

# Rotorwash

A Newsletter for Air Force Rotorheads

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By ROTORHEADSRUS

Contact: [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com)

*On 22 February 2007 we lost a true friend and valued member of our group. Charles "Chuck" Severns passed away as the result of a long struggle with Cancer. Chuck will be missed but never forgotten.*

*If you would like to pay tribute to Chuck we have a "Final Flight" section on our website honoring our helicopter family members and friends. Send the info to [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com)*



*Col. James (Jim) R. Murtha, age 69, U.S. Air Force retired, died March 1, 2007, at his home in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., following a courageous battle with cancer.*

*Born July 1, 1937, in New York City to the late James E. and Mabel H. (Smith) Murtha, he moved to Bennington, Vt., as a young boy. He graduated from Bennington High School in 1955. A winter laboring on the St. Lawrence Seaway inspired him to return to school and in 1960 he earned an economics degree from St. Michael's College Burlington, Vt., and an officer's commission in the U.S. Air Force. During his 24-year military career, which included Vietnam service, he traveled the world — Europe to Asia to Africa. He was a Command Pilot flying sea planes and*

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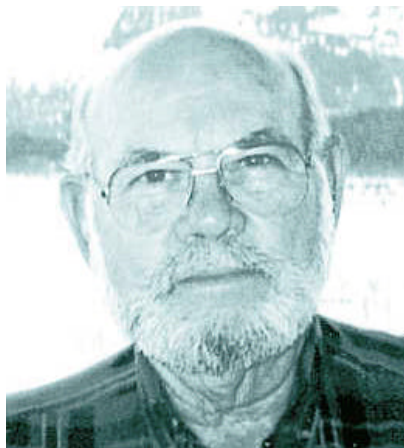
*helicopters for Air Rescue. He was awarded Vietnam combat decorations and many personal awards. Prior to retirement, he served as Chief, Resource Management Division, Directorate of Maintenance, Robins Air Force Base, Ga. Though proud of his career, he was most proud of the opportunity to work with so many outstanding military professionals. See the "Final Flight" section on our web site.*

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***Col. Maxie "Max" L. Trainer, USAF, (Ret.) died March 19 peacefully at his home in Shalimar, Florida surrounded by friends and family. He was diagnosed with stomach cancer 48 days before his death.***

*Max was born in Hot Springs, Virginia on November 28, 1932. Following his family tradition of military service, Max joined the United States Air Force on August 11, 1953. He enjoyed a significant career serving in various pilot and command positions in Air Rescue and Recovery Service, "These things we do that others may live". His last assignment was PACAF Headquarters, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. After retiring from the Air Force, Max worked as a realtor at El Matador Condominium Management Company where he made many long, lasting friendships.*

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**Bernie V. Womble**

*WOMBLE, BERNIE V., 77, passed away on March 22, 2007 surrounded by his family. He was a beloved husband, father, and grandfather who will be dearly missed. He was the eternal optimist and in spite of the health challenges that life threw in his way, he fought the good fight and never gave up. He was loved and respected by everyone fortunate enough to know him and he always had a ready smile and story to tell. From the time he was a small boy he was fascinated with airplanes and pursued his lifelong dream to become a pilot. He proudly served his country and*

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had a distinguished career in the USAF. Throughout his life he established goals and worked hard to achieve them. He enlisted as a private at the age of 17, graduated from Officer Candidate School, and realized his dream of flying various airplanes and helicopters. One of the highlights of his career was his time spent as an Air Rescue Service helicopter aircraft commander. Bernie was a Vietnam Veteran and retired with many honors as a Major from the USAF in 1968. Bernie met his beloved wife, Janet Shuff, in South Dakota while stationed at Ellsworth AFB. They were married for 42 wonderful years and raised their three children in Winter Park. Together they delighted in spending time with their children and grandchildren, fishing, boating, traveling, and spending summers in North Carolina. Following his career in the military, he graduated from Rollins College with a BS degree in Business Administration and went on to own and operate a commercial decorating business. He enjoyed membership in various organizations including the Orlando Masonic Lodge 69, Scottish Rite, Quiet Birdmen, and many veterans associations. Bernie loved his 1965 Ford Mustang convertible, and relished participating in Classic Car shows where his car won numerous awards. After becoming a bilateral amputee, he resided at the Orlando Veterans Administration Healthcare Center where he received excellent and loving care and found companionship with the other veterans. He is survived by his wife, Janet; daughters, Stacey Roach (Alex), Kari Hoffmann (Marc), and Phyllis "Cat" Gorton; sons, Brian Womble (Rosangela), and Scott West.

