

Flight School

Compiled and Edited by [Ross Rainwater](#), ORWAC 70-24, "Orange Hats"

For most of us, the phrase "Flight School" has a meaning mere mortals will never understand.

It conjures up a wide variety of memories, some bad, some terrifying, most good. If you were a WOC, your experience was a lot different that if you were already a commissioned officer. If you were a commissioned officer who went through OCS or a military academy, you understood the WOC experience. If you received your commission through ROTC, you were very glad to be avoiding the WOC experience!

The VHPA Directory each year provides a growing list of the names of those who survived flight school and pinned on wings, now beginning with Class 42-J, pilots who may have known Mr. Sikorsky by his first name! Thanks to shows like "MASH," and growing up during the Korean War years (with acknowledgment to those VHPA members who were growing up well before that), many of us probably tended to think of Korea as the first real use of helicopters in warfare. It was not until I became a VHPA member that I learned of the first US evacuation by military helicopter happened in 1944, which gave me a whole new perspective on the rich history of Army Aviation, especially helicopter history. Sadly, much of that history has been lost, and that seminal time is often compressed into a mere few paragraphs that loses the color and intensity of the first-hand narrative.

If you went through flight school in the 50's (or earlier), your experience was vastly different than those who went through in the pre-Vietnam 60's, as was the Vietnam-era 60's and 70's experience different from all that came before. If you were an early-era trainee, you often had considerable time in the military, and so avoided the need to learn much of the basics of military life at the same time you were learning to fly. You started out in fixed wing and transitioned to rotary wing. Later, whether you were a WOC or young lieutenant, your military experience tended to be far less (especially for WOCs who were often only weeks out of high school), and there was the added factor of inexperience about all things military. Your experience was almost always 100% rotary wing with the rare transition later (sometimes much later) to fixed wing.

The aircraft in which you took your initial training was a big part of the equation, and greatly different depending on which one you flew. I never did like the aftermath of the most severe examples of ground resonance problems inherent to the TH-55, and was very glad to be flying the OH-23. However, when it came to backing up in a confined area, I was jealous of the "look over your shoulder" option in the TH-55, impossible in the OH-23.

Each era had its own "look and feel," or perhaps just as accurately, to borrow a more current phrase, its own "shock and awe!"

The Green Machine (and before Green, the Brown Machine) took hordes of often abysmally inexperienced groundlings and, in an amazingly short time, turned thousands into aviators who, for the most part, were just blissfully ignorant enough NOT to realize a helicopter didn't really want to fly and would kill us at the first opportunity we provided. Most of us can tell a story or two that demonstrated just how close we came to "buying the farm" in one way or another, and that only by the slimmest of margins did we escape with our lives. Too, most of us can tell stories of fellow student pilots whose luck ran out by equally slim margins. There, but for the grace of God, went ourselves. We only need look at the names associated with "DDT, Died During Training," to remind us of the inherent dangers of flight training, especially rotary-wing flight training.

The subsequent Air Medals, Distinguished Flying Crosses, Silver Stars, Distinguished Service Crosses, and Medals of Honor are proof of the successes of that process and the bravery of the men who flew "above the best." The vast number of honored names on "The Wall," are proof of the costs involved.

The diversity of flight school experiences was brought home to me in a flash. When I attended the '98 VHPA Reunion in Fort Worth, which included a return to Fort Wolters, I rode on the bus with a member who'd never been to Wolters in his life and wanted to see what it was all about. THAT was an eye-opener, because since Wolters was such a big part of the experience of flight school, especially my own, it hadn't occurred to me there were many helicopter "trail blazers" who'd missed that scenic part of Texas. Having done the classic Wolters-Rucker route, the differences between that and anything that came earlier, or even the Wolters-Stewart track, are totally are foreign to me.

So, what follows is a mere "tip of the iceberg" of the stories that could be told, should be told, and hopefully, you will tell while you can: and are glimpses into various eras of helicopter flight school training (and even earlier fixed-wing training) that so often influenced us for the rest of our lives.

In your mind's eye, relive your own experiences as you read about others'.

Remembrances of Ben Booth, LTC Armor, Retired.

Please keep in mind that virtually all US Army Aviators were originally graduates of the flight school at Fort Sill, OK, as original aviators were Field Artillery Officers and sergeants who graduated from flight and fire adjustment training. Later, some sergeants were commissioned as the original Field Artillery Fire Control (Forward Observer) mission was expanded to liaison, reconnaissance, and movement of commanders by light aircraft (L-3, L-4, and L-5 fixed-wing aircraft) within the Army battle zones.

Some Army Aviators were later trained as helicopter pilots as the H13, H-37, H-19, and H-34 helicopters were added as Army aircraft.

Many warrant officers graduated from US Army flight school at Ft. Rucker, AL in Fixed-wing aircraft classes and at the Camp Gary, TX (formerly Gary AFB, San Marcos, TX) flight school as already-commissioned officers, including almost all flight school classes prior to about 1952, when WORWAC classes began at Fort Still, OK, and later at Fort Wolters. Many graduates of fixed wing flight school at Camp Gary (where USAF officers trained US Army fixed wing pilots, to 1957 when Graham Aviation was awarded a contract to train commissioned officers), until the fixed-wing school was moved to Ft. Rucker.

Many fixed-wing pilots who graduated from Ft. Sill and later Camp Gary, attended rotary-wing pilot training at Ft. Wolters as qualification classes, while the WORWAC classes were also being trained there. Many fixed-wing Army aviators never received rotary-wing flight training, but spent their careers flying L-19 (later O-1) and L-20 (later U-6), U-1, and CV-7 (all Canadian built DeHaviland bush aircraft), and L-23 (later U-23) and OV-1 (Mohawk) and L-26 aircraft.

Class 52B, by Dick Shortridge

Flight Class 52B began the latter part of October 1951 at San Marcos AFB, Texas. We were the green flight hat flight and I think we started with 52 officer students. We flew the L-17 Aeronca Champion with Air Force IPs. Most of us soloed between 8 and ten hours. It was during this pre-solo phase that we lost most of our washouts. However, one guy they carried to his twenty-hour check and he passed both his solo and twenty-hour check at that time.

Except in case of severe illness no one was ever washed back a class; either you kept up with the class or you washed out and returned to your branch for reassignment, usually Korea.

The Air Force was a great believer in imbuing self-confidence in its students. At about our 50-hour level, we all flew to an abandoned airfield. Our IP then took us up to altitude, shut off the engine, and demonstrated a dead stick landing. Then he climbed out of the L-16 and told us to go shoot three dead stick landings . . . solo. It was quite a confidence builder. After each landing someone had to come out to the airplane and proper the engine so we could do it again. By the third landing most of us had the bird on the ground and stopped with 25-50 feet of the next student. I hadn't felt this confident until the night seven years later when I shot touchdown autorotations at night with my flight commander sitting with his arms crossed in an OH-23 at Ft. Wolters.

In March of 1952 we completed the Liaison Pilot Course at San Marcos. However, we were the first class NOT to receive our Air Force L wings. Very disappointing. Over the weekend we drove up to Ft. Sill to attend the Army portion of our flight training. At Sill we flew L-19 Cessnas with Army and civilian IPs. The L-19 was a great bird. Not very fast but lots of power with that 213 hp engine and big, fixed-pitch prop; it also had some instruments and a radio to play with.

Oklahoma is laid out in square mile sections that point in the cardinal directions, north, east, south, and west. Each student pilot was assigned a four-mile (or 4-section) area to be his local flying area and this is where he practiced.

