the enemy's frequent use of guerrilla tactics. The Viet Cong were wily, elusive, and intensely motivated. They usually had no respect for the red crosses on the doors of the air ambulance helicopters. Likely to be annihilated in a large-scale, head-on clash with the immense firepower of American troops', they usually struck only in raids and ambushes of American and South Vietnamese patrols. To perform their missions the air ambulance pilots often had to fly into areas subject to intense enemy small arms fire. Later in the war the pilots encountered more formidable obstacles, such as Russian- and Chinese-made ground-to-air missiles. No air ambulance pilot could depend on a ground commander's assurance that a pickup zone was secure. Mortar and small arms fire often found a zone just as the helicopter touched down. Enemy soldiers were known to patiently hide for hours around an ambushed patrol, looking for the inevitable rescue helicopter.

In these conditions the modern techniques of aeromedical evacuation developed and matured. The obstacles of mountain, jungle, and floodplain could be overcome only by helicopters. The frontless nature of the war also made necessary the helicopter for medical evacuation. Air ambulance units found ever wider employment as the helicopter—used both as a fighting machine and as a transport vehicle—came to dominate many phases of the war.

The Struggle Begins

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy took the first of a number of measures that over the next four years drew the United States deep into the stormy politics of Southeast Asia. In May, Kennedy publicly repeated a pledge, first made by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954, of U.S. support for the government of the Republic of Vietnam. Kennedy had the Department of State adopt a less demanding diplomacy in its dealings with the troubled regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem. The department tried to coax Diem into making urgently needed political, economic, and military reforms, but he dallied, and the Viet Cong summer campaign of 1961 further weakened his tenuous hold on the country. U.S. officials knew that he was losing control

rapidly when, in September, the rebels captured a provincial capital only ninety kilometers from Saigon.

President Kennedy now believed that he had to decide whether to watch a U.S. ally collapse or to find some way of helping Diem fight the Viet Cong. In October 1961 Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, the President's personal military adviser, and Dr. Walt W. Rostow, one of the President's aides, recommended that the United States commit some of its combat troops to Diem's defense. But Kennedy turned down this proposal. Instead he persuaded Diem to agree to a program of broad reforms, in return for the deployment of more U.S. military advisers and military equipment to support the combat operations of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

On 11 December 1961 Saigon saw the arrival of the first direct U.S. military support for South Vietnam—the 8th Transportation Company from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the 57th Transportation Company from Fort Lewis, Washington. Both were light helicopter units. The two companies consisted of 400 pilots, crews, and technicians, with thirty-three U.S. Army H-21 Shawnee helicopters. The aircraft carrier that brought them, the U.S.S. Core, also brought four T-28 single-engine, propeller aircraft en route to the Vietnamese National Air Force (VNAF). With its deck towering over hundreds of nearby junks, the Core edged up the Saigon River to a pier in front of the Majestic Hotel. Thousands of Vietnamese lined the riverbanks and watched the start of a new phase in the war dividing their country.

In January and February 1962 two more helicopter companies, the 93d Transportation and the 18th Aviation, arrived in Saigon. The city struggled to find room for several thousand personnel from helicopter companies, Air Force training groups, engineer detachments, the Seventh Fleet, and sundry advisory units. The South Vietnamese Army, equipped with American armored personnel carriers and backed by the new American helicopters, began to show a more aggressive spirit. Accompanied by U.S. advisers, it attacked previously inviolate Viet Cong strongholds, such as War Zone D north of Saigon, and the U Minh Forest in the southern Mekong Delta.

The First Air Ambulance Unit in Vietnam

Despite their early successes in 1962, both the South Vietnamese and their American advisers suffered growing numbers of casualties. By the end of the year the medical part of the Vietnam troop list had expanded to encompass units able to provide a full range of medical services for a planned eight thousand U.S. military personnel. In Washington, Maj. Gen. James H. Forsee, Chief of Professional Services at Walter Reed, and Col. James T. McGibony, Chief of the Medical Plans and Operations Division, assured the Surgeon General that the medical units assigned to Vietnam would supply fully integrated health care. Forsee and McGibony designated the first Army medical units that would go to Vietnam to support the U.S. buildup: the 8th Field Hospital; medical detachments for dental, thoracic, orthopedic, and neurosurgical care; and the 57th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance). Arriving in April 1962, the 57th remained there throughout the next eleven years of American military involvement in that country.

This long ordeal began for the air ambulance pilots and crews in late February 1962, when Headquarters of the U.S. Second Army ordered the 57th, stationed at Fort George Meade, Maryland, for a permanent assignment to the U.S. Army, Pacific. A frenzied logistical effort began. Since the 57th was not authorized a cook, the commander, Capt. John Temperelli, Jr., obtained a six months supply of C-rations. Since they had no

survival equipment, the unit's men hastily made up their kits from local stores. The typical kit, stored in a parachute bag, contained a machete, canned water, C-rations, a lensatic compass, extra ammunition, a signaling mirror, and sundry items the men thought they might need in a crisis. When they arrived in Vietnam in late April, the pilots had five "Hueys," as their UH-1 helicopters were nicknamed. Along with the 8th Field Hospital and the other medical detachments, the 57th set itself up in the seaside town of Nha Trang, 320 kilometers northeast of overcrowded Saigon. The assignment of U.S. Army medical units to Nha Trang prevented a worsening of the logistics problem in Saigon, but it placed medical support far from most of the U.S. military units in the country.

On its first mission the 57th evacuated a U.S. Army captain advising the ARVN forces. An evacuation request came on 12 May from Tuy Hoa, sixty-five kilometers up the coast from Nha Trang. The captain, suffering from an extremely high fever, was carried to the 8th Field Hospital. Soon after, the 57th began to evacuate ARVN soldiers as well, even from combat. Although the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) prohibited the 57th from evacuating Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, Captain Temperelli found this policy to be unrealistic. He had to work closely with local Vietnamese officials to set up designated evacuation sites in secure areas and to improve the communication nets that relayed the 57th's evacuation requests. Forced to use the ARVN radio channels, the 57th was obliged to honor requests for evacuation of Vietnamese casualties. In the years ahead the air ambulances carried the wounded of all nationalities, even those of the enemy.