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***Col. Owen 'Al' Heeter***

*Jan. 3, 1936-Feb. 17, 2007*

*Col. Owen "Al" Heeter, USAF Retired, age 71, of 1458 Park Road, Rochester, passed away at 8:30 p.m. Saturday at Life Care Center of*

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*Rochester, surrounded by the loving and dedicated members of his family.*

*Col. Heeter was born Jan. 3, 1936, in Athens, the son of Darwin and Edythe Clevenger Heeter. During his youth, he was raised in the Akron area and he attended school at Akron for 10 years before graduating from Rochester High School in 1954. Al was a member of the RHS 1953 Indiana State Champion football team. He also was a standout on the 1952-1954 RHS baseball team.*

*Al was an employee of McMahan Construction Company, during his high school years. While at McMahan's, he served under the wing of his mentor, the late Ed Boswell. Upon graduation from RHS, he attended DePauw University, Greencastle, where he was a member of the graduating class of 1958. While at DePauw, Al lettered in baseball, was an active member of the ROTC and Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity. It was through the ROTC at DePauw that he discovered his love for flying.*

*On July 13, 1957, in Jackson, Miss., he married Mary Elizabeth Turk. She preceded him in death on Dec. 1, 1996.*

*Upon his graduation from DePauw, Al entered the United States Air Force. He spent the next 30 years of his life serving our country. During his many years of service, Col. Heeter was stationed in the following locations: Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan; Richards Gebaur Air Force Base, Missouri; Moron Air Base, Spain; Moody Air Force Base, Georgia; Udorn Air Base, Thailand; Scott Air Force Base, Illinois; Norton Air Force Base, California; Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas; Howard Air Force Base, Panama; Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico; Eglin Air Force Base, Florida; and Hurlburt Field, Florida.*

*During his tours of duty, Col. Heeter received many citations including: the Silver Star (the second highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of the armed forces); Legion of Merit (awarded for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievement); Distinguished Flying Cross*

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*(awarded to those who distinguish themselves in combat by heroism while in aerial flight); Bronze Star (awarded for bravery); Defense Meritorious Service Medal (awarded for outstanding noncombat meritorious achievement or service); Meritorious Service Medal with Four Oak Leaf Clusters (third highest award bestowed by the military, additional awards are denoted by the Oak Leaf Clusters); Air Medal with Four Oak Leaf Clusters (awarded for distinguished merit while in aerial flight); and the Air Force Commendation Medal (awarded for acts of courage).*

*Of his many accomplishments, Col. Heeter was a distinguished command helicopter pilot with more than 5,000 career flying hours; many of them were from rescue missions flown over Vietnam. He also served as Deputy Commander of the Panama Canal from 1976 to 1978. Col. Heeter was the first pilot to fly an HH-53 helicopter across the Pacific Ocean, traveling more than 9,000 miles. He served as Air Rescue and Recovery Service Commander from 1983 to 1985.*

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### **"NOTICE"**

If you have a Air Force helicopter story that you would like to share and prefer not to join our group, we would be happy to hear it. Stories and/or pictures are welcomed. Items that we post will be credited to the contributor. Send your input to [rotoheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotoheadsrus@yahoo.com)

### **HEROES**

Here is a link sent in by Tom Green. It is a tribute to a hero from each of the 50 states prepared by the Office of Public Affairs, The Pentagon OSD Writers Group. [HeroesBrochure.pdf](#)