On a hot afternoon in May I took my final check ride with a civilian IP. I met him at the aircraft and preflighted the bird while he strapped in. I then hopped in, started the engine, called the tower, got my clearance, added power to taxi . . . and went nowhere. I had forgotten to pull the chocks. Soooooo, I had the IP stand on the brakes, I unstrapped, got out and pulled the bloody chocks, got back in, and proceeded on my hot and sweaty way. I then flew directly to my practice area and started to demonstrate my basic maneuvers.

About halfway through, the check pilot called me on the intercom and told me he thought I was doing a good job with my flying but I might be able to do a better job if I used all four square miles of my area instead of the one square mile I was using. I nodded mutely. He then tapped me on the shoulder and said in a very kindly voice, "Relax, Lieutenant, I never

have washed out a second lieutenant yet." With that I took a deep breath and proceeded to pass my final check ride. Thank you Mr. Knox, wherever you are

Our last big flight occurred about two weeks before graduation. We were to fly solo from Sill to Ft. Knox and spend a few days there flying the students at the Advanced Armor Officers Course, and then fly back to Sill. In charge of our group was a young captain who loved to micro-manage everything. There were about 12 or 14 L-19s in this gaggle and we were all about ten or twelve minutes apart with the captain bringing up the rear. Somewhere over Illinois one of the students encountered engine trouble and radioed to the captain who was probably twenty miles back, "Don't land until I get there!!!" I still remember that guy's name, but I'll never tell . . .

We had a flight surgeon at Sill during our tour who was a bit of a character. If, God forbid, you had to see him, you knew two things would happen: He would spray your throat with some foul-tasting stuff and then put you on the scale. If you exceeded the Army weight limit for pilots, either 170 or 180, you were put on an immediate diet and threatened with elimination if you didn't make the weight ASAP.

Final subject: Wives. In flight school wives could make you or break you. I did not know one student who successfully completed the program if his wife didn't want him to fly. Conversely, I've talked to many guys who firmly believe their wives were a big help in getting them through.

We finally graduated and were awarded our wings in June 1952, about eight months from start to finish. Most of our guys wound up in Korea but I know of four of us who hung around for Vietnam: Bob Corneil, Ed Carr, Frenchie Provencher, and me.

Paul France's recollections of Class 52-E

On a night cross country flight, a class member named Bradley turned south to complete the third leg of the mission. Lo and behold, he missed the check point to turn east and back to San Marcos. He finally ended up at the north end of San Antonio, lost and confused. He was running low on fuel about now so decided to make a landing on the only lighted area he could see. He landed his trusty L-16B in a softball field, where there was a game being played, no less. No one was hurt except for Bradley's ego. Next day someone went down and flew the bird out. End of tale.

Then there was the time when LT Don Swett was out flying with a couple of other students. They were goofing off, flying low-level, etc. Don was leading the group and came upon some power lines. He didn't pull up quite fast enough and clipped a couple of them. No damage to him or the aircraft.

Upon landing back at San Marcos, the line chief made not of several deep gouges in the propeller and reported it to the authorities. Upon questioning Don, he admitted to low-level flying and hitting the power lines. They washed him out right on the spot. This was probably his last solo flight before graduating. Everyone felt sorry for Don, and he even had the guts to come and watch the rest of us receive our graduation certificates. Like classes before us and after, we all did stupid things, but never got caught.



[Standing beside the L-16A is (L to R) Joe Capo and then Joe Levinson. I loved to loop this bird and do barrel rolls all day in it] [In the pic by the pool is sitting Tom Lendrum, myself, Joe Levinson and an unknown. Between Tom and myself sits my little boy, Reed.now 53.]

From Devon L Nooner. Class 55-0

Class ACHPC 55-0 started Helicopter flight training on 9 May 1955 at Camp Rucker, AL. The class consisted of 53 students, all in the grade of sergeant or above, 40 enlisted men, 3 WO's and 8 Commissioned (MC)! Some were "washed out" because of "Dr Furyuki's" psychoanalysis as being "Undesirable." We picked up 2 extra students from a previous class because of a broken leg and medical reasons, Howard Estes and Edward Gilmore.

We were assigned Instructors and Academic Classrooms in World War II barracks! My Instructor was Jimmy Johnson and the Flight Commander was CPT Hauck (Black Bird Flight Leader). Our first flight took place on 18 May 55 in an H-13G. No sickness or dizziness as recorded in my Flight Log Book signed by the numerous flight instructors that taught me to fly. Soloed in 22 hours! I busted my first check ride with CPT Hauck because of "Checkitis" and was given an extra 5 hours and passed my first supervised solo under the watchful eye of Don Whitaker, who later died from a crash in an experimental jet called the G-90! Stalled on a tight turn to final approach to Cairns AAF!

A second supervised solo was uneventful and I was released for unsupervised solos for 10 hours. Intermediate Check Ride was also Unsatisfactory and I was given an extra 5 hours to "Clean Up My Act". Passed my Intermediate check ride on 17 Aug 55 and was cleared for Loads (300 lbs) at Hooper Stage field.

All of the classmates who started except for the "wash-outs," started advance flight training, doing Confined Area Operations that included High and Low Recon, Road Operations and Pinnacle landings, autorotations, also at night. Lake Tholoco was an experience for the brave at heart! Night flying to Opp, AL was accomplished solo and some of us got lost and stopped at a road side gas station and refueled with High Test Gasoline!

We were Named "Eagle Flight" and a large hand-painted plaque by Candidate Grubaugh was nailed to the ceiling in the Mess Hall along with the many other Flight Plaques of classes that came before us! Our Upperclassmen came from Class 55-F who were the first starting Flight Class at Camp Rucker! Most of our demerits came from 360's on the floor and unauthorized pets in the room (flies). Frank M. Donahoo was proclaimed "Father" of a litter of kittens that was born under the barracks; he was feeding them from food and milk from the mess hall! Our Tactical Officer was Lt. Arlie D. Price. We received our "Yellow Tabs" signifying we were now Senior Candidates and within 11 weeks of graduation! Our Class song at the time was "The High and The Mighty" and our School song was written by Mitch Miller and the Gang, "Above the Best" of which I still have a 45 RPM copy!

Our Final check ride came on 7 Sept 55 with a day cross country to Troy, AL and return and final night cross country to Sampson-Opp-Elba-and return to Camp Rucker!

Started check out in the H-25 Flying Mule and half the class started training and check out in the H-19, on 19 Sept 55 for an additional 10 hours of flight time. Graduation was on 15 Oct 55 at the Post Theater with 35 cadets graduating. I graduated #26 of 28 Cadets although my academic standing was the "Anchorman" for the whole class! Our Valedictorian was Jerry K Wayne (Deceased) with Howard L Knight (deceased) runner up. Presentations of our rank, WOJG and Silver Wings were by Gen Carl I Hutton. Our company 1SG stood outside the exit door and received \$1 for every salute he gave to the newly appointed Officers & Warrant Officers.

Our entire class was re-assigned to Ft Sill to qualify in the largest helicopter then made, the H-34A. One of our class members, Floyd Weaver, had helped to build them at the Sikorsky plant in Conn! Weaver was also the Crew Chief for Elmer Schwartz, who is now the oldest living Warrant Officer from Flight School at the age of 86 on 25 Sept 03, living in Dallas, Tx. Weaver soloed first in our class with 5 hours of flight time in the H-13 helicopter. He now lives here on beautiful Lake Eufaula with Devon L Nooner, writer of this Bio of Class 55-0.