As yet, however, the 57th was a new unit, little known, and with little to do. It spent most of that summer sitting in Nha Trang, unable to get to the fighting. By the end of June the detachment had evacuated only twelve American and fourteen ARVN personnel. In an attempt to increase his range of action, Temperelli assigned two of his Hueys to Qui Nhon, another coastal town some 160 kilometers to the north. Neither base had refueling sites in its area. The radius of action from each was only 140 kilometers, and most of the fighting was at least 200 kilometers to the south. Hoping to add an extra fifty-five minutes flying time to each helicopter, Temperelli asked for permission to replace the unnecessary cockpit heaters with auxiliary fuel cells; but he never received approval for the change. He also tried to have the helicopters' JP-4 fuel stored in certain critical inland areas, but was only partially successful. He could also obtain no favorable response to his several requests for permission to move the unit to Saigon or the Delta.

Early in July 1962 all commanders of U.S. Army aviation units in South Vietnam met in Saigon to discuss the possibility of the extensive use of Army aviation in support of South Vietnamese counterinsurgency operations. Briefing officers told the commanders that greater American military involvement would probably require Army aviation to assume many duties formerly assigned to armor, ground transport, and the infantry. Captain Temperelli left this conference angered that, in spite of the predicted growth of Army aviation in Vietnam, the Army Medical Service had so far furnished only limited resources to his unit. The reluctance of the Vietnamese Air Force to respond to many evacuation requests convinced him that the burden of medical evacuation in this war would have to fall on U.S. Army helicopter ambulance units. Yet so far the Surgeon General had sent no representative to the 57th to see what its problems were.

In fact, the logistics problems of the 57th were only a small part of the shortages that hindered all Army aviation units in the first years of the war. Deficiencies and excesses in the authorized lists of equipment too often appeared only after units were

committed to combat. Many of the aviation units carried unnecessary heaters and winter clothing with them to Vietnam simply because the standard equipment list called for them. Red tape compounded equipment problems. At first the aviation units sent their orders for parts directly to the U.S. Army on Okinawa, but Okinawa often returned the paperwork for corrections to comply with directives that the forces in Vietnam had never heard of. Only after several months of logistical chaos did the Army Support Group, Vietnam (USASGV) begin to coordinate the requisition of parts.

In this first year of operations Army supply depots in the Pacific could fill only three-fourths of the aviation orders from Vietnam. This problem arose partly from the unusual role of the Army aviation units there. Army helicopters used in support of ARVN operations flew far more hours and wore out much faster than peacetime supply estimates provided for. By November 1962 the Army had thirteen aviation units flying 199 aircraft of eight types at ten places in Vietnam. Multiple bases for several units added to the units' supply needs.

Since the 57th Medical Detachment had the only UH-1's in Vietnam so far, it could draw on no pool of replacement parts. Instead, it had to cannibalize one of its own helicopters to keep the others flying. When Gen. Paul D. Harkins, commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), and Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, Army Chief of Staff, visited Nha Trang in August 1962, they saw two of the 57th's UH-1's sitting on a ramp, with no rotor blades. The 57th had no spares.

Then combat aviation units began to demand the 57th's few remaining parts. In November, feeling confident after an influx of new infantry equipment from the United States, the South Vietnamese Army planned a large scale combat assault into the "Iron Triangle," a Viet Cong stronghold northwest of Saigon. Armed Huey UH-1's were to cover the CH-21's carrying ARVN troops to the landing zones. Since several of the Hueys had bad tail rotor gear boxes and faulty starter generators, the 57th received instructions to bring all its starter generators to Saigon. Plainly, the unit's craft were about to be cannibalized.

To head off the danger, Temperelli accompanied the generators to Saigon and reported to Brig. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, commander of the Army Support Group, Vietnam. Noting that the absence of the generators on the 57th's aircraft would leave South Vietnam without air evacuation coverage, Temperelli suggested that the 57th might fly down to support the ARVN assault. But Stilwell said no. Temperelli handed over the generators and left, taking with him a promise that they would be returned after the operation. Only one ever made it back, and the 57th was totally grounded from 17 November to 15 December. When he recovered the one generator, Temperelli shifted the 57th's one flying aircraft back and forth between Nha Trang and Qui Nhon to provide some coverage at each location.

A graver danger to the 57th's independence developed out of its medical mission. For most of the Korean War, Army ambulance helicopters had served under the aegis of the Army Medical Service, attached to the hospitals behind the corps areas. But in September 1962 General Stilwell considered ending this policy in Vietnam by transferring the 57th from the Medical Service to the Army Transportation Corps, which then controlled all other Army helicopters in Vietnam. Temperelli, accompanied by Lt. Col. Carl A. Fischer, USASGV Surgeon and commander of the 8th Field Hospital, again went to Saigon. This time he was more successful, convincing Stilwell to maintain the old policy.

Temperelli also deflected other attacks on the 57th's integrity. Because of the relatively few hours flown by the pilots in their first year in Vietnam, other Army aviators there argued against dedicating any helicopters to medical evacuation. Some suggested removing the red crosses from medical helicopters and assigning general support tasks to any idle medical aircraft. In another attempt to coopt the 57th's resources, the senior MAAG advisor in Qui Nhon tried several times to commandeer a standby evacuation ship; but each time the 57th told him that he could have priority on the craft only if he were a casualty. All in all, 1962 was not a good year for the air ambulance unit and its pilots.

Early in January 1963, however, an ARVN assault in the Delta convinced many skeptics that the 57th ought to be brought closer to the scene of battle. South Vietnamese intelligence had heard of an enemy radio station operating near the village of Ap Bac in the Plain of Reeds. Fifty U.S. advisers and 400 men of the ARVN 7th Infantry Division flew ten CH-21 Shawnee helicopters to the area. Five armed UH-1's that would serve as close air cover escorted the convoy.