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→ ROTORHEAD LOCATOR ←

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**Huey** Looking for anyone that is either a helicopter maintenance crew chief type or flight crew member associated with Hueys. (Please contact us at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Jimmy W. Blackwell** I last talked to him in 1967 at Udorn when he was a FE in the 20th SOS. (Please contact Don Larsen at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Larry Dreyer** Last seen at NKP as a FE in the 21<sup>st</sup> SOS in 1969. (Please contact Jim Burns at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Donn Hassman** Contact Bob Runniger at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com) if you know where Donn Hassman may be.  
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**William "Bill" Wilson** Last seen in 1962/63 at Stead Air Force Base. (Please contact Jim Moore at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Larry Collins** Last seen at the 33<sup>rd</sup> ARRS at Kadena have been informed he retired out of Indian Springs. (Please contact Jim Moore at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Hienrich "Herbie" Herber** He was German born and the last I saw or heard from him was in September of 1965. We were stationed together at Minot for about 2 years. He was from New York State. (Please contact Jerry Bucknall at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Francis Fisher** I believe we were together in the 5040th in Alaska. We were also together at NKP and the 20th in 67-68. (Please contact Jim Burns at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Richard "Rick" Wert** He was in the 21st SOS in 73 - 74 time frame. He was an old rotor head from Hill AFB. I lost contact with him when NKP closed in 75. (Please contact Woody Freeman at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Hank Theriot** Information is as follows: ACFT HH-53C, tail # 68-10366, Call Sign Jolly Green 70, Unit 37th ARRS, Crash date 25 Nov 71, Survivors were: FE Hank Theriot, PJ R. L. Steed (Please contact Mike Wade at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**Members** of the 917S/917H FTD that was at Tan Son Nhut in 1963/64 training VNAF helicopter pilots and mechanics on the H-19 (Please contact Jim Moore at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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**William O. Johnson** We were together at Det 11, 38th ARRS, Tuy HOA Vietnam in 68/69. (Please contact Ron Smitham at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com))  
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Any one knowing where the folks listed in the locator are or where to contact them please contact us. Pass this on to your contacts that are not members of our group. Widest dissemination is requested to assist in locating these "rotorheads".

The names in the locator will remain in forthcoming issues of the Newsletter. The point of contact, at their discretion may remove their search request.

If anyone knows how to contact the following individuals please pass contact information to [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com)

<i>Dennis Bowling</i>	<i>Glenn D. Hunter</i>	<i>Alfonso M. River</i>
<i>Richard J. Thibert</i>	<i>Paul B. Carter</i>	<i>Patrick J. Cook</i>

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*Kenneth L. Hudson  
Steve McKone  
Joseph A. Slavik  
Floyd Watson*

*Ernest R. Kerns  
John F. Reese  
Christopher R. Scott*

*Mark D. Smith  
Jon E. Sorensen  
Paul A. Heller*

Thanks to Steve Mock of the Pedro Newsletter we have added several stories that were originally printed in The MAC Flyer.

A page was added as a subpage to the "Members" page. It is a "Special Honorary Members" page that is a tribute to the ROTORHEAD wives that kept the home fires going. The article is courtesy of Jim Burns.

During January John Flournoy, Chuck Ruth, Don Damoth, Ensley Sisk, Gary Pruitt, Jerry Kibby and Bob Blough joined our group.

In January Mr. Johan Ragay of The Netherlands joined our group as a "Honorary" member serving as the H-43 historian to the group.

The USAFHPA, ARA and the PRHA have placed a link on their website to our website.

A Guest Book has been added to the web site.

During February Fred Gunn, Kyron "KV" Hall, Les Bunting, Mike Boehme, and Gary Estep joined our group. KV became the group's 50<sup>th</sup> member.

Jim Burns and Bill Lyster are working on designing a patch for the "ROTORHEADS". We want a patch that will be representative of all and one that we will be proud of. More on this as the process evolves.

During March 2007 the USAF ROTORHEADS website was awarded the prestigious Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB) *Award for Excellence, The Beloz Award, the LZ Angel Award, The Top 100 Website Award and The VMB-613 "Semper Fidelis" Award.*

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The web site is continually being updated with new information so check frequently to see what is new. There is a link on the home page, "What's new as of 'date' ". The date signifies the last time the site was updated. Click on the link and the changes are listed.

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**NOTICE~~INFORMATION BEING SOUGHT~~NOTICE**

One of our group Historians, Wayne Mutza, is seeking stories from anyone who may have had anything to do with the Hughes OH-6A "Loach". If you have anything to contribute please get it to Wayne. If you don't have his email send it to [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com). Wayne has a book in progress on the Loach and would appreciate your assistance.