[Class Members who started with the illustrious Flight Class 55-0 and their status are:

NAME	RANK	STATUS
RICHARD G ACKERMAN	SFC	DECEASED
ALFRED J ADCOCK	SGT	WASHED OUT
CHARLES W ANDERSON	SGT	FT WORTH, TX
JOHN BATTAGLIA	LT	WASHED OUT
DORSEY BATTLE JR	MSGT	DECEASED
ALBERT G BENSON	LT	DECEASED
ROBERT D BIVENS	SFC	DECEASED
ERNEST H BRASHAW	SGT	PACE, FL

ROBERT A CARR	LT	UNK
JOHN D CLEARY	SGT	LONG BEACH, CA
CLARENCE D CORSON JR	SGT	PANAMA CITY, FL
ROBERT L DAZEY	SFC	WASHED OUT
DONALD L DODSON	SGT	DECEASED
FRANKY M DONAHOO	SGT	ONALASKA, TX
FRANKLIN L DUKE	CW2	UNK
JAMES L EDWARDS	SFC	WASHED OUT
BILLY J ENGLISH	SFC	DECEASED
ROBERT W FEDDERMAN	2/LT	UNK
IVEY L FURR	SFC	WASHED OUT
HOWARD Y GARLAN	WO1	WASHED OUT
WALTER C GENTRY	SFC	WASHED OUT
WALTER D GORDON	CW2	WASHED OUT
CHARLES E GREER	SFC	WASHED OUT
RAYMOND E GRIFFITH	MSGT	FLUNKED CHECK RIDE
JAMES C GRUBAUGH	SGT	DECEASED
WILLIAM P HART	SGT	FLUNKED CHECK RIDE
ROY R HOWELL	2/LT	DECEASED
HOWARD L KNIGHT	MSGT	DECEASED
MELVILLE H KNOWLTON	SGT	FLUNKED CHECK RIDE
HAROLD D LOGAN	SGT	FLUNKED CHECK RIDE
JAMES H LOHMEYER	SFC	DROPPED FROM FLT
ROBERT R MARSH	SGT	OZARK, AL
THURLOW W MATTESON	LT	DECEASED
JAMES H MAXEY	SFC	DECEASED
DANIEL E MOLDENJR	CW2	UNK
SAMUEL J MOWERY	SFC	OZARK. AL
DEVON L NOONER	SGT	ABBEVILLE, AL
DAVID C PAXTON	SFC	WASHED OUT
ALEXIS S PEREZ	SGT	WASHED OUT
CHARLES E PUCKETT	MSGT	WASHED OUT
JIMMY L REESE	2/LT	WASHED OUT
ELMER L RHOADS	MSGT	DECEASED
LEONARD M SEYMOUR	LT	WASHED OUT
WILLIAM R SMITH	SGT	WASHED OUT
JOHN R VERGE	SFC	WASHED OUT
BILLY J WARD	SGT	UNK
JERRY K WAYNE	MSGT	DECEASED
FLOYD L WEAVER	SGT	ABBEVILLE, AL
BILLY J WEEKS	SFC	FLORENCE, SC
AUBREY J WEIBELT JR	SFC	DECEASED
ROBERT O YEAGER	SFC	WASHED OUT
MICHAEL W ZENAK	SGT	DECEASED
ADDED TO CLASS		
HOWARD ESTES	SGT	SAVANNAH, GA
EDWARD GILMORE	SGT	ENTERPRISE, AL

Memories of James Ford, Class 55-J:

I reported to Gary AFB, San Marcos, Texas in January 1955 for Army Primary Flight Training with further orders to Fort Rucker, Alabama for Advanced Flight Training.

Gary was at that time totally owned and operated by the U.S. Air Force and the entire flight training program was run by the U.S. Air Force. All instructors, check pilots, and ground school instructors were U.S. Air Force.

I was assigned to Class 55-J, "yellow hats." Our class was split into two sections and one section would fly in the morning while the other section had ground school and they would switch in the afternoon. The following week, the sections would switch.

Our class consisted of everything from 2LTs right out of a basic course to senior 1LTs who had served in Korea. Our

instructors consisted of Air Force 1LTs with a few CPTs as flight leaders. In some cases, the student might have rank seniority over the instructor but there was no doubt who was in charge during flight.

There were frequent stories of instructors, who sat behind the students, taking off their caps and flailing the back of the students' heads with their baseball caps while screaming and hollering about sub-par abilities or questioning the ancestry of the students.

Our aircraft were tandem-seat L-21 super cubs with no radios and the Gary flight line had hundreds of the little yellow birds lined up, row after row after row. At the end of each section's flight day, the line of little yellow birds on entry leg would stretch for miles as the classes came in from the stage fields. One would follow the other in the pattern and, as one turned base, the pilot would be given a green light from the tower which was clearance to land; the pilot had to acknowledge by wagging the wings. If there was a problem, they might flash a yellow light which meant to continue approach or a red light to go around.

The first major goal was to solo and be able to walk out on the flight line and climb in a bird all by yourself, take off and go flying. Next was instrument training in the back seat of a TL-19, a bird dog with an instrument panel in the rear, which was hooded. The last big deal at Gary was soloing the L-19. The first time I climbed into the front seat of a Bird Dog, I could not believe what a big airplane it was with all of those instruments and it even had radio and you could wear a headset.

The first major obstacle in the operation of the L-19 was learning to taxi it from the ramp parking spot. There were many occasions when airplanes would be observed going in circles around the tie downs because the student could not get the airplane going straight. One day, a classmate of mine spent a whole hour's instruction on the ramp trying to go in a straight line with his instructor screaming and yelling in the back seat. He finally mastered the technique and went on to graduate with no trouble.

Graduation from Gary was in August and off we went to a recently re-opened Camp Rucker. Rucker had just assumed the mission of being the Army Aviation School which had been at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. At Rucker, it was all becoming proficient in the L-19, a lot of tactical flying which consisted of STOL work and flying in and out of unprepared field strips, some instrument flying and a checkout in the L-20 Beaver. We graduated as Army Aviators on November 5, 1955 and for the next 18 years, I ran into my 55-J classmates all over the world. (Within the VHPA, there is only one other member of 55-J and that's Jack Johnson of Lawton, Oklahoma.) After a 3-year tour in Germany, flying L-19's for a field artillery group, in January 1959, I reported to Camp Wolters, Mineral Wells, Texas for primary helicopter training flying Bell H-13B's.

Remembrances of Don Joyce

On 30 April 1955, my Flight Class, ACHPC 55-Fox, "Camp" Rucker's 1st WOC Class, graduated. Arriving in September 1954, Class 55-Fox participated in the re-opening of Camp Rucker, which had been inactive for several years.

Our Classmates who are no longer with us: Don Lusk, Jack Snipes, Don Beachnaw, Raymond Smith, Henry "Hank" Beau, John "Jack" Williams, Joseph Truitt, Robert Buechter, Eugene "Gene" Price (who graduated with 55-H), Leonard Brown, Mike Madden and Joe Griffin (who graduated with 55-G)

"Hank" Beau, while flying a CH-21C, was the 1st Army Aviator wounded in Vietnam. "Gene" Price, a former H-19 line chief, was the 1st WOC to "Solo" at Knox Field, the first "Stage-Field" at the newly re-opened Camp Rucker, in mid-Nov 54. Years later, he set several world altitude records in a CH-54A, above 25,000 feet!

"Jack" Williams and I "Soloed" on the same day, 30 Nov 54, and were photographed and "written-up" by the Dothan "Eagle". Must have been a slow news day!

Now a retired airline pilot, "Chuck" Hall in April 2000 flew his P-51 "Six-Shooter" to Kissimmee, FL, to attend the "Mustang Gathering", and had a "mini-reunion" with several classmates.

"Mike" Madden was selected as the Army Aviator of the Year in 1960.

Joe Griffin was awarded the DFC as a pilot in the 1st flight of two HU-1Bs to the South Pole - 1963.