The first three waves of helicopters dropped their troops into the landing zone without difficulty. But just as the fourth wave was touching down, Viet Cong opened fire with automatic weapons and shot down four of the CH-21's. A U.S. Army UH-1B moved into the face of the enemy fire to try to rescue one of the downed crews. It too crashed-the first UH-1B destroyed by the enemy in the Vietnam War. The other four UH-1's suppressed the Viet Cong fire, allowing the remaining Shawnees to leave the hotly contested area without further loss.

Other than for the unusually large number of forces involved, the battle was typical for this period: in the ground fight that followed, the South Vietnamese infantry failed to surround the Viet Cong, who escaped under cover of night. Three American advisers and sixty-five ARVN soldiers were killed. The 57th Medical Detachment, still stationed at Nha Trang and Qui Nhon, far to the north, could not help evacuate the wounded.

The losses suffered at Ap Bac impressed on Army commanders that the air ambulances might be best employed near the fighting. On 16 January the Support Group ordered the 57th to move to Saigon. By this time the 57th had only one flyable aircraft, at Qui Nhon. But Support Group told Captain Temperelli that new UH-1B's were on the way. On 30 January the 57th arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon.

Dust Off Takes Form

The pilots and crews found Saigon much different from Qui Nhon and Nha Trang. Here they enjoyed access to a large, fully stocked post exchange and commissary. Local Vietnamese stores sold French wines, liqueurs, and champagnes, and the post exchange sold popular American spirits. The Armed Forces Radio Station broadcast the latest American music and reported ball game scores. The officers had clubs in the Brink and Rex Hotels, and the Five Oceans Club in the Cholon Officers' Open Mess. The French-sponsored Cercle Sportif provided the officers swimming and tennis, and the Club Nautique offered water-skiing, rowing, and motorboating. Also available were the Saigon Tennis Club, the Saigon Golf Club, and the Cercle Hippique for horseback riding. The city even boasted a six-lane bowling alley. Some of the pilots frequented cafes like the Riverboat Restaurant, and one even sang for a while in a downtown nightclub.

The veterans had little time to enjoy such amenities. In late February 1963 Captain Temperelli passed the reins of the 57th to a new commander, Maj. Lloyd E. Spencer. The veteran pilots rotated out of Vietnam and their replacements arrived. Shortly after Spencer arrived in Saigon, General Stilwell called him in for an interview. Slapping at a map of South Vietnam, Stilwell asked Spencer how he proposed to cover all the country with only five aircraft. All that Spencer could say was that the 57th would do its best. After a lengthy discussion of problems, Stilwell again promised the 57th the first five new UH-1B's in South Vietnam. On 11 March the unit signed over the last of its grounded UH-1A's for return to the States. The next day Support Group issued the detachment five new UH-1B's that were still on a ship in the Saigon Harbor. On 23 March the 57th declared itself fully operational again.

But Saigon brought its own problems. The 57th's assigned parking area at Tan Son Nhut Airport was directly behind the area where the Vietnamese Air Force pilots parked their C-47 Dakotas. When the VNAF pilots started their planes, always parked with the tails towards the 57th's area, the engines splattered oil all over the bubbles, windows, and windshields of the Hueys. Several times the 57th's crews asked the Vietnamese to park the C-47's facing another direction, but the pilots refused. The 57th's solution to the problem, while it did not foster allied harmony, was effective. Spencer explained: "When you fly a helicopter over the tail of a C-47 it really plays hell with the plane's rear elevators; so the Vietnamese got the message and moved the C-47's."

In April, part of the 57th's pilots and crews bade farewell to the comforts of Saigon when two of the aircraft went on a semipermanent standby to the town of Pleiku, some 120 kilometers northwest of the 57th's old base at Qui Nhon. Pleiku lies in Vietnam's Annamite mountain chain. That month a 57th helicopter at Pleiku joined a search and rescue mission for a B-26 that had crashed while covering a combat assault. The crew found the B-26 lying on a pinnacle, but could not land because of the stunted trees and other growth that covered the peak. While the pilot hovered as low as possible, the crew chief and the medical corpsman leaped from the Huey to the ground, where they cut out a landing area. The Huey landed and the men removed the B-26's .50-caliber machine guns and the bodies of its three Air Force crewmen.

The 57th's two units in the north stood duty round the clock, until their operational commanders canceled night missions after a transport aircraft went down on a flight in darkness over the South China Sea. Most of their missions were to small U.S. Army Special Forces teams scattered among the Montagnard villages in the wild highlands. The Viet Cong there had none of the sophisticated weapons used by their compatriots in the south. The air ambulances at Pleiku contended with only homemade guns, crossbows, and a few firearms the Viet Cong had captured from ARVN troops.

In late June, one of the Hueys at Pleiku moved to Qui Nhon to resume coverage of that sector. In I Corps Zone to the north, U.S. Marine H-34 helicopters furnished both combat aviation support and medical evacuation. The 57th's aircraft at Pleiku and Qui Nhon covered II Corps Zone, and the three in Saigon covered III and IV Corps Zones. Although all the four corps regions of South Vietnam had some form of medical evacuation, it was thinly spread.

For the past year the 57th had worked without a tactical call sign, simply using "Army" and the tail number of the aircraft. For example, if a pilot were flying a helicopter with the serial number 62-12345, his call sign would be "Army 12345." The 57th

communicated internally on any vacant frequency it could find. Major Spencer decided that this slapdash system had to go. In Saigon he visited Navy Support Activity, which controlled all the call words in South Vietnam. He received a Signal Operations Instructions book that listed all the unused call words. Most, like "Bandit," were more suitable for assault units than for medical evacuation units. But one entry, "Dust Off," epitomized the 57th's medical evacuation missions. Since the countryside then was dry and dusty, helicopter pickups in the fields often blew dust, dirt, blankets, and shelter halves all over the men on the ground. By adopting "Dust Off," Spencer found for Army aeromedical evacuation in Vietnam a name that lasted the rest of the war.

