

AIR RESCUE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Mike Tillema, ARA President



Hello Good Rescue People,

I'll start off with the very sad news that our former ARA President, a hero, and a great man, John Flournoy, passed a few days ago. It is a huge hit to our community and let's all pray for Ms Charlene and the entire Flournoy family. Sure love you John and miss you very much already.

We are excited to host the Air Rescue Symposium in Oct and your ARA Board has come up with a great plan. Our intent this year to make it fun and have a less busy schedule so you can have time with your family and close friends. We've made the Symposium a day shorter to regard your time away. Also, we tried to make it more convenient and less expensive! We have a lot of "Firsts" so you won't want to miss this one in lovely Ft Walton Beach and yes...it's at the same hotel the JGA had theirs for years! We will welcome and introduce our Inaugural ARA Member Hall of Fame Class of 2025. John Flournoy and his wife Charlene are two of the members who will be honored. We will welcome our Pedro Rescue Helicopter Association members as new lifetime members of the ARA. And...drum roll please...we will award our brand new USAF Rescue Maintainer of the Year along with our incredible other awards the ARA sponsors through the Pentagon's Air Staff.

I'm excited to introduce the members of a newly established ARA Senior Advisory Board. I am so thankful to Lt Gen Tex Brown, Lt Gen Brad Webb, Maj Gen Chad Franks, Maj Gen Tom Kunkel, Maj Gen Jay Flournoy, and Brig Gen Billy Thompson for saying yes to helping our cause! At the symposium, we will also have a great opportunity for our Vietnam War heroes. I've contacted and connected with a great organization called Witness to War (thanks Lt Gen Webb!). You'll be able to tell your rescue story! The Witness to War data follows in a bit in the newsletter. We also have some incredible guest speakers for our Friday warrior afternoon including original H-43 Pedro PJ Tommy Miles who will chat about a Huskie rescue/fire fighting mission of a B-52 crew that had crashed after takeoff...the story will be amazing! Lt Col Fred Bergold will chat about the very last HH-43 mission he piloted. Col John "Skinny" Macrander will chat about his "Lone Survivor" mission in Afghanistan, and Lt Col John Mangan will chat about one his Afghanistan "Anaconda" mission. It promises to be an incredible time together.

Have a great summer and hope to see you in Oct in FL. Bless you and your family.

Mike Tillema

Obituary Colonel John Charles Flournoy

30 November, 1936 – 18 June, 2025



With profound sadness and deep respect, we announce the passing of Colonel John C. Flournoy, USAF (Retired), age 88, of Opelika, AL. John was a devoted husband, brother, loving father, grandfather, great-grandfather, decorated military officer, and steadfast friend to all who knew him. He passed away peacefully on 18 June, 2025 at home, surrounded by his family.

John was born at home on 30 November, 1936 in Florala, AL and was educated in the public school system of Alabama, graduating from Vigor High School, Prichard, AL in 1955. He worked in a local grocery store and on a shrimp boat during his summers. He graduated from the Alabama Polytechnic Institute (Auburn University) in 1959 with a Bachelor Of Science Degree in Business Administration. John enlisted in the Alabama National Guard Band in February, 1954 as a Private in the 31st Infantry, Dixie Division. He transferred to the Army Reserve as a Corporal in 1956 and remained with the Army until transferring to the Air Force Reserve as an Airman First Class in 1957. He married his Vigor High School sweetheart, Charlene Lett, on 7 June of that same year. In December 1959, John was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve through the Air Force ROTC Program at Auburn, and was appointed Second Lieutenant in the Regular Air

Force in February 1960. His first assignment was preflight pilot training at Lackland Air Force Base, TX, in February 1960; followed by primary pilot training at Graham Air Force Base, FL; basic pilot training at Laredo Air Force Base, TX; and helicopter pilot training at Stead Air Force Base, NV. After receiving his wings and helicopter training, John's first operational assignment was with Detachment 1, Atlantic Air Rescue Center, Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, flying the H-19 and H-43 as a rescue crew commander from September 1961 to July 1965. One of his most memorable accomplishments during that assignment was receiving the German Medal of Gratitude in 1963 for flying the H-19 and saving lives during one of the worst floods to ever hit Hamburg, Germany. Returning stateside in 1965, the family was assigned to Detachment 12, Eastern Aerospace Rescue Center at Moody Air Force Base, GA as an H-43 instructor pilot and flight examiner. After 18 months at Moody, he was assigned as Commander, Detachment 18, EARRC, Thule Air Base, Greenland. Here he participated in several notable missions. The most memorable was the rescue/recovery of crashed B-52G, carrying four hydrogen bombs and seven crewmembers. Returning from Thule in 1968, he became the H-43 standardization pilot for EARRC at Robins Air Force Base, GA. In October 1970, he was assigned to Scott Air Force Base, IL as the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS) H-43 standardization pilot, and in December 1971, he became the ARRS H-1/H-43 standardization pilot. During this tour, he served numerous temporary duty assignments in Southeast Asia to include a tour as Commander, Detachment 12, 40th ARRSQ, U-Tapao Royal Thai Naval Airfield, Thailand from February to December 1974. Upon his return he was assigned as Commander, Detachment 4, 37th ARRS, Little Rock Air Force Base, AR. After Little Rock, John was selected as Chief, Rescue Services Division, Headquarters, Military Airlift Command Inspector General, and returned to Scott Air Force Base, IL. In December 1978, he completed qualification in the H-53 and assumed his fourth command as 55th ARRS commander, Eglin AFB, FL in January 1979.