William Ruf, Bobby Bruce and Carl Burhanan (who graduated with 55-G) spent several tours as VH-3 pilots in the Presidential Executive Flight Detachment.

Looking back, with pride and memories:

* ACHPC (Army Cargo Helicopter Pilot Course)

* MSC (Medical Service Corps) The only Branch, prior to Vietnam, that sent its Commissioned Officers to Rotary-Wing training only. When Warrant Officer Helicopter Pilots began Fixed-Wing training in 1959/1960, MSC Officers were part of our "Gold Hat" Classes once again.

* WOJG (Warrant Officer, Junior Grade) One of the only two Warrant Officer Ranks at the time.

* CWO (Chief Warrant Officer) the higher rank for Warrant Officers at that time.

Camp Rucker's 1st WOC Class, ACHPC 55-Fox graduated and were awarded the silver wings of an Army Aviator and the EM pinned on the WOJG insignia.

Class Roster of EM, Warrant Officers and MSC Officers of ACHPC 55-Fox:

CPT Glen W. Jones - Class Leader

1LT Donald F. Lusk

1LT Willie M. Dixson

1LT Curtis O. Greer

1LT Jack C Snipes

2LT Raymond E. Smith

CWO William L. Ruf

WOJG Jack M. Hendrickson

MSGT Donald C Beachnaw

MSGT Henry R. Beau

MSGT Carl Burhanan

MSGT John F. Williams

MSGT Joseph M. Truitt

MSGT Robert W. Buechter

MSGT Meckie I. Keys

SFC Rex C. Flohr

SFC Raymond T. Kline

SFC Eugene E. Price

SFC Louis L. Share

SFC Jay L. Dugger

SFC Leonard T. Brown

SFC Donald R. Joyce

SGT Stanton L. Beedy

SGT Bobby G. Bruce

SGT Michael J. Madden

PVT Charles R. Hall

Class 55-Fox had its 1st Reunion at "Cheap Charlie's" Restaurant in Saigon in September 1962. Classmates came from several bases in Vietnam and Thailand.

Many of the surviving members of 55-Fox will meet again in June at Fort Rucker, AL, during the annual "W4" Reunion..

Thinking back to the "Early Days"....

The Army foresaw the future of cargo helicopters in logistical support and established the idea of Transportation Companies in 1949.

In or about 1950 the Army Staff (ARSTAF) programmed for 12 helicopter companies in the Transportation Corps and scheduled them for activation over 5 years. Aviation companies would have 2 observation and 21 transport helicopters. TC Battalions would be assigned to Field Army headquarters for attachment to subordinate units as needed.

The Army got 5 Transportation Helicopter Companies in the Army Emergency Supplemental Budget for 1951.

The first Army helicopter company, the 6th Transportation Company (Helicopter) received its H-19C (UH-19) Chickasaw helicopters. They began training at Fort Bragg and departed for Korea on 7 December 1952. The company consisted of 5 Officers and 28 Aviation Warrant Officers (AWO) plus necessary NCOs and EM, to operate and maintain 21 aircraft.

The first (AWO) Transportation Helicopter Pilot Course, taught at Fort Sill, OK, graduated in November 1952. The course moved to Camp Rucker in September 1954, then to Ft Wolters, TX in 1956.

Also in 1952 the Army gained its first practical experience with mass helicopter flying, within the 6th Transportation Company (Helicopter) and then the 13th Transportation Company (Helicopter).

Orders published 5 January 1955 activated the 45th Transportation Battalion, (Light Helicopter), at Fort Sill, OK for the new H-34 [CH-34] Choctaw light tactical transport.

In late March 1955 the Army first took delivery of the Sikorsky H-34 [CH-34] Choctaw light tactical transport helicopter at the plant in Bridgeport, CT. Training of H-34 pilots was at Fort Sill, OK.

During March, Army pilots received intensive training from Sikorsky's chief test pilot. The H-34 course involved 10 hours of actual flight time.

On 1 May 1955 the 587th Transportation Company (Aviation) with the first H-34 [CH-34] Choctaw light tactical helicopters formed at Fort Sill, OK.

In February 1956 the 587th Transportation Helicopter Company was chosen as the first of 3 21-aircraft companies with the H-34 [CH-34] Choctaw to deploy to Europe.

By late 1954, the Army had formed other TC helicopter Companies, equipped with H-25s originally, then replaced with Piasecki H-21s (CH-21C) Shawnees. The 509th TC (later 3rd TC) was stationed at Ft Belvoir, VA and the 580th TC (later 8th TC) at Ft Bragg, NC. Other H-21 units formed at Ft Devens, MA, Ft Riley, KS, Ft Lewis, WA, with the Transition course at Ft. Riley.

All of these CH-21C TC Companies, except the 3rd TC, were the 1st units sent to Vietnam, starting in 1961, under command of the 45th TC Bn (later 145th CAB) at Tan Son Nhut, Saigon.

H-21's soon replaced the H-19s in the 6th TC and 13th TC in the Far East.

From several sources and memory.... CRS might be the cause of any errors.

Don Joyce
WOJG, 30 April 1955
CW4, US Army, Retired
GoldEagle4@WebTV.Net

Ben Vandervoort's (65-3) Memories of Vietnam-era Training as an IP in 1966 (From an article he wrote for the US Army Aviation Digest, November 1973)

I was good. I had just completed a tour in the Republic of Vietnam and had a thousand hours of flying time under my belt. No one could teach me anything about flying a helicopter! Put a pair of blades on it and I'll make it fly!

That was back in June 1966. Since then my thousand hours has grown to 4200 hours and I've learned that I'm not as good as I once thought.

But let's go back to that time in 1966 when I signed into Ft. Wolters, TX, where the Army's Primary Helicopter Schools was located. I was fortunate enough to be in one of the last military classes to go through both civilian and military instructor pilot training. At that time military students were first taught by Southern Airways the pre-solo and primary phase of flying in the OH-23. We were then transitioned into the TH-55 by military instructors and turned loose to our respective flight commanders.

Upon being assigned my first students, I suddenly realized something: I'm supposed to teach them how to fly!. All of the devious little tricks I used to pull on my old instructors flashed across my mind. Every attempt I had made at killing that wizened old pilot was remembered. Each time, where he had waited until the last moment to salvage us from disaster, was realized. Now, they can't expect me to do that with my students . . . "

But they did.

My first few classes were a disaster--at least to my mind they were. I must have done something right though; all my students passed their check rides--that was back when they had check rides. But, oh, those first few classes. I couldn't keep up with the students." Sir, why aren't you supposed to autorotate an OH-23 from above 10,000 feet." Or, "How does

the degree of bank affect the relative gross weight of the aircraft?" Gad! Back to flight school!

I started by devouring the dash 10 for the OH-23D. At the same time I learned my planned lessons a week in advance-- just in case one of the sneaky ones was reading ahead in the program. I got a copy of their ground class schedule. I learned quickly that when they were having meteorology I would be besieged by such questions as, "Could you explain the difference between an altostratus and an altocumulus cloud?" Or take navigation: "Would you please show me how to computer wind drift with the E-6B?"

E-6B! Now what was an E-6B? Occasionally, I suspected I was doing their homework for them. Fortunately, I didn't get too many calls from irate ground instructors.

My control touch improved considerably those first few classes. There is nothing quite as embarrassing as saying, "No, that's wrong. Let me demonstrate how it's done." And then making the same error. Control touch had to improve. I didn't mind a few students inadvertently trying to kill both of us, but I felt I didn't have to help them.

After awhile I got better. I started getting a feel for the aircraft. I began to get a reasonable idea of both my own and the aircraft's capabilities and limitations. The ability to communicate with my students became easier. I now knew several different techniques I could use to "get through" to them. Things were really shaping up. Yes, sir, I could handle anything.