Even though distinguished by its own name, the 57th still had no formal mission statement. Its pilots worked on the assumption that their main purpose was to evacuate wounded and injured U.S. civilians and military personnel. It continued to provide this service to the Vietnamese as well when resources permitted. Like Captain Temperelli, Major Spencer also felt pressure to allow ground commanders to use Dust Off aircraft for routine administrative flights, but with General Stilwell's support he kept the 57th focused on its medical mission. If the 57th had already scheduled one of its aircraft for a routine flight, it sometimes accepted healthy passengers on a space-available basis, with the proviso that the passengers might have to leave the ship in the middle of nowhere if the pilot received a Dust Off request while in the air.

As the year went on, the 57th flew Dust Off missions more often. On one day alone, 10 September 1963, it evacuated 197 Vietnamese from the Delta, where large Viet Cong forces had virtually destroyed three settlements. That day Dust Off helicopters made flights with Vietnamese jammed into the passenger compartment and standing on the skids. The last flight out took place at night, and the three aircraft flew near a firefight on the ground. After a few tracer rounds arced up toward their helicopters, the pilots blacked out their ships and flew on to Saigon.

The first nine months of the year had brought important changes. Dust Off had a name, solid support from above, a mission—though no mission statement—and a great deal more business. Its problems reflected its new-found popularity.

Relations with the South Vietnamese

Although the number of Vietnamese casualties rose in 1963, the South Vietnamese military refused to set up its own aeromedical evacuation unit. The VNAF response to requests for medical evacuation depended on aircraft availability, the security of the landing zone, and the mood and temperament of the VNAF pilots. If the South Vietnamese had no on-duty or standby aircraft ready to fly a medical evacuation mission they passed the request on to the 57th.

Even when they accepted the mission themselves, their response usually suffered from a lack of leadership and poor organization. Since South Vietnamese air mission commanders rarely flew with their flights, the persons responsible for deciding whether to abort a mission often lacked the requisite experience. As a MACV summary said: "Usually the decision was made to abort, and the air mission commander could do nothing about it. When an aggressive pilot was in the lead ship, the aircraft came through despite the firing. American advisers reported that on two occasions only the first one or two helicopters landed; the rest hovered out of reach of the wounded who needed to get aboard."

An example of the poor quality of VNAF medical evacuation occurred in late October 1963, when the ARVN 2d Battalion, 14th Regiment, conducted Operation LONG HUU II near O Lac in the Delta. At dawn the battalion began its advance. Shortly after they moved out, the Viet Cong ambushed them, opening fire from three sides with automatic weapons and 81 -mm. mortars. At 0700 casualty reports started coming into the battalion command post. The battalion commander sent his first casualty report to the regimental headquarters at 0800: one ARVN soldier dead and twelve wounded, with more casualties in the paddies. He then requested medical evacuation helicopters. By 0845 the casualty count had risen to seventeen lightly wounded, fourteen seriously wounded, and four dead. He sent out another urgent call for helicopters. The battalion executive officer and the American adviser prepared two landing zones, one marked by green smoke for the seriously wounded and a second by yellow smoke for the less seriously wounded. Not until 1215 did three VNAF H-34's arrive over O Lac to carry out the wounded and dead. During the delay the ARVN battalion stayed in place to protect their casualties rather than pursue the retreating enemy. The American adviser wrote later: "It is common that, when casualties are sustained, the advance halts while awaiting evacuation. Either the reaction time for helicopter evacuation must be improved, or some plan must be made for troops in the battalion rear to provide security for the evacuation and care of casualties."

The ARVN medical services also proved inadequate to handle the large numbers of casualties. In the Delta, ARVN patients were usually taken to the Vietnamese Provincial Hospital at Can Tho. As the main treatment center for the Delta, it often had a backlog of patients. At night only one doctor was on duty, for the ARVN medical service lacked physicians. If Dust Off flew in a large number of casualties, that doctor normally treated as many as he could; but he rarely called in any of his fellow doctors to help. In return they would not call him on his night off. Many times at night Dust Off pilots would have to make several flights into Can Tho. On return flights the pilots often found loads of injured ARVN soldiers lying on the landing pad where they had been left some hours earlier. After several such flights few pilots could sustain any enthusiasm for night missions.

Another problem was that the ARVN officers sometimes bowed to the sentiments of their soldiers, many of whom believed that the soul lingers between this world and the next if the body is not properly buried. They insisted that Dust Off ships fly out dead bodies, especially if there were no seriously wounded waiting for treatment. Once, after landing at a pickup site north of Saigon, a Dust Off crew saw many ARVN wounded lying on the ground. But the other ARVN soldiers brought bodies to the helicopter to be evacuated first. As the soldiers loaded the dead in one side of the ship, a Dust Off medical corpsman pulled the bodies out the other side. The pilot stepped out of the helicopter to explain in halting French to the ARVN commander that his orders were to carry out only the wounded. But an ARVN soldier manning a .50-caliber machine gun on a nearby armored personnel carrier suddenly pointed his weapon at the Huey. This convinced the Dust Off crew to fly out the bodies. They carried out one load but did not return for another.

Kelly and the Dust Off Mystique

Early in 1964 the growing burden of aeromedical evacuation fell on the 57th's third group of new pilots, crews, and maintenance personnel. The helicopters were still the 1963 UH-1B models, but most of the new pilots were fresh from flight school. The new commander, Maj. Charles L. Kelly, from Georgia, was a gruff, stubborn, dedicated soldier who let few obstacles prevent him from finishing a task. Within six months he set an example of

courage and hard work that Dust Off pilots emulated for the rest of the war.

Kelly quickly took advantage of the 57th's belated move to the fighting in the south. On 1 March 1964 Support Group ordered the aircraft at Pleiku and Qui Nhon to move to the Delta. Two helicopters and five pilots, now called Detachment A, 57th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance), Provisional, flew to the U.S. base at Soc Trang. Once a fighter base for both the French and the Japanese, Soc Trang was a compound roughly 1,000 by 3,000 feet, surrounded by rice paddies.