He moved across the street to the 39th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Wing in November 1980, first as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, then becoming the Director of Operations in May 1981. He returned to Scott Air Force Base, IL for his third tour in March 1983 as the Twenty-Third Air Force Assistant Director of Operations. John assumed the position of Twenty-Third Air Force Director of Operations in May 1986 prior to the unit moving to Hurlburt Field, FL.

Colonel John C. Flournoy retired after 35 years of service on 31 August 1988 and relocated from Florida to New Mexico in October 1988 where he assumed the position of Site Manager for Link/Hughes Training for the Aircrew Training Simulator operations at Kirtland AFB. He became the Mission Training Simulator Support Training Manager prior to his retirement from Hughes/Raytheon in 1998. He then worked for the Air Force Research Lab at Kirtland, followed by three months in Colorado Springs with Boeing working on the National Missile Defense Program. He returned to Kirtland to consult with the Research Lab and the USAF Safety Center until fully retiring in 2002. In retirement, John and Charlene enjoyed being part of the Blue Crew, supporting "Out of the Blue" hot air balloon flights across the southwest. He also cherished his annual trips to their condominium in Auburn to enjoy family and, of course, Auburn football, until finally settling in Opelika in 2018. John and Charlene built a new home where John enjoyed everything Auburn, fishing, peanut butter crackers, malted milk balls, chocolate ice cream and watching wildlife in his backyard. He loved collecting coins and rocks at every opportunity and meticulously organizing everything...and we mean everything. John was always committed to serving his fellow veterans and their families by in a variety of capacities in multiple military related organizations. He was President of both the Jolly Green Association (85-86) and Air Rescue Association (01-07) and, served in a variety of roles in those as well as the Pedro Rescue Helicopter Association. In October of this year, he and Charlene will be part of the inaugural class of the Air Rescue Association Member Hall of Fame in recognition of their tremendous contributions to the organization.

More than anything, he loved his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, his family, friends, and fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, and coastguardsmen. He was

hardworking, strong-willed, intentional, loving, caring and a little grumpy.

John (aka Buddy, Grumps) is survived by his beloved wife of 68 years, Charlene Lett; his brother Ron (Pam) Flournoy; his children, Jamie (Huey) Allen, Jay (Anne) Flournoy; Jeffrey (Jennie Collins) Flournoy; his grandchildren, Heather, Melissa, Andrew, Charlene, Emily, Jack, Ashton, and Tristan; 10 (soon to be 11) great-grandchildren, and many extended family members, friends, neighbors, and comrades who will miss him dearly.

Viewing will be at Trinity Presbyterian Church, 1010 India Road, Opelika, AL on 25 June 2025 10:15 followed by a Celebration of Life Service at 11:00. A reception will follow at the Springs of Mill Lakes Clubhouse, 2901 Birmingham Highway, Opelika from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. He will be laid to rest at Barrancas National Cemetery, 1 Cemetery Road, Pensacola, FL on 27 June 2025 at 11:00. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Colonel John C. Flournoy's memory to the That Others May Live Foundation at thatothersmaylive.org.



2025 AIR RESCUE SYMPOSIUM INFORMATION & REGISTRATION

JOIN US OCTOBER 9-12, 2025 IN FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA

THE REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS **SEPTEMBER 5, 2025**



REGISTER ONLINE:

<https://www.usafrescue.org/events-reunion-news>

REGISTER VIA MAIL:

Print and complete registration form found here:

<https://www.usafrescue.org/events-reunion-news>

Mail prior to Sept 5, 2025 to:

Jim Morris, c/o Air Rescue Assn.