We recovered at about 50 feet above the ground with the rotor rpm at a setting so low I still don't know how the aircraft stayed in the air. I didn't think he would hold pitch in a simulated forced landing like that! I learned a lot from that incident. I did from all my students.

The two years I spent as an instructor pilot at Ft. Wolters were perhaps the most rewarding time I have spent in my life. To take a fledgling aviator and watch him progress and learn to fly fascinated me. I learned more about flying in those two years than is imaginable.

To the students who had me as their instructor pilot during the time from June 1966 to June 1968--thank you. You taught me a lot about flying. I hope I did the same for you. And the most important thing you taught me is that I will never know all there is to know about flying.

To those pilots who do know all there is to know about flying--congratulations on your retirement.

Mister Mallet
by Ira McComic
WORWAC 68-7

As I was learning to fly a helicopter, every instructor pilot I had in flight school was different and I learned something from each one, yet the one IP that I recall most often, and always with special fondness, is Mister Mallet. Mister Mallet was a civilian instructor pilot in the Huey transition phase of flight training at Ft. Rucker.

I entered the Huey transitioning phase of flight school in a state of disbelief. I couldn't believe that I had made it that far. Contrary to the opinion I had about my aptitude for flying before I actually attempted to fly anything, my experience in flight school had knocked the notion from my mind that I had some natural talent for this profession. The evidence and the testimony were conclusive. In addition to the evidence of my own first-hand experience testifying to the difficulty I had getting a helicopter to do what I wanted, several of my IPs shared with me their opinion of my ineptness in grasping the skills of flying a helicopter. Therefore, based upon the evidence and opinions of expert witnesses, I was convicted in my mind, and beyond any reasonable doubt, that the only reason why I kept passing from one phase of flight training to the next was because each IP feared that if he flunked me, I might be recycled through the phase and he would get me again. Now, there I was, starting the Huey transition phase and nearing the end of flight school. I wondered, how long was the Army going to let me get away with this?

Perhaps it was the luck of the draw or, more precisely, the order of the alphabet, that brought me to Mister Mallet. He drew three students from my class: Mathis, McComic, and McLean. Maybe it was a coincidence that Mister Mallet's name also started with an "M". Mathis was a quiet, reserved person. McLean was outgoing and, because he already had a private pilot's license before starting flight school, McLean often volunteered to explain aeronautical things to anyone he felt needed help. He carried around a pocket notebook to jot down important information in case anyone needed to be set straight on something.

I don't know all the things that Mister Mallet had done before he started risking himself with Army helicopter student pilots, but I remember his telling us that he once had a crop dusting business in Wichita Falls, Texas. That fact alone was

something that automatically raised him several notches on my scale of esteem. As a kid growing up on a farm in Texas, my first encounters with flying machines (other than hay balers caught up by tornadoes) were with crop dusting airplanes. Unlike a fighter or bomber I saw only in a movie, and unlike even an airliner way up in the sky too high to cast even a shadow on the field where I sweated with a hoe and a cotton sack, a crop dusting airplane had been immediate and real.

Once, when I was eight years old, I watched a crop dusting airplane perform its ballet, dipping into a field, skimming the rows of cotton, rearing on its tail to climb over the trees of a fence row, circling tight, and doing it again and again. Once, as the plane's path brought it in my direction, the pilot waved down at me and I felt blessed.

Mister Mallet belied the stereotype dashing aviator. He was a short, round fellow and he was totally without pretension. I learned that when it came to flying, Mister Mallet had nothing to be pretentious about; he was thoroughly competent. And, as I have discovered to be true of most competent people in their profession, he appeared to make it easy.

And talk!? Mister Mallet could carry on a continuous one-man conversation on any subject that attracted his interest and, apparently, there wasn't anything that didn't interest him. But he was especially interested in talking about anything we wanted to know about flying. He always stopped to listen whenever any of us had a question and he could always ask just the right question himself to make sure we got the point of anything he wanted us to understand.

That first day of Huey flight training, Mister Mallet walked us through a hands-on pre-flight inspection. Then, he chose Candidate Mathis to be the first one to fly the Huey. Mathis settled into the front seat beside the other seat where Mister Mallet sat. McLean and I climbed into the back. With Mathis at the controls, Mister Mallet stepped us through the start-up procedure for the aircraft. McLean and I craned our heads from the back. I watched every step as if I were trying to learn the intricacies of brain surgery. McLean took notes and repeated to me some of the steps that he thought I might have missed.

Once the engine was running, the rotor was turning, and Mister Mallet had explained all the proper readings for the instruments, I was surprised that he simply said to Mathis, "OK, let's go." Because this was the first time for any of us in a Huey, I expected he would at least hover it himself out of the crowded tie-down area.

Mathis took the controls and brought the aircraft up to a hover with barely a bobble. Then, he hovered it through the tie-down area and up to the runway with hardly any fishtailing at all and he held it pretty close to three feet off the ground all the way. I was glad Mathis was doing this and not me.

With Mister Mallet directing the way, Mathis flew the helicopter out to the stage field. On the way there, Mister Mallet pointed out key landmarks, including the distant Dothan radio tower and the pasture with the lone hollowed-out pine tree where, he assured us, an owl roosted during the daytime.

All the way there, Mister Mallet talked about a variety of subjects, including the full spectrum of significant airspeeds (those for normal flight, best rate-of-climb, best glide ratio, not-to-exceed, and so forth). He talked about engine out procedures and explained at length a personal theory he had developed about how to determine the health of an engine by smelling the exhaust.

We soon arrived at the stage field, a piece of pasture with an asphalt runway, a small building and a windsock, all surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Mister Mallet had Mathis land on the grass beside the runway. When the aircraft came to a rest, he asked Mathis to roll the throttle to flight idle. Then Mister Mallet turned to the back seat, looked at my nametag, and said, "McComic, it's your turn."

I said, "Yes, sir," and nodded my head, but my knees were shaking "no".

I thought, this was it; this is where it all comes to an end. Oh sure, I had survived all of preliminary flight training at Ft. Wolters by the grace of some benevolence. And, thus far at Ft. Rucker, I had even managed to fly a TH-13 on cockpit instruments alone without totally inverting it, even though I was hooded like some dray horse. But this was different. This was a real helicopter, a Huey, just like the ones that real helicopter pilots flew, not some farm boy like me.

But, having no other recourse other than immediately agreeing to spend the rest of my Army career as an infantryman, I climbed into the front where Mathis had been and strapped myself into the pilot's seat.

I sat there, fumbling with the seat adjustment, trying to delay my last moments in flight school. Mister Mallet filled those moments by reviewing the green zone of every instrument on the panel that had one, then moved to an analysis of why the ash tray in the aircraft was located where it was, and concluded with an opinion regarding the misplacement of the stage field's runway in relation to the prevailing wind.

Eventually, seeing as how I could no longer delay the inevitable, I shifted in my seat like a bronc rider in the chute settling onto "Ol' Thunder and Lightning" and I rolled on the throttle, watching the engine and rotor tach needles marry; that is, align with one another on the combined tachometer.

Just as he did with Mathis, Mister Mallet said to me, "Ok, let's go."

I pulled up on the collective and wiggled the cyclic and foot pedals with little actual hope of holding the Huey in one spot as it came off the ground. Why wasn't Mister Mallet on the controls with me? Didn't he know that, by myself, I wouldn't be able to hover a real helicopter and keep it within the confines of the state of Alabama, let alone within the perimeter of a stage field? Mister Mallet, unconcerned, was caught up in an explanation of why windssocks were shaped the way they were.