Unit statistics soon proved the wisdom of the move south: the number of evacuees climbed from 193 in February to 416 in March. Detachment A continued its coverage of combat in the Delta until October 1964, when another helicopter ambulance detachment from the States took over that area. Major Kelly, who had taken command of the 57th on 11 January, moved south with Detachment A, preferring the field and flying to ground duty in Saigon.

Detachment A in Soc Trang lived in crude "Southeast Asia" huts with sandbags and bunkers for protection against enemy mortar and ground attack. The rest of the 57th in Saigon struggled along with air conditioning, private baths, a mess hall, and a bar in their living quarters. In spite of the contrast, most pilots preferred Soc Trang. It was there that Major Kelly and his pilots forged the Dust Off tradition of valorous and dedicated service.

Major Kelly and his teams also benefited from two years of growing American involvement in Vietnam. By the spring of 1964 the United States had 16,000 military personnel in South Vietnam (3,700 officers and 12,300 enlisted men). The Army, which accounted for 10, 100 of these, had increased its aircraft in South Vietnam from 40 in December 1961 to 370 in December 1963. For the first time since its arrival two years ago the 57th was receiving enough Dust Off requests to keep all its pilots busy.

But Major Kelly faced one big problem when he arrived: the helicopters that the 57th had received the year before were showing signs of age and use, and General Stilwell, the Support Group commander, could find no new aircraft for the detachment. Average flight time on the old UH-1B's was 800 hours. But this did not deter the new pilots from each flying more than 100 hours a month in medical evacuations. Some of them stopped logging their flight time at 140 hours, so that the flight surgeon would not ground them for exceeding the monthly ceiling.

The new team continued and even stepped up night operations. In April 1963 the detachment flew 110 hours at night while evacuating ninety-nine patients. To aid their night missions in the Delta the pilots made a few special plotting flights, during which they sketched charts of the possible landing zones, outlined any readily identifiable terrain features, and noted whether radio navigational aid could be received. During one such flight Major Kelly and his copilot heard on their radio that a VNAF T-28, a fixed-wing plane, had gone down. After joining the search, Kelly soon located the plane. While he and his crew circled the area trying to decide how to approach the landing zone, the Viet Cong below opened fire on the helicopter. One round passed up through the open cargo door and slammed into the ceiling. Unfazed, Kelly shot a landing to the T-28, taking fire from all sides. Once down, he, his crew chief, and his medical corpsman jumped out and sprayed submachine gun fire at the Viet Cong while helping the VNAF pilot destroy his radios and pull the M60 machine guns from his plane. Kelly left the area without further

damage and returned the VNAF pilot to his unit. Kelly and his Dust Off crew flew more than 500 miles that day.

On 2 April one of the Detachment A crews flying to Saigon from Soc Trang received a radio call that a village northwest of them had been overrun. Flying up to the area where the Mekong River flows into South Vietnam from Cambodia, they landed at the village of Cai Cai, where during the night Viet Cong had killed or wounded all the people. Soldiers lay at their battle stations where they had fallen, women and children where they had been shot. The Dust Off teams worked the rest of the day flying out the dead and wounded, putting two or three children on each litter.

One night that spring Detachment A pilots Capt. Patrick H. Brady and 2d Lt. Ernest J. Sylvester were on duty when a call came in that an A1-E Skyraider, a fixed-wing plane, had gone down near the town of Rach Gia. Flying west to the site, they radioed the Air Force radar controller, who guided them to the landing zone and warned them of Viet Cong antiaircraft guns. As the Dust Off ship drew near the landing zone, which was plainly marked by the burning A1-E, the pilot of another nearby A1-E radioed that he had already knocked out the Viet Cong machine guns. But when Brady and Sylvester approached the zone the Viet Cong opened fire. Bullets crashed into the cockpit and the pilots lost control of the aircraft. Neither was seriously wounded and they managed to regain control and hurry out of the area. Viet Cong fire then brought down the second A1-E. A third arrived shortly and finally suppressed the enemy fire, allowing a second Dust Off ship from Soc Trang to land in the zone. The crew chief and medical corpsman found what they guessed was the dead pilot of the downed aircraft, then found the pilot of the second, who had bailed out, and flew him back to Soc Trang.

A short time later Brady accompanied an ARVN combat assault mission near Phan Thiet, northeast of Saigon. While Brady's Dust Off ship circled out of range of enemy ground fire, the transport helicopters landed and the troops moved out into a wooded area heavily defended by the Viet Cong. The ARVN soldiers immediately suffered several casualties and called for Dust Off. Brady's aircraft took hits going into and leaving the landing zone, but he managed to fly out the wounded. In Phan Thiet, while he was assessing the damage to his aircraft, an American adviser asked him if he would take ammunition back to the embattled ARVN unit when he returned for the next load of wounded. After discussing the propriety of carrying ammunition in an aircraft marked with red crosses, Brady and his pilots decided to consider the ammunition as "preventive medicine" and fly it in to the ARVN troops. Back at the landing zone Brady found that Viet Cong fire had downed an L-19 observation plane. Brady ran to the crash site but both the American pilot and the observer had been killed. The medical corpsman and crew chief pulled the bodies from the wreckage and loaded them on the helicopter. Brady left the ammunition and flew out with the dead.

By the time the helicopter had finished its mission and returned to Tan Son Nhut, most of the 57th were waiting. News of an American death traveled quickly in those early days of the war. Later, reflecting on the incident, Kelly praised his pilots for bringing the bodies back even though the 57th's mission statement said nothing about moving the dead. But he voiced renewed doubts about the ferrying of ammunition.