PO Box 424, Shalimar FL, 32579

2025 AIR RESCUE SYMPOSIUM ITINERARY

THURSDAY – OCTOBER 09th

- **1800-2000 WELCOME SOCIAL:** with Heavy Hors d'oeuvres
 - Food sponsored by the ORCs (ARA's Old Retired Colonels!) and Cash only bar
- **2000: HOSPITALITY SUITE**

FRIDAY – OCTOBER 10th

- **0800: AM EVENT** – Depart from Hotel to Duke Field for MH-139 Grey Wolf static display and hopefully many more aircraft
- **1300-1600: PM EVENT** – Symposium Stories (Hanger fly with “current” and “vintage” Rescue Warriors).
- **2000: HOSPITALITY SUITE**

SATURDAY – OCTOBER 11th

- **1000** ARA Board Meeting (ARA Board Members Only)
- **1100:** ARA General Membership Meeting
- **LUNCH, BEACH TIME, SIGHTSEEING:** On Your Own

EVENING GALA

- **1700 COCKTAIL HOUR** (cash bar) Capri Room
- **1800 AIR RESCUE GALA**

VIETNAM VETERANS – AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE YOUR STORY



*WELCOME HOME Vietnam Veterans, bless you and thank you! We've connected with a great organization called **Witness to War**. We have an incredible opportunity for you Vietnam Veterans to **share your war story during the Oct Symposium**. Please **go on their website below and sign up**. Your story will be available later online and even in the Library of Congress! There is no charge, and you can start on Wednesday, the 8th of Oct if you'd like. I know we will have so many amazing rescue stories to tell. Please see below for details. – Mike Tillema*

The **Witness to War Foundation**, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Atlanta, GA, is planning on attending [the 2025 Air Rescue Symposium] to help you record your stories for your family, and for future generations. Each interview is recorded on video and will cover your life before, during, and after your service. Everyone who participates receives a full copy of their unedited interview to share with family and friends. These interviews can also be submitted to the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project. You can see the Foundation's previous work on their website, www.WitnessToWar.org.

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and absolutely free of cost. Each interview lasts just over an hour, and you can sign up ahead of time at <https://www.witnesstowar.org/schedule>. Scheduled days and times are subject to change based on reunion events but time will be made available to make sure everyone who would like to has an opportunity. For any questions, please contact interviewer Martin Madert at Martin@WitnessToWar.org.



TOMLF HANGER

Supporting USAF Rescue Warriors and Families since 2002



Hello ARA Family,

As we move into 2025, I'm proud to share the continued growth and impact of That Others May Live Foundation. Your ongoing support is vital to our mission of honoring and supporting the families and warriors of the U.S. Air Force Rescue community.

Board of Directors Update

At the close of last year, we welcomed three new members to our Board of Directors, each bringing unique expertise and a shared passion for our mission. This quarter, we extend our deepest appreciation to Steve Colby, Mick Harper, and Ken Price, who have faithfully served on the Board and will now continue their service as members of our Senior Advisory Committee. Their leadership and dedication have been instrumental to TOMLF's success, and we are grateful for their continued involvement.

Launching Our First Warfighter Retreat

We are especially proud to announce that TOMLF will host its first Warfighter Retreat in June 2025—an initiative designed to support the emotional and psychological well-being of our rescue warriors. This effort is made possible through a generous grant from NAPE Expo Charities, whose commitment aligns with our shared goal of addressing the often invisible stressors associated with military life.

The retreat will serve as a cornerstone of our expanded wellness programming, providing participants with tools to navigate the long-term impacts of service through peer support, holistic care, and professional guidance. Learn more about our partnership with NAPE Expo Charities at <https://napeexpo.com/nape-charities>.

Scholarship Updates - Jolly Green Merit Scholarship & Children of Fallen Warriors

This spring, we saw a significant increase in applications for the 2025 Jolly Green Merit Scholarship (JGMS) program. Thanks to the dedication of our volunteer evaluator panel, eight outstanding students were selected to receive a combined total of \$18,000

in scholarship awards. Recipients were chosen for their academic excellence, leadership, and commitment to service—upholding the proud legacy of the rescue community.

Looking ahead to this fall, we are honored to welcome two new students into our Children of Fallen Warriors Scholarship Program as they begin their post-secondary education journeys. This brings the number of active recipients in the program to four, each pursuing academic excellence in memory of their fallen parent. We are incredibly proud to support their growth and success as they carry forward a legacy of sacrifice and resilience.

Looking Ahead

As 2025 continues, TOMLF remains focused on expanding our reach and impact within the rescue community. With renewed leadership and strong partners like NAPE Expo Charities, we are well-positioned to grow our programs and strengthen our support.

From scholarships and wellness to tragedy assistance, we proudly stand with the families of those who serve.

Thank you for your continued support—we look forward to all that lies ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wade Koch" with a small green heart symbol at the end.

Wade Koch, Chairman

That Others May Live Foundation

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www.thatothersmaylive.org | EIN 88-0487308 | CFC #61226

2025 JOLLY GREEN MERIT SCHOLARSHIP (JGMS)

By Sarah Lively, Executive Director

An all-volunteer team from the Air Rescue Association (ARA) and That Others May Live Foundation (TOMLF) proudly facilitated the 2025 Jolly Green Merit Scholarship (JGMS) program, continuing a legacy of over 40 years of honoring the children of our rescue community.

This year, the program awarded a total of \$18,000 in scholarships to eight outstanding students, each selected for their exceptional academic performance, leadership qualities, community involvement, and commitment to service.