When I eased the Huey off the ground, to my surprise, it only drifted a few inches before I was able to catch it and hold it on that spot. Mister Mallet said, "Give me a normal take off." I pulled up some more on the collective, nudged the cyclic forward, and up we went climbing away from the stage field. I kept waiting for Mister Mallet to show me how I really ought to be doing a takeoff, but he simply said, "Stay in the pattern."

On the climb out from the stage field, Mister Mallet pointed out a pond that he felt had promising fishing potential. As Mister Mallet continued talking about fishing the pond, I turned to the downwind leg of the traffic pattern, paralleling the runway. I handled the controls gently so as not to disturb whoever, or whatever, was actually flying this Huey. It couldn't be me. Maybe the Army had installed some kind of autopilot on a Huey that no one mentioned.

About halfway along the downwind leg, Mister Mallet was speculating on the best bait to use in the pond. That's when he reached down and rolled off the helicopter's throttle. He interrupted his bait discussion briefly to interject for my benefit, "Simulated engine failure", before continuing the discussion.

Cutting the throttle was such a surprise, I didn't have time to think; I just reacted. I automatically shoved down the collective in my left hand to reduce the lifting pitch of the rotor blades so the rotor could continue to turn. With no power from the engine, the Huey began to sink. Only the up rushing air was keeping the rotor blades spinning.

Although I was flying in the pattern and set up for a landing on the stage field's runway, surely Mister Mallet wasn't expecting me to make an autorotation landing, was he? Sure, I had practiced this maneuver in other helicopters, but this was different. This was a Huey, a helicopter made for real pilots. Mister Mallet needed to be on the controls doing this.

No longer under the delusion that anything or anyone other than me was flying the aircraft, I gripped the controls, holding the helicopter straight ahead on the downwind leg of the landing pattern. I waited for Mister Mallet to tell me when I should turn the cross wind back toward the runway. It seemed to me that every other IP before him had always felt it necessary to make that judgment for me. However, Mister Mallet apparently wasn't paying attention to those details. He was half turned toward the back seat, elaborating for Mathis and McLean the proper aging of stink bait. With a quick glance to the back seat, I saw that McLean was taking notes on this.

The helicopter continued losing altitude, its rotor windmilling. Out of the corner of my eye, I watched the runway slipping away behind me. When it seemed to me that I was about to get too far away from the runway, I decided to go ahead and make the turn. I wasn't sure that it was the right time to do that, but I was sure that Mister Mallet would yell at me for any mistake; it seemed every other IP of mine did. But when I started the turn, Mister Mallet simply asked me, "Where do you plan to touch down?"

I replied tentatively, "On the runway?"

"Ok," he said, "but where exactly on the runway?"

It seemed to me that Mister Mallet had misplaced priorities. Here we were, in a helicopter falling out of the sky, with some farm boy he had met only that day at the controls, and he was asking this boy to be precise about where the impact would occur. Why wasn't he on the controls with me?

I hastily picked a spot. "Uh, I guess there beside the stage field building," I stabbed. I had no more confidence in predicting where I would touch down than I did in picking a winner when I went to the weekend dog races in Panama City.

I was wide-eyed, rounding out the turn to line up with the runway while riding the collective, adjusting it up and down, adding and subtracting pitch on the rotor blades to keep the rotor tachometer in the green zone.

As we plummeted toward the ground, Mister Mallet studied the building alongside the runway, a wooden shack some fifty-

feet-or-so long with two small windows facing the runway. "Tell you what," he said, "if you can touch down right across from the second window, I'll buy you a Coke."

McLean thought it was a wager. "I'll raise you two cokes," he said, and he wrote it down. I took a grim satisfaction in knowing that McLean would never collect those Cokes since I felt certain, with me at the controls, none of us would even survive the fundamental basis of the bet.

I sweated with the controls, puzzled about why it was that Mister Mallet had me confused with someone else. He was expecting this person sitting in the seat where I was to not only touch down on the runway but on a precise spot a few window panes long. When was he going to get on the controls with me?

As the runway approached, Mister Mallet was holding forth on the subject of transformations: trading airspeed for altitude and converting the potential lifting energy in autorotating rotor blades into practical kinetic energy for touchdown. And I was sure it was for my benefit that he added a footnote on the relationship between nose-up flare angles and tail boom stinger bumping.

He only stopped that discussion because something else caught his interest. "Look over there," he told Mathis and McLean. Pointing out the window, he said, "See that deer in the trees." He stuck his head out of the open window, to see it more clearly. "I think it's a white tail," he said.

I despaired. More interested in wild life than even his own self-preservation, I no longer had any hope that Mister Mallet was going to save us. Obviously, Mister Mallet was not a judge of flying ability, and his mistake in judgment by letting me attempt this autorotation landing all by myself was going to prove disastrous.

So, realizing that it was all up to me, I decided that I had to perform at least well enough to convince the accident investigating board when it studied the wreckage that the flight training dollars the Army had spent on me had not been totally wasted.

The hurtling Huey was about fifty feet above the runway. I pulled back on the cyclic to flare the aircraft, attempting to slow its forward momentum and its descent. I held the cyclic back, trying to be careful and not flare the aircraft so much that it ballooned up into the air. I felt the pressure on the seat of my pants as the plunging Huey began slowing its rate of descent. I continued holding back pressure on the cyclic. Nose up, the Huey was now skimming above the runway and sinking toward it at more sedate rate. Then, as the Huey's forward speed slowed, I eased the cyclic forward to level the aircraft and bring the skids parallel with the runway. As the nose came down, the aircraft began to fall again. I pulled up on the collective in an attempt to cushion the impact with the runway. I squinted my eyes and held on. The Huey settled gently onto the runway like dust on furniture, scooted forward on the skids a few feet, and stopped.

Mister Mallet pulled his head from the window. "Yep, definitely, a white tail," he said.

McLean was jubilant. Looking back at the stage field window Mister Mallet had picked, he said, "Hah, you missed it over ten feet. You owe me..", and he paused to refer to his notes, "...three Cokes."

I sat there, in disbelief. I had done it. I had done that autorotation landing all by myself, but how was that possible?

Then, a possible explanation came to me. Maybe I actually was becoming a real helicopter pilot. Maybe all those other IPs had, in their own way, actually prepared me to become one. And maybe, between the two of us, only Mister Mallet had been the one that believed that.

This was an invigorating thought and from that moment on, even though it was still challenging, helicopter flying was fun.

I asked him, "Mister Mallet, can I do that again?"

"Sure," he said, "you can do it again tomorrow, but right now", and he turned to the back seat, "it's McLean's turn."

Ira McComic
235th Aerial Weapons Company
Can Tho, Republic of Viet Nam 1968-1969
Army Flight School Class WORWAC 68-7

A couple of short ones from Bob Paine, now in Australia

We had about eight marine student pilots in our class 68-40 at Wolters, all great guys. There was a restriction on altitude

in primary training, can't remember what the level was, but one of the marine students was caught flying way too high. The radio transmissions went something like:

Control: "XYZ, what's your altitude?"

Student: "3000 feet".

Control: "What are you DOING at 3000 feet?"

Student: "Just getting the lay of the land."

Control: "Do you know what they call a marine at 3000 feet?"

Student: "No"

Control: "A high freq."

Another time one of our students got lost. Control tried to help him by asking him if he could see any railroad tracks, lakes, towns, etc. The student said he could only see a town ahead. Control told him to look around the town for some feature that would help to identify his location. The student replied that he could see a water tower. Assuming the water tower would have the town's name on it, Control told him to see what was written on the tower.

The student replied, "It says Seniors 68."