In fact, the Dust Off mission was again under attack. When Support Command began to pressure the 57th to place removable red crosses on the aircraft and begin accepting general purpose missions, Kelly stepped up unit operations. Knowing that removable red crosses had already been placed on transport and assault helicopters in the north, Kelly told his

men that the 57th must prove its worth-and by implication the value of dedicated medical helicopters-beyond any shadow of doubt.

Whereas the 57th before had flown missions only in response to a request, it now began to seek missions. Kelly himself flew almost every night. As dusk came, he and his crew would depart Soc Trang and head southwest for the marshes and Bac Lieu, home of a team from the 73d Aviation Company and detachments from two signal units, then further south to Ca Mau, an old haunt of the Viet Minh, whom the French had never been able to dislodge from its forested swamps. Next they would fly south almost to the tip of Ca Mau Peninsula, then at Nam Can reverse their course toward the Seven Canals area. After a check for casualties there at Vi Thanh, they turned northwest up to Rach Gia on the Gulf of Siam, then on to the Seven Mountains region on the Cambodian border. From there they came back to Can Tho, the home of fourteen small American units, then up to Vinh Long on the Mekong River, home of the 114th Airmobile Company. Next they flew due east to Truc Giang, south to the few American advisers at Phu Vinh, then home to Soc Trang. The entire circuit was 720 kilometers.

If any of the stops had patients to be evacuated, Kelly's crew loaded them on the aircraft and continued on course, unless a patient's condition warranted returning immediately to Soc Trang. After delivering the patients, they would sometimes resume the circuit. Many nights they carried ten to fifteen patients who otherwise would have had to wait until daylight to receive the care they needed. In March this flying from outpost to outpost, known as "scarfing," resulted in seventy-four hours of night flying that evacuated nearly one-fourth of that month's 450 evacuees. The strategem worked; General Stilwell dropped the idea of having the 57th use removable red crosses.

Although most of Dust Off's work in the Delta was over flat, marshy land, Detachment A sometimes had to work the difficult mountainous areas near the Cambodian border. Late on the afternoon of 11 April Kelly received a mission request to evacuate two wounded ARVN soldiers from Phnom Kto Mountain of the Seven Mountains of An Giang Province. When he arrived he found that the only landing zone near the ground troops was a small area surrounded by high trees below some higher ground held by the Viet Cong. Despite the updrafts common to mountain flying, the mists, and the approaching darkness, Kelly shot an approach to the area. The enemy opened fire and kept firing until Kelly's ship dropped below the treetops into the landing zone. Kelly could set the aircraft down on only one skid; the slope was too steep. Since only one of the wounded was at the landing zone, Kelly and his crew had to balance the ship precariously while waiting for the ARVN troops to carry the other casualty up the mountain. With both patients finally on board, Kelly took off and again flew through enemy fire. The medical corpsman promptly began working on the Vietnamese, one of whom had been wounded in five places. Both casualties survived.

When Kelly flew such a mission he rarely let bad weather darkness, or the enemy stop him from completing it. He fought his way to the casualties and brought them out. On one mission the enemy forced him away from the landing zone before he could place the patients on board. An hour later he tried to land exactly the same way, through enemy fire, and this time he managed to load the patients safely. The Viet Cong showed their indifference to the red crosses on the aircraft by trying to destroy it with small arms, automatic weapons, and mortars, even while the medical corpsman and crew chief loaded the patients. One round hit the main fuel drain valve and JP-4 fuel started spewing. Kelly elected to fly out anyway, practicing what he had preached

since he arrived in Vietnam by putting the patients above all else and hurrying them off the battlefield. He radioed the Soc Trang tower that his ship was leaking fuel and did not have much left, and that he wanted priority on landing. The tower operator answered that Kelly had priority and asked whether he needed anything else. Kelly said, "Yes, bring me some ice cream." just after he landed on the runway the engine quit, fuel tanks empty. Crash trucks surrounded the helicopter. The base commander drove up, walked over to Kelly, and handed him a quart of ice cream.

Apart from the Viet Cong, the 57th's greatest problem at that time was a lack of pilots. After Kelly reached Vietnam he succeeded in having the other nine Medical Service Corps pilots who followed him assigned to the 57th. He needed more, but the Surgeon General's Aviation Branch seemed to have little understanding of the rigors of Dust Off flying. In the spring of 1964 the Aviation Branch tried to have new Medical Service Corps pilots assigned to nonmedical helicopter units in Vietnam, assuming that they would benefit more from combat training than from Dust Off flying. In late June Kelly gave his response:

As for combat experience, the pilots in this unit are getting as much or more combat-support flying experience than any unit over here. You must understand that everybody wants to get into the Aeromedical Evacuation Business. To send pilots to U.T.T. [a nonmedical unit] or anywhere else is playing right into their hands. I fully realize that I do not know much about the big program, but our job is evacuation of casualties from the battlefield. This we are doing day and night, without escort aircraft, and with only one ship for each mission. The other [nonmedical] units fly in groups, rarely at night, and always heavily armed.

In other words, Kelly thought that his unit had a unique job to do and that the only effective training for it could be found in the cockpit of a Dust Off helicopter.

With more and more fighting occurring in the Delta and around Saigon, the 57th could not always honor every evacuation request. U.S. Army helicopter assault companies were forced to keep some of their aircraft on evacuation standby, but without a medical corpsman or medical equipment. Because of the shortage of Army aviators and the priority of armed combat support, the Medical Service Corps did not have enough pilots to staff another Dust Off unit in Vietnam. Most Army aeromedical evacuation units elsewhere already worked with less than their permitted number of pilots. Although Army aviation in Vietnam had grown considerably since 1961, by the summer of 1964 its resources fell short of what it needed to perform its missions, especially medical evacuation.