A dedicated six-person review team carefully evaluated 52 applications, scoring each submission based on demonstrated academic excellence and extracurricular achievements. We extend our sincere gratitude to Committee Chair Ken Price, along with Joe Alkire, Ken Koch, Dave Morgan, Mike Tillema, and Linnaea Vance, for their time, thoughtful consideration, and commitment to supporting the next generation of scholars.

Their efforts continue to keep the Jolly Green spirit alive—fostering resilience, excellence, and opportunity for our military families.



This year's first place recipient is Max Diehl, son of Col Brian Diehl, a pilot. He has been awarded \$5,000 to support his undergraduate studies in Biology and Biomedical Engineering at the University of Florida. Max's goal is to attend medical school and ultimately serve as a Flight Surgeon in the United States Air Force.

This year's second place recipient is Madelynn Nichols, daughter of Maj Jordan Nichols, a Combat Rescue Officer. She will receive a \$4,500 scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Fort Hays State University. Madelynn aspires to serve military-connected students as a Speech-Language Pathologist within the Department of Defense Education Activity school system.





This year's third place recipient is Colin Fitzgerald, son of Col Shawn Fitzgerald, a Combat Rescue Officer. He will receive a \$2,000 scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree in Economics at Brown University. Colin plans to become a Finance Consultant focused on sustainability, working with companies to reduce their carbon footprint, prevent environmental degradation, and minimize harmful pollutants.

This year's fourth place recipient is Burgan Danger, daughter of LtCol Mark Danger, a pilot. She has been awarded \$1,750 to support her pursuit of a bachelor's degree in Biochemistry at Norwich University. Following graduation, Burgan aspires to serve as a United States Naval Officer.



This year's fifth place recipient is Emily Cook, daughter of Col Lane Cook, a pilot. She will receive a \$1,500 scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree in International Relations and Foreign Affairs. Emily intends to serve her country through a career in public service following graduation.

This year's sixth place recipient is Sydni Ittis, daughter of LtCol Shawn Ittis, a Combat Rescue Officer. She will receive a \$1,250 scholarship to support her undergraduate studies in Economics. Sydni plans to continue her education in law school, with the goal of becoming a Corporate Lawyer.





This year's seventh place recipient is Victoria Sosa, daughter of MSgt Noel Sosa, a Combat Medic. Victoria has been awarded \$1,000 to support her pursuit of a bachelor's degree in Nursing at Florida State University. After graduation, she plans to become a Nurse Practitioner and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist.

This year's eighth place recipient is Ryan Williams, son of TSgt Christopher Williams, a Flight Engineer. Ryan has been awarded \$1,000 to support his undergraduate studies at Benedictine College, where he will pursue a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Following graduation, he hopes to contribute to the field of national security in a professional capacity.



Pedro Rescue Helicopter Association

Rick Sheets - President
Roger Barre - Vice President
Chris Taylor - Treasurer
Jeff Snicale - Secretary



Stephanie Cheek - Chaplain
John Flournoy - Member-at-Large
Larry Schmidt - Member-at-Large
Johan Ragay - Historian

June 18, 2025

Greetings to all ARA members from PRHA Members.

We are looking forward to meeting those of you that we have not met over the years. PRHA is pleased to become a member of ARA and to participate with all of you at the reunions. Most of our members were involved in rescue during the Viet Nam era and were crewmembers or family members of those that flew on the HH-43. Our call sign was Pedro as it was with the Rescue Units in Afghanistan. Different helicopter, different location but the same mission, "That Others May Live".

At the reunion I will introduce PRHA to you and speak a bit about us so as to let everyone know the history of our Organization and our successes during the years the HH-43 flew. We will have a couple of HH-43 guys on the panel discussion, one pilot and one PJ, so I believe it will be very interesting and inspiring. If you are a PRHA member, I encourage you to attend the reunion at Ft Walton Beach this October. There is a time set aside for PRHA to meet and greet other and spend some time together. Of course we will see each other at the reception and other activities. ARA has set up a tour so we can go look at an MH-139 at Duke Field on Friday Morning. It should be a great visit.

Rick Sheets

RESCUE STORIES: AN LBR TO REMEMBER

By Jeff Snicale, PRHA Secretary

By the time I reached Det 5, 38th ARRS at Udorn RTAFB in July of 1969, Pedro's glory days of CSAR were long gone. First, the HH-3's came in to help. Then the 40th ARRS arrived with the HH-53's, relegating Pedro to its original mission... LBR. In fact, Pedro could no longer fly into Laos without the permission from the U.S. Embassy in Laos and that just didn't happen.

As an Aeromedical Specialist (Med Tech), my primary assignment was to the 432nd USAF Hospital Flight Surgeon's Office. We were responsible for maintaining the health and wellbeing of all aircrew members assigned to the



base and some that were flying missions from within Laos. In addition, we provided emergency ground support on all incoming in-flight emergencies. There were always three of us that would rotate to Det. 5 for 24-hour alert duty, though we were only at the alert shack for 10 to 12 hours with the rest of the day being spent on call for whatever might happen after dark.