Bob Paine
119th 69-70
GATOR 14

Mystery Discharge -- Ross Rainwater, 70-24

One day, during stage field operations in Primary I at Wolters, the tower OIC noticed a puddle on the ground at a pad where there had just been a student pilot change. Concerned this might have been a fluid leak, one of the 2LT student pilots who had finished his session was quickly dispatched to the "area of interest" to determine just how serious it might be.

It was a bitterly cold day and the student soon found himself on all fours, trying to determine the composition of the mysterious liquid. First, he tried to identify it by sight, but there was no discernible color that was of any help. It didn't look like either AvGas or engine oil.

Then he decided to try his sense of smell, but found the extreme cold seemed to prevent his being able to recognize it; there didn't seem to be much of a tendency of the liquid to evaporate, so he doubted it was AvGas. It just lay there in its puddle.

The 2LT reported later that he was just about ready to try tasting it when a representative sent by the tower ran to him to let him know that the IP from the OH-23 most recently on that pad radioed he had taken a short "call of nature" on the far side of the aircraft, away from the alert eyes of the tower! Mystery solved, close call!

Later, at a class social function, that 2LT made a presentation to the "nature boy" IP of a Mason jar full of an equally mysterious, yellowish-looking liquid, calling it the Class 70-24 "Pizzonya Award." Its composition remains undetermined to this day.

John Silberman's Prank (69-28)

On a bright sunny day at Ft Wolters, it was time to fly. Briefing over, students and IPs were heading for their assigned aircraft. My flight had the OH-13s because it was so big, the class had to be split into 13s, 55s, and 23s.

On the way out to the aircraft, I saw a rod end bearing laying on the ramp so I picked it up to throw it away later. Upon arriving at my trusty steed for the day, I climbed on top to preflight the rotor system while my IP decided to look over the engine directly below.

All of a sudden something came over me, a slight grin appeared on my face and I started to chuckle inside. I reached into my pocket, pulled out the rod end bearing, positioned it above the engine, and let her go. Klink, klank, klunk, all the way to the ground.

My IP jumped back and screamed "What was that?"

I said "What was what?" (Slightly more grin but not overly done.)

He picked up the bearing, became white in the face, then red with anger. I knew I was done for. Instead, he calls maintenance, cusses them out, red-Xs the aircraft and he and maintenance had it out, right there on the ramp. We were finally given another aircraft, even though no one could find anything wrong with the first one or where the bearing came from. IP just would not accept the aircraft.

The rest of the day did not go well either. He kept complaining about the MFs in maintenance and how they are trying to kill us. (Actually, I think maintenance did a great job keeping all those trainers flying after all we did to them.) No names or dates except mine because I don't want to embarrass anyone. If the IP reads this, call me if you like, I'm wearing my Nomex for the flames.

Blackcat 28
282 AHC DaNang 69-70

WOC Rock, by Doug Cooper, 68-9/11

I have a "WOC Rock" story for you. It very well may be the origin of the Rock that is now on display at Ft. Rucker. My question is where was the Ft. Rucker Rock located at Ft. Wolters before our VHPA members transported to Rucker? There were more painted Rocks at Ft. Wolters. At the D.C. VHPA Convention, one of my flight school classmates (Bob Crow, I believe) said that he had seen the relocated WOC Rock at FT. Rucker and that, judging by the shape and size, he was almost positive that it was "Our Rock".

So here's the historic tale of "Our Rock".

In the late summer of 1967 I arrived at Ft. Wolters and joined the Snowbird class that would eventually become WORWAC Flight Classes 68-9 and 68-11. Some of my fellow Snowbirds and I had seen other painted Rocks on The Hill and decided that we should have one of our very own next to our Snowbird barracks. Looking back, I now wonder what exactly we were thinking to go to all of that effort and to expend our precious free time knowing that we would be re-quartered on The Hill in just a few weeks. Maybe we intended it to become a symbol of Ft. Wolters history, to be seen and revered by all future Snowbird WOC-wannabes. I'm sure that we hadn't considered that the future Snowbird classes would desecrate "Our Rock" by repainting it, many times as I understand.

So one bright, hot Saturday morning, about a dozen of us loaded into cars and followed fellow Snowbird Bobby G. Cormack's old, rather "experienced", however classic, 1956 Chevy 1/2 ton pick up truck and drove up the paved back road behind the Snowbird area that lead to the Hill. We had scouted the area on our daily pre-dawn PT runs on the back road. There was a dirt road about half way up that turned off to the East and eventually lead to a promising treasure trove of large boulders. Once there, we scattered out and searched for a prime rock that was not only the correct size and shape but also one that could be loaded onto Bob's truck without creating multiple cases of hernias. After deciding on an appropriate stone (and fortifying ourselves with a Lone Star beer or few as I recall) and with a massive group effort, we eventually rolled it very carefully onto the bed of Bobby G.'s pickup. (Bobby still remembers the "crunch!" sound it made in the wooden truck bed he had just rebuilt.)

The return trip to our Snowbird barracks was uneventful except that the old truck's springs were totally bottomed out. We were betting whether or not the quite hefty rock would break through the wooden truck bed and tumble into the middle of the road. There would have been no way for us to lift the stone back onto a truckbed, and surely no sane person would even consider loaning us another truck for the task. Fortunately, it didn't happen and the unloading and positioning next to the barracks went much easier.

One of our classmates was a self-proclaimed artist and painted Our Rock. The design was an obviously hungry Wiley Coyote w/flight helmet piloting a helicopter in pursuit of a terrified Roadrunner. As I remember, the back of Our Rock was painted with a gold scroll listing the names of our Snowbird class. And that's the way we left it when we progressed to the Hill to become the yellow hats of WORWAC Class 68-9 or the orange hats of Class 68-11.

The story doesn't quite end here. In 1980 I was visiting friends in Texas and stopped by the abandoned Ft. Wolters on our way to Possum Kingdom Lake. The Government had donated the fort main area to the City of Mineral Wells to be used as an industrial park. Our Rock was gone. However, the red 1st WOC rock was still in position on the Hill, painted with the silver Army Aviator Wings. A large chunk of that rock had been broken off at the left tip of the wings. The large yellow painted footprints still lead down the street on The Hill. It was sad looking at the once sparkling clean WOC barracks on The Hill with the peeling paint and broken windows, surrounded by dense, tall weeds. The TH-55A remained on display along the main post road. Many of the parts were missing and the canopy and doors had been broken out. Dempsey

Heliport in Palo Alto had become a "Government Strategic Material Storage Area". All of the parking ramps and hover lanes were completely filled with house trailers! What a waste! The facility had just become operational in 1967 and was the world's largest heliport at the time.

32 YEARS LATER

Still later, in 1999 I went to Sheppard AFB in Wichita Falls, TX. My daughter Holly was graduating from Air Force jet flight training. (Since I had been a rated military pilot, I was able to pin on her aviator wings. Yes!!) My wife, Sue, and I decided to take an afternoon and drive down to Mineral Wells. WOC Hill had become a prisoner confinement area and was completely surrounded with barbed wire fencing. The TH-55 was gone. There were some small businesses in a few of the old buildings. Some of the old wooden barracks had mailboxes out front, evidently being used as residences. A waitress at the Mineral Wells Dairy Queen told me that the old Dempsey Heliport in Palo Alto was up for sale. One potential bidder wanted to turn it into a race track. Another bidder wanted it for a flea market! I took some back roads on the return trip. I almost missed recognizing some of the old stage fields. One of them still had the small metal control tower standing although the building was gone. The tall hardwoods growing between what remained of the hover lanes reminded me of just how many years had passed since I had successfully survived three white knuckle laps around a stage field traffic pattern to earn my WOC student wings.

On the drive back to Wichita Falls I realized that something was troubling me. It finally came to me that each of the prisoner's rooms on The Hill had an air conditioner extending out of the window! I suppose it would be cruel and unusual punishment if they didn't.