Army commanders, however, seldom have all the men and material they can use, and Major Kelly knew that he had to do his best with what he had. On the morning of 1 July 1964 Kelly received a mission request from an ARVN unit in combat near Vinh Long. An American sergeant, the adviser, had been hit in the leg by shrapnel from a mortar round. Several of the ARVN infantry were also wounded. Kelly and his crew flew to the area. The Viet Cong were close in to the ARVN soldiers and the fighting continued as Kelly's helicopter came in to a hover. Kelly floated his ship back and forth, trying to spot the casualties. The Viet Cong opened fire on his ship. The ARVN soldiers and their American advisers were staying low. One adviser radioed Kelly to get out of the area. He answered, "When I have your wounded." Many rounds hit his aircraft before one of them passed through the open side door and pierced his heart. He murmured "My God," and died. His ship pitched up, nosed to the right, rolled over, and crashed.

The rest of the crew, shaken but not seriously injured, crawled from the wreck and dragged Kelly's body behind a mound of dirt. Dust Off aircraft later evacuated Kelly's crew and the other casualties.

The United States awarded him the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously. South Vietnam conferred the Military Order Medal of Vietnam, National Order, Fifth Class, and the Cross of Gallantry with Palm. Far more important than the medals he earned was his legacy to the hundreds of Dust Off pilots who followed him. His death saddened all who had known him, for he had given so much of himself so selflessly. The men of the 57th heard that General Stilwell, Kelly's commander for the last six months, wept when he heard of his death.

Capt. Paul A. Bloomquist took command of the 57th Medical Detachment in Saigon and Capt. Patrick H. Brady moved to Soc Trang to take over Detachment A. Assuming that the 57th would now select its missions more carefully, the commander of the 13th Aviation Battalion in the Delta called Brady into his office. He asked what changes would be made now that Kelly was gone. Brady told him that the 57th would continue flying missions exactly as Kelly had taught them, accepting any call for help.

A New Buildup

Kelly's death coincided with an important turning point in U.S. relations with North and South Vietnam. In the first half of 1964 the new administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson concluded that the growing political and military disturbances in South Vietnam required a commitment of larger U.S. economic and military resources in the area. In March 1964, after visiting South Vietnam, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recommended that the United States increase its aid to the Republic of Vietnam. President Johnson immediately increased U.S. aid to South Vietnam by \$60 million. He also promised to obtain new equipment for the South Vietnamese Army, to finance a 50,000-man increase in South Vietnamese forces, and to provide funds for the modernization of the country's government. At his request the Joint Chiefs of Staff began to draft plans for the retaliatory bombing of North Vietnam. Over the next few months the South Vietnamese government of Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh was unable to make good use of the increased U.S. aid; American advisers in the countryside reported that Khanh's political power was still crumbling. General Khanh and Air Commodore Nguyen Cao Ky, commander of the South Vietnamese Air Force, began a public campaign to place all blame for the deteriorating conditions on North Vietnam and draw the United States even further into the conflict.

The United States was already more deeply involved than most Americans knew. For some time United States forces had taken part in clandestine amphibious raids on the North Vietnamese coast to gather intelligence. In the spring of 1964 the Johnson administration publicly stated that the United States was stockpiling for the possible deployment of large numbers of American troops in Southeast Asia.

The administration also surrounded with great publicity the dedication of the new U.S.-built airbase at Da Nang, on the northernmost part of South Vietnam's coast. These American threats had no effect on the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese, who continued to bring supplies south through trails in Laos and to stage daring terrorist raids even in the center of Saigon. The North Vietnamese Navy openly challenged the United States in early August 1964 when its torpedo patrol boats attacked two U.S. destroyers sailing in the Gulf of Tonkin. Congress, outraged by this seemingly unprovoked attack in international waters,

quickly gave President Johnson nearly unanimous approval to take whatever measures he thought necessary to protect U.S. forces in the area.

As U.S. involvement mounted, the requests made by Kelly and Stilwell for another air ambulance unit at last took effect. In August the Surgeon General's Office named five more helicopter ambulance detachments for assignment to Southeast Asia. The 82d Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance) at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, was alerted for a 1 October move. The other four detachments were put on notice without firm departure dates and told to bring their units to full strength.

The advance party of the 82d arrived in Saigon on 5 October, and the next day Support Group, Vietnam, gave the detachment five new UH-1B's. The rest of the detachment arrived two weeks later. The officers and enlisted men of the 82d spent their first nights in Saigon billeted with their counterparts in the 57th. There they heard disturbing war stories from the veterans, then left for their new home in Soc Trang. Most of the detachment traveled by convoy, down Route 4 through the alien Delta countryside. Their first sight of Soc Trang—a small airstrip with a tiny village at one end, lying in the middle of rice paddies, with only a triple-stranded concertina wire to protect the perimeter—added to their concern.

To stagger personnel departure dates and help train the new 82d pilots and crews in Dust Off flying, three of the 57th pilots transferred to the 82d, and three from the 82d transferred to the 57th. Mai Henry P. Capozzi commanded the 82d; Maj. Howard H. Huntsman, the 57th. The 82d used the 57th's Hueys until it had its own in place and declared itself operational on 7 November 1964.

The new unit retraced the steps of their predecessors. Soon after they started flying evacuation missions the pilots of the 82d had their first taste of Viet Cong resistance. On a mission near Bac Lieu on 27 October, one of their new helicopters took three hits during a takeoff with casualties aboard. The crew flew back to Soc Trang and found one bullet hole through the red cross on one of the cargo doors. One of the ARVN evacuees lay dead from an enemy round that had penetrated the aircraft.

The old question of a call sign soon came up. After considering various signs, including those used by helicopter ambulance units in Korea, the new commanders settled on the 57th's sign, "Dust Off." When the 82d also adopted the 57th's unit emblem, merely changing the "57th" to "82d," some of the former 57th pilots objected to this piracy. But the policy made sense, since both units performed the same mission and the common symbols helped the ground forces recognize the ambulance helicopters.

One radical change was the conservative style of Capozzi and Huntsman. Both felt that the "wild and woolly days" ought to end and that the pilots of the 57th and 82d ought to temper their flying with cool judgment. They counseled their pilots to accept no missions without direct communication with the ground forces requesting the mission, to fly night missions only for extreme emergencies, and never to fly into an insecure landing zone. Despite these orders, the veterans of the 57th at Soc Trang quietly instilled the old élan in the new pilots, ensuring that the Kelly spirit stayed with Dust Off until the end of the war.