Flying time was tough to get for the Med Techs at Det. 5, with the average sortie in the range of 10 to 15 minutes and even with multiple training flights every month, we usually were behind in our flight time. To make up for this and earn combat pay, I took several missions with other units including the 39th and 40th ARRS as well as the 18th S.O.S. It was quiet

an experience flying with other units, but Pedro was always home.

One mission in particular stands out from the rest, not only for the mission itself but the timing. It occurred on 8 December 1969, the day after the rescue of Bat-22, a devastating three-day rescue effort that left the 37th and 40th ARRS's reeling from that heavy battle

damage to their aircraft. In addition, the 40th lost one of its own, A1/C David Davison, a P.J. and personal friend.

When I reported for duty the morning of December 8th, I was informed (without verification) that

both the 37th and the 40th were standing down to allow repairs to their helicopters. In any event, the day was uneventful until mid-afternoon when the red crash-phone rang loudly throughout the building. We were needed!

The HH-43 crews were known for their quick scrambles, usually about 60 seconds from the ringing of the crash-phone to flight. Each member of the crew had specific duties. My duty was answering the phone and taking the information concerning the inflight emergency – aircraft type, nature of the emergency, number of souls onboard, runway being used, and potential hazards. The Airborne Firefighters would don their firefighting bunkers and board Pedro; the Flight Engineer did whatever they did

(never really got a chance to see them at work during a scramble); and the pilots would buckle in and start going through their pre-flight checklists and firing up the helicopter. The Med Tech was always last on board, taking a position in the open door and hooking into the com system to give the information provided by the tower. By the time this was all done, we would be in a hover ready to pick-up the fire suppression kit (FSK) and heading into our orbit.

This day was a little different. The temperature and humidity were both high, limiting our lift capacity required for the mission. Under these conditions, the crew configuration would change. Specifically, the co-pilot was dropped and the Med Tech moved to the left seat to take over the co-pilot's duties and pray that he never had to take over the controls, though we all had "some" training just in case.

When I climbed into my seat and hooked in, I went through the pre-flight check list with the pilot and relayed the information provided by the tower: F-105F (63-8352 a Wild Weasel) landing on runway 12 with two souls on board, no hydraulics (battle damage), and no unspent ordnance. Then we were airborne!

One thing to know about the F-105 (Thud) is that it required a lot of runway to slow down. Thus, unlike the F-4's assigned to Udorn, it could not use the earlier arresting barriers to stop the aircraft, meaning they had to use one of the last two barriers along with their drag shoot and brakes before reaching the end of the runway.



Before we pulled in behind Scotch 02 (flying out of Takhli RTAFB), the pilot had already activated the tail hook and engaged one of the two middle barriers. Unbeknownst to us, the 105 had lost its tail hook and having no brakes due to the loss of hydraulics, it was doomed to a bad ending.



From the co-pilot's seat, watching things unfold was surreal. Everything seemed to play out very slowly, as if I was watching a slow-motion movie, though in reality it only took a matter of seconds. First the 105 started to drift to the left, and as if it would make any difference, totally bypassing the last barrier. Then the runway ended and the aircraft went airborne as it passed over a 30 to 40 feet wide klong (water filled ditch), only to drop several feet. The collision on the far side of the klong ripped off the landing gears, destroyed the undercarriage, and folded about ten feet of the nose of the aircraft back and under. Almost instantly Scotch 02 was in flames and had attracted a sizable crowd along the perimeter road. At least one witness indicated that no one could approach the aircraft because there were 20mm cannon rounds "cooking off."

Pedro was immediately hovering over the burning hulk. The back seater, 1Lt. Bruce Cox, was standing in his cockpit surrounded flames. The downwash from our HH-43 pushing down the flames, providing 1Lt. Cox a safe egress to the right side of the aircraft. Cox would later recount how everything became quiet and he could hear the sound of the flames.⁽¹⁾ He had no idea what was just feet above his head providing the help he needed to safely exit his now destroyed and burning aircraft.

As soon as 1Lt. Cox was safely on the ground, we placed the FSK down and landed long enough for the firefighters and myself to hit

the ground. The firefighters quickly went to the FSK and started to fight the fire. I ran to 1Lt. Cox and checked him for injuries, which he only had a few abrasions on his lower legs.

As I finished checking on Lt. Cox's status, he asks "how is the pilot" (Maj. Carl Dice). Almost simultaneously, someone called for a medic from near the front of the aircraft. Informing the Lieutenant, I did not know anything about the pilot, I took off running back to the aircraft. The fire was under control and it was safe to approach. When I arrived at what should have been the nose of the 105, I found Maj. Dice wrapped in his parachute just under what was left of his cockpit. He had suffered catastrophic injuries to his head and body. He did not survive! By this time the crash rescue and medical teams were on scene taking over



the crash site and our job was done and we were ready to return to the alert shack.