Bobby Cormack has found pictures of "Our Rock", both in original and decorated condition. He also sent me pictures of his '57 Chevy truck which he had affectionately dubbed the "El Camino" ("4th WOC" artwork painted in gold on the door). Perhaps someone can compare the shot of "Our Rock" to the WOC Rock that's now at Ft. Rucker. Its tale will still add to the flight school history even if it isn't the same stone.

Bobby G. also wrote to tell me the fate of his trusty, rusty "El Camino". (Did I mention that is where Bobby G. hid his extra pairs of inspection display combat boots, fatigues and other items that he really didn't want TAC officers to see?) He tells me that the '57 Chevy pickup has retired to a farm in Arkansas. His brother's kids and grandkids had learned to drive in it. The last time he saw it, "It was parked under a blackjack oak tree, bed full of farm stuff, the left (pilot's) door had been removed and the gold racing stripe was a bit faded---

Short Takes from Chuck Bell, 66-21/23

One of my all time favorites was a classmate shooting three night approaches to what he thought was smudge pots before he figured out they were burning stumps. Just couldn't make a "T" out of them.

Another guy's throttle came apart in his hand on an OH-23 during solo stage field work and he had to put it back together in flight so he could land. I think my personal best was a solo night flight to Abilene, when my stick buddy lost the damned map out the door on takeoff (I was probably two balls out of trim) and we faked it all the way there and back because we weren't about to tell the IP's what had happened.

Surviving Wolters and Rucker: John Dibble, 67-9

Ft. Wolters, Texas

I was in the advanced portion of Training at Ft Wolters, having been cleared for solo slops and confined areas. Being a "pretty hot pilot" I selected a fairly restricted confined area with a bit of a slope added for extra measure. I circled it a few times, set up my approach and shot my landing. Since I was in a TH-55 I stopped the rotor but left the engine running as we were instructed to do and then got out to pace the area and put out my "hover stop marker", which we used to indicate when to stop hovering backwards, in preparation for our confined area takeoff.

As I walked away from the helicopter I heard a funny creaking noise and turned around and looked back. The helicopter had settled back on the heels of the skids because of the slope and was sitting on three points – the heels and the stinger. I started to run back to it but realized it was "stable" and not marking my hover point might cause me to wreck on the hover, if I could get it back to that point, so I did my ground recon and placed my marker. As I stood up from placing my marker I looked up and saw three of four TH-55's circling me, all with 2 on board – I assume IP's. I guess they wanted to see if I could get out of my quandary or they would be there to call for medevac if I crashed. When I tried to get in the pilots seat the bird did not go back to an even keel – so I got back out and bounced up and down on the toes until it

leveled out (I can imagine the laughter in the observers). After it leveled out I walked on the skid back to the cockpit and regained my seat. By the time I had buckled in it tilted back a little but nothing like it had been. I engaged the rotor keeping a little forward cyclic and when it got up to speed I popped it up to a hover. The rest of the takeoff was uneventful and for the rest of the period I just flew around, and calmed down. When I landed nothing was said nor was there from then on. Although I am sure the observers got my tail number. I never said anything about it until today.

Ft. Rucker, Alabama

I was almost ready to graduate and was doing solo flights in the Huey with other students. I was on one of those flights with my stick buddy (I think with Bill Day). When we flew over a field and as we looked down one of the bushes was on fire, or at least was smoking profusely – I don't actually recall any flames. We flew down closer to see what was going on and finally hovered up close to get a really good look. All of a sudden the bush moved and a shotgun barrel appeared and took a shot at us. I assume it was at us although I don't recall any holes in the aircraft on post flight and although I imagine we reported it to our IP all I really remember is I was baptized by fire prior to going to Viet Nam.

On another flight with Bill we became "locationally disoriented" and pulled a classic student stunt. We landed across from a gas station and I held the Huey at flight idle while my stick buddy (I'm sure it was Bill this time) ran across the road to get our bearings.

John Dibble
WORWAC 67-9
4th WOC -Yellow Hats

Spiking the Punch: Personal recollections of Keith Alleger, 68-1/505

I have a flight school story concerning an incident that occurred while I was a TAC Officer at Ft Wolters in the 1969-1970 time-frame. I was a TAC in 10th WOC and a Senior TAC in 6th, and to be honest, I don't remember which unit I was in at the time, or what class number the incident occurred during

Each class at Wolters used to have three phase parties, Pre-Flight, Solo, and Senior. Over the years Ft Wolters had worked out an association with Texas Women's University in Denton. Each class could send an open invitation to the young ladies at TWU to attend their party, and the Army provided the transportation from Denton to Wolters and back (in the form of an OD Army Bus) and a suitable escort (one of the Officers assigned to the unit).

TWU, being the fine Christian School that it was, had certain stipulations about the young ladies who attended these parties. One, they were not allowed to consume alcohol, two, they were not allowed to leave the building the party was held in, and three, at midnight they loaded up the bus and headed for Denton. To insure that these rules were followed, they would send suitable chaperones, usually a member of the teaching staff or two, with spouses. To accommodate rule one, the NCO Club, who catered the parties had a really nice fountain punch set that they would set up with a nice fruit punch, so that they young ladies would not be parched during the party.

It came to pass that one of the classes I was associated with had either a solo or senior party coming up and a couple of the candidates approached me with a request. They wanted to know, if by chance, the Class Six store at the O Club sold Everclear (for the uninitiated 190-proof grain alcohol). They then wanted to know if I would be willing to obtain, oh say, four or five fifths for them. I knew what they had in mind (wasn't born yesterday) and also knew that I probably should say no (I'm sure that buying the alcohol for them probably broke several Army Regulations) but I did it anyway, the Devil made me do it.

As luck would have it, I was assigned as the Escort Officer for this particular party and after a long hot ride in that OD Army Bus in my Dress Blues, we arrived at the Student Activity Building where the party was being held and everyone commenced to have a good time. A VERY good time. I don't think I have to tell you what happened, other than to say that the young ladies got bombed out of their minds. This also included the chaperones who were quit possibly the most inebriated pair at the party. I'm not willing to guarantee that none of the young ladies slipped out, say, to the parking lot, I know the chaperones didn't know because I don't think they knew their own names after a couple of hours.

At midnight I herded my young charges back onto that OD Army Bus for turned out to be a long ride to Denton. Picture girls passed out, or puking out of the windows, there was even one laying down on the back seat that was moaning very loudly the whole way back. The bus driver kept mumbling something about who was going to clean up the mess, and I started contemplating the end of a very short military career. When we got back to Wolters, I apologized to the driver and slipped him some money. That seemed to do the trick as we never heard any complaints from the TMP. I did expect to be standing on somebody's carpet once TWU got wind of what happened and reported the breach of etiquette to Ft Wolters.

Nothing became of it.

To this day I have a hard time understanding how the School Administration at TWU failed to learn what happened. I can only assume that the chaperones were too embarrassed, and the students too afraid to admit that they had all been three sheets to the wind. I went on to stay in the Army for 27 years thanks to everyone's silence.



M. J. "Skip" Parenteau, 66-11/13

I was a TAC Officer in the 2nd WOC Co, Green Hats, for only two cycles. One was 69-7; I can't recall the other class.

It was kind of a thrill for me since I had been in the 2nd WOC Class 66-11. George Marcotte was my TAC and I thought he was the meanest SOB I had ever met. So when I became a TAC I modeled myself after him. A few years ago I met one of my candidates, Phil Marshall, at a reunion and he said only nice things to me, so I must have done something right!

Skip in a "bad ass" pose that should bring back a lot of WOC memories

TH-55