In one area, however, Capozzi and Huntsman succeeded in ending a Kelly practice. They refused to allow their pilots to fly the Delta looking for patients. "Shopping for business," they said, "is a waste of time." They reasoned that the communication net

was now secure enough to ensure speedy response to any call. The decision was sound. With five new helicopters, Dust Off no longer had to cover 31,000 square kilometers with only two flyable aircraft. U.S. advisers could call or relay their mission requests directly to the air ambulance units via FM radio; ARVN units in the Delta routed their calls through the joint U.S.-ARVN Combat Operations Center at the 13th Aviation Battalion (U.S.). The aircraft pilots decided on missions Air Force radar control at Can Tho provided its customary invaluable service; the rapport of USAF radar controllers with pilots of the 82d was as excellent as it was with those of the 57th.

In other respects, Kelly's teachings lived. As casualties mounted in the first months of 1965, the pilots of the 82d, despite their commander's caution, flew many night missions. Since the Viet Cong usually attacked outposts and villages at night, and both sides patrolled and set ambushes at night, the Dust Off pilots too had to be abroad, seeking the wounded where they lay.

The Crisis Deepens

Late in 1964, the 271st and 272d Viet Cong Regiments merged and equipped themselves with new Chinese and Soviet weapons, forming the 9th Viet Cong Division. The 9th Division showed the value of this change in a battle for Binh Gia, a small Catholic village on Inter-provincial Route 2, sixty-five kilometers southeast of Saigon. On 28 December and over the next three days the Viet Cong ambushed and nearly destroyed the South Vietnamese 33d Ranger Battalion and 4th Marine Battalion, and inflicted heavy casualties on the armored and mechanized forces that came to their rescue. The reorganized and reequipped Viet Cong were so confident that they stood and fought a four-day pitched battle rather than employ their usual hit-and-run tactics. The South Vietnamese suffered over 400 casualties and lost more than 200 weapons. Nearly eighty helicopters, including those from the 57th Medical Detachment, took part in the relief operations of this battle. During the fighting, Dust Off rescued nine crewmen from their downed helicopters and evacuated scores of South Vietnamese troops.

Assistant Secretary of State William P. Bundy urged President Johnson to retaliate against North Vietnam. He was seconded by the new commander of the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, and the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor. Westmoreland thought that the Viet Cong seemed to be preparing to move from guerrilla tactics to a more conventional war. But President Johnson, ignoring his advisers, refused to allow an immediate bombing campaign against North Vietnam.

Shortly afterward, however, Johnson himself lost confidence in current U.S. and South Vietnamese policy. On the morning of 7 February the Viet Cong attacked the U.S. advisers' base and airstrip at Camp Holloway near Pleiku. Mortar fire and demolitions killed several Americans, wounded more than a hundred, and destroyed five aircraft. Within hours forty-nine U.S. Navy fighter-bombers struck back at a North Vietnamese barracks just above the Demilitarized Zone. In his memoirs General Westmoreland called this strike a vital juncture in the history of American involvement in Southeast Asia. Within two days President Johnson approved a policy of "sustained reprisal" against the North.

Along with the rest of the U.S. Army in Vietnam, Dust Off quickly felt the new surge of America's war effort. From 1962 to early 1965 the Dust Off pilots and their crewmen had been at school in Vietnam. Now they would have to show what they had learned,

applying on a large scale the tradition of courage and unhesitating service that they had forged in the early years.

If you need to express yourself, or have something worth sharing, please e-mail Roberta at Hdwizrd8@aol.com, or call me at 386-424-1989.

THE DUSTOFF PRAYER

Penned by Chaplin Connie Walker

Kind and Merciful Heavenly Father, thank You for "calling" and "sending" DUSTOFF Teams on missions of mercy, under the most hostile conditions, in a deeply Dedicated and Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces of all ages and ranks. Lord, history has us standing on the shoulders of the faithful and courageous DUSTOFF Teams who have gone before. Bless them forever. We follow their stalwart leadership steps. Lord, may each of us hear afresh Your Summons, "Follow Me." Heroic cries like "When I have your wounded..." captivate and ring in our ears, hearts and prayers, even today as we fly on missions of mercy to Life for Life and Hope. Heavenly Father, we trust in Your saving and sustaining Grace, now and forever. In the Name of our Great God, Redeemer and Holy Spirit. Amen!

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All inquiries, questions or comments may be directed to the President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer. All articles printed in our newsletters are strictly the opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Dustoff Organization.
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FLORIDA DUSTOFF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NEW _____ RENEWAL _____ LIFETIME _____ ANNUAL _____
NAME: _____ DOB: _____ AGE: _____
SPOUSE: _____ DOB: _____ AGE: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
PHONE: () _____ E-mail: _____
CELL: () _____
BRANCH OF SERVICE _____ RANK _____ DATE OF ASSIGNMENT (FROM/TO) _____
ATTACHMENTS: _____

If Dustoff and/or Medevac what capacity did you serve? Pilot ___ Crew Chief ___ Medic ___ Maintenance ___
Supply ___ Door Gunner ___ Flight Ops ___ Clerk ___ Commo ___ Cook ___ (check one or more)

If this is a renewal is this a change of address/information ? _____

_____ I know a former Dustoff/Medic/Corpsman/Pilot/Nurse or other potential member and have listed their name, address and telephone number below.

Enclosed is \$20.00, my membership dues for one year () initial

Enclosed is my Lifetime membership dues as follows Age 55 and Below \$100.00 () Age 56-75 \$75.00 () Age 76 and above \$50.00 ()

Mail application and payment to: Florida Dustoff Association
c/o Roberta Neitzel
2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141

For Information Call Robert or Roberta Neitzel (386) 424-1989

***Checks should be made payable to Florida Dustoff Association
Please make sure to include a copy of your DD-214***