Looking back, I am amazed at how fast things happened. From the crash phone ringing to being back at the alert shack could not have been more 20 minutes. The efficiency at which we completed our mission: scrambling, engaging the aircraft on the runway, hovering over the F-105, dropping the FSK, off-loading the crew, extinguishing the fire, and checking the aircrew. I am proud to have been part of this team.

Scotch 02 was not the typical day for Det. 5, 38th ARRS, but it does demonstrate

the possibilities. A normal day would have crews scrambling multiple times. With each sortie there were always the unknowns and we were always ready and willing to do "the things we do that others my live."

⁽¹⁾"Just Not Our Day!" Lt/Col Bruce Cox USAF (Ret) 2009

Aircraft photographs were by an unknown individual(s). Photo of Det 5, 38th ARRS Alert shack and HH-43 on alert taken by an unknown individual.

RESCUE STORIES:

Lt. Col Bergold, Nov 2024

Three pilots arrived at Pleiku in early March 1966 after enjoying our Philippine Jungle Adventure. That brought the pilot contingent to six. We were all qualified pilots, crew chiefs and PJ's but with zero combat experience, but that soon changed! One PJ had been assigned to another unit before arriving at Pleiku. In six months, we made 90 hoist recoveries mostly at night in the mountainous jungles of the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

The worst missions I flew were October 30-31. It was about 9:30PM on the 30th and I was about to go to bed when I got a call that the Army had been in contact with the NVA and had wounded men who needed to be evacuated from the battle field. When we arrived at operations, Carl Vermeys was the alert pilot and briefed there were seven to be picked up and his crew would take four and I would get the remaining three. Carl's copilot was Spike Bonnell, a young USAF Academy grad who had arrived in August, Airman Rice and PJ Al Stanek. Dale Tyree was my copilot and Burt Brundrige the crew chief. We had the base C-47, Spooky Bird, as our cover ship. When we arrived, Carl made contact with the platoon and made his approach and started hoisting the wounded. When he called number four coming up, I replied, turning final, he said no he would take another. As I turned there was a huge flash as his helicopter was hit in the fuel tank by an RPG, exploded and crashed into the jungle. When I made contact with the platoon, they said, "Do not try who come in, we are under attack". As our fuel approached minimums to make it back to Pleiku, the platoon leader indicated some survivors from the crash. It was a sad return to base and meeting the rest of the detachment who were waiting.

The next morning another crew, and I do not recall names, began another day of recoveries. Sadly, the four men that had been picked up and Airman Rice, did not survive, Lt Bonnell was evac'ed to the coastal hospital, and then to Clark AB but did not survive his wounds. Airman Stanek survived in the firefight and said he used all the ammo he had. Dale Tyree, Burt Brundridge and I continued support of the operation. We were on our fifth trip when we were hit with 50 cal and forced to proceed to a safe landing spot - a howitzer detachment that was supporting the operation. On the way, Sgt Brundrige noticed the pyrotechnic box was smoking. He unlatched it and threw it out and as it passed the tail it exploded. Looking at the holes in the aircraft, including one through the main fuel to the engine, several in the rotor blades with one about a foot from the hub, two between my legs and one behind my back, we concluded this beauty is not flying back. The next day an Army Chinook flew our Pedro back to Pleiku where our talented maintenance men started repairs. Al Stanek a young two striper in Vietnam ended his career as the number two PJ in Rescue.



RESCUE STORIES

MSgt Hank Howard, Det 3, CARC Grand Forks AFB, ND

The deployment started in January 1965 with aircrew certifications, readiness and record inspections, power of attorneys, shots for tropical areas, affairs and building readiness. Grand Forks AFB, ND was a huge SAC B-52 base located near the Canadian border in a frigid cold terrible place.

We started to systematically build mobility kits for all different systems which we would deploy with, this included the parts buildup for FSK's and firefighting gear. We deployed with two HH-43B's two FSK and trailers, two alert crew six pack pickups and several boxes of rotor blades and spares and roll on roll off mobility kits for the mechanics tools and spares. We disassembled the two HH-43 in the Hangar assigned to Air Rescue and Air Defense Command and a base C-47 storage point.

We had lots of support from Civil Engineering squadron and SAC Base Supply personnel and the medical unit on the base. This deployment would be among the earliest TDY's underway from a CONUS base and there was a lot about it unknown. First off we, the underlings, had no idea where the hell we were going and it was kept secret until we go to Wake Island out in the Pacific.

I remember some unique things happening that included the disassembly of the rotor stations uprights, rotor blade boxes, and problems loading them on C-124's. Likewise there were no plans or instructions for the removal or TO's for removal of tail (or empennage) sections and tail pipe stack exhaust. So special crating had to be built for those items and designed for pallet on/off loading onto aircraft. Kaman sent two tech factory reps in for disassembly and oversight. Also, a RAM team of civilians assisted from Hill AFB to advise on preparing the choppers. Both required defueling and purging fuel line and systems.