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Jim Henthorn, who is doing research for a book on AF Helicopter Special Operations, is looking for the any crewmembers or anyone with specific information from the 20th Helicopter Squadron during the A Shau Valley SF Camp rescue.

Contact Jim at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com)

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**We continue to seek inputs for our Blog and website from the members, so if you have stories, pictures or whatever send them as well as any comments (positive/negative) on the Blog and/or the website to [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com).**

If you have patches that you would like to see posted send them to [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com).

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## **"NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD WARRIOR"**



### **Apple Valley man combines military helicopter and school bus to create eye-catching ride.**

APPLE VALLEY — What do you get when you combine an old military helicopter and a school bus? One very cool ride.

Whenever Dan Morgan, owner of Apple Valley Automotive Paint and Body Supply, takes the "Limokopter" out for a spin, he gets plenty of jaw-dropping stares, loud cheers and numerous questions.

The Limokopter is a completely refurbished Vietnam War-era U.S. military helicopter that has been attached to the frame of an old school bus.

Morgan and his longtime friend Vini "Big Daddy" Bergeman built the vehicle as a tribute to military veterans. The entire process was filmed and aired on the Discovery Channel for Bergeman's show "The Kustomizer" this past fall. (Morgan said the "k" in Limokopter mimics the TV show's title).

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The outside of the Limokopter is painted in camouflage colors with red and white flames on the sides and an evil grin under the cockpit. The patriotic look continues on the inside of the vehicle. Flat screen TVs and speakers — connected to a massive sound system — line the red and white-stripped walls. The ceiling is painted blue with white stars, which complement the matching blue and red leather seats. The Limokopter does not exactly offer a smooth ride — there are a lot of jerky movements and the loud diesel engine makes it difficult to hear.

Morgan said veterans are ones who seem to appreciate the vehicle the most. "When the Vietnam soldiers had to get in this helicopter, they were afraid they were doing to die," he said.



It took Morgan and the Kustomizer crew only three months to build the Limokopter, starting with picking up the old helicopter in Kansas and transporting it to Apple Valley to be customized. The Limokopter was driven to the 2005 annual *Sturgis Bike Week* in Sturgis SD and was dedicated to the Vietnam Veteran's then driven up to MT. Rushmore. "We took it and made something pleasurable out of it."

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Check here to see three videos of the customization process. (Note: Bill Crawford provided the links to the videos)

<http://turbo.discovery.com/beyond/player.html?bctid=68668689>

<http://turbo.discovery.com/beyond/player.html?bctid=68668691>

<http://turbo.discovery.com/beyond/player.html?bctid=68668693>

Nowadays the vehicle is primarily being used at charity events and school visits. Morgan said he and the Limokopter are at charity functions almost every weekend. "We are doing something nice to show veterans we are giving back," Morgan said

As late as May of 2002 there were six H-3s stored behind a garage in Pratt Kansas. These were bought out of Davis Monthan by an outfit called "PA Exchange" of Pratt KS in 1995. There were three Air Force (63-9679, 65-5697 and 65-12788). The other three were USCG aircraft. (Note: This info provided by Sid Nanson)

A call was made to Pratt however PA Exchange is out of the business and the person that answered the phone was only able to confirm that there had been helicopters there at one time.

A close look at the third video above indicates that it is 65-5697.

The individual that apparently owns the LIMOKOPTER in California has been contacted and we hope to have more information to include additional pictures in the near future. **Latest on this.** We have added a page, "Choppers Sui generis" to the web site. Check it out and see the shots we have there.

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One of our goals is to document and preserve Air Force helicopter history. There are other ongoing efforts to preserve this history and is appropriately being accomplished through the refurbishing and

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display of the great birds. We are thinking of compiling pictures and information of such birds and placing the info on the website. There are several museums that have some of these helicopters on display. If you have pictures and possibly historical information please send it to us at [rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com](mailto:rotorheadsrus@yahoo.com)

*Please forward a copy of this Newsletter to all your Air Force ROTORHEAD friends and encourage them to join. Note: If you are not a member check out our website at <http://www.rotorheadsrus.us/> and see what we are all about and then contact us and sign on. We need your helicopter experiences to achieve our goal of documenting Air Force helicopter history.*

*Contact your friends and encourage them to join.*

***Integrity, Respect and Honor.***

***Some of the best things can not be bought, they must be earned.***

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