We also had a major job of deciding what to take and not, we surely didn't need snow shovels. But we were told we would have two C-124's and the mobility gear would be split evenly. Air Rescue in those days did not have checklist for deployments and forward basing choppers.

I remember that we worked thru blizzards and took off from Grand Forks in a blizzard condition for western pursuits.

That was on 20 March 1965. The crews that flew us were from a MATS unit out of Tinker AFB, OK (1707th ATW). We first went to Hill AFB, UT for refueling and a overnight crew rest. MATS crews could only fly a specific number of hours and take breaks.

Next, we went to Travis AFB, CA and remained here three days with our two loaded C-124 carrying the two Huskies, two FSK's and two trucks. Included aboard was our personal gear, firefighting gear, spares, mobility kits, tail fin and rotor blades, office chairs, desk, Technical Library and basis aircraft records and filing cabinets all of it aircraft palletized.

After our stay at Travis we took off (25 March) for a 12 hour ride to Hickham AFB Hawaii and another crew rest, three days in beautiful warm HI and Honolulu. We then flew (29 March) another 10 hours in "Old Shakey's" to Wake Island, a dot island in the Pacific and a god forsaken place that was

abuzz with military aircraft enroute to Nam and Thailand. Oh yes another two day crew rest and it was next off to Clark AFB in the Philippines (01 April). Here we spent five days (02-06 April) and went to jungle survival school on Mount Pinatubo, where we learned a lot about snakes and the jungle canopy and how it would affect us in rescue situations.

(07 April) - Our next stop was Da Nang, Vietnam and I really thought this is where we would end up, we refueled here and under orders were ordered out of Nam to Ubon, Thailand. We crossed over the Central Plains of South Vietnam and across Laos at a very low elevation within picture taking range.

A four hour flight and we arrived at Ubon, Thailand (07 April).

The base designation at the time was RAAF Ubon with a Aussie outfit with CAC Sabre aircraft (Australian variant of the F-86F), RAAF No. 79 Squadron, who had been at Ubon since 1962. The Aussies greeted us with a two plane flyby for each arriving C-124. Scared the crap out of us.



HH-43B 59-1561 being unloaded from a C-124C assigned to 1501 ATW - Ubon AB 14 April 1965

Note : the Huskie was still in full MATS scheme, including MATS emblem; at left is Capt. Chuck Proft, at right (front) is Capt. Mike Langford - photo by 1st Lt. Vance Need



HH-43B 59-1561 being assembled at Ubon AB 15 April 1965 - photo by Vance Need



HH-43B 59-1561 and 59-1562 at Ubon AB during April-May 1965. Note : aircraft still in full MATS scheme, including MATS emblem - photo by Vance Need

CALL FOR OLD NEWSLETTERS!

If you have any old ARA Newsletters in *paper form* sitting around, please mail or scan and email them to ARA Historian Bob Remey! Contact him at bobremey@yahoo.com for mailing address.

From an old newsletter, dated...

20 Feb 72

Operation Long Flight: ARRS establishes a new world record for turbo-prop aircraft distance in a straight line for 14,052 kilometers (8,732.09 miles). Lt. Col. Edgar L. Allison, Jr., pilots the HC-130. The flight originates at Chung Chuan Kang AB, Taiwan, and touches down at Scott AFB, Illinois, after 21 hours and 12 minutes of total flight time. The flight breaks the previous distance record as it passes over Portland, Oregon. Later (1974), Lt. Col. Allison (Ret.) is awarded the Harmon International Trophy in recognition of this achievement.

30-31 Mar 72

An AC-130, "Spectre 22," with 15 crewmen aboard is hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire near Paksong, Laos, but all crewmen are able to bail out. On the following day, the 40th ARRS sends out five HH-53's and brings back all 15 crewmen.

13 Apr 72

Captain Bennie D. Orrell wins the Air Force Cross and his crew the Silver Star medal, as a result of a rescue mission in Southeast Asia. Following the enemy spring offensive through the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on 30 March, rescue activity increased dramatically. On 13 April the 40th ARRSquadron is tasked to find United States Marine Corps Major Clyde D. Smith who is down between Tchepone, Laos, and the DMZ. Capt. Orrell, piloting an HH-53, approaches the search area, and Major

Smith "pops his smoke" to show his location. The smoke drifts uphill before it emerges from the trees. When Capt. Orrell hovers at that spot, Major Smith makes a "max-effort" run up the hill to the hoist. As he grabs it, Capt. Orrell encounters enemy fire, forcing him to retract the hoist, not realizing Smith is there until the hoist clears the trees!

1 May 72

Evacuation of Quang Tri: The 3d ARRGroup evacuates 132 persons from the citadel in the besieged city of Quang Tri to DaNang, RVN. Five HH-53's of the 37th ARRSquadron are used for this mission. No one is injured, despite the nearby presence of enemy forces. Staff Sergeant Robert L. LaPointe, a para-rescueman in the first HH-53, silences enemy snipers with his mini-gun. When the helicopter lands, Sgt. LaPointe organizes the evacuees and maintains ground control until the second HH-53 departs.

11 May 72

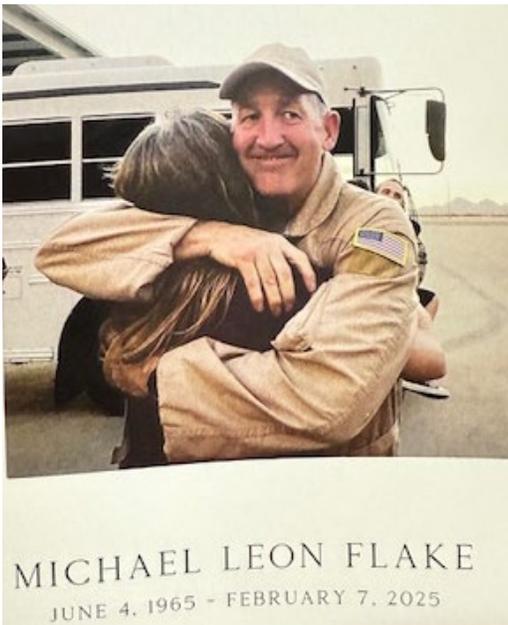
General John D. Ryan, USAF Chief of Staff, directs that the mission of ARRS be primarily oriented toward combat rescue operations.

MEMORIAL ROSTER

We have been notified of the passing of the following members since publication of the last Newsletter. Please Ctrl+click on the underlined individual's name to view their obituary. We don't have the link to the others.

[Michael Flake](#) [Billy Waters](#) [Robert Converse](#) [John Flourney](#)

May they rest in peace



ROBERT CONVERSE

Editor's note: please notify the ARA Board via Gene Manner (genemanner@gmail.com) if you are aware of the passing of any ARA members.

BECOME AN ARA LIFETIME MEMBER

Tired of having to get reminded about annual dues?

Become an ARA Lifetime Member!

Lifetime Membership One-Time Fees:

Under 60 years old - \$300

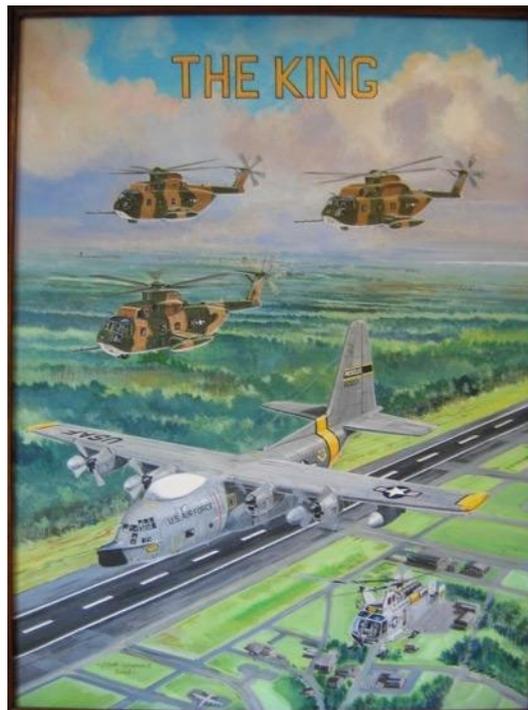
Age 60 to 69 - \$200

Age 70 to 79 - \$100

Age 80 and up – free

Contact Gene Manner (genemanner@gmail.com) for the application. If you've already paid for this year, we can deduct that amount off the total. Life Memberships also include the member's spouse!

Come on in and join the ARA Lifetime Member team!



AIR RESCUE ASSOCIATION APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Since 1976, and 48 successful reunions later, the Association still seeks and accepts eligible persons who wish to enjoy the camaraderie of “rescue” people. As stated in the bylaws, “Membership in the Association is open to all persons, regardless of grade, rank or position who were or are assigned to the USAF Air Rescue Service or its antecedent and descendent organizations. Other military personnel, government civilian employees, or contractor representatives who were associated with Air Rescue; current and former members of the U.S. Coast Guard and Civil Air Patrol; plus any persons who have been rescued, recovered, or rendered emergency assistance by Air Rescue are also eligible and welcomed for membership. Adult close family members (parents, spouse, children and siblings) of those eligible for membership in accordance with the foregoing are also eligible for regular membership in their own right.” If interested in becoming a member, please supply the information requested in the form below, with a brief summary of applicable Air Rescue service and other pertinent information.

Join online at the following link: <https://www.usafrescue.org/membership>



ARA STORE

If you'd like to purchase some cool USAF Rescue swag, please go check out Undaunted Apparel at <https://undauntedclothing.com/product-category/collections/air-rescue-association/>

There are great items including hats, mugs, coins and more!



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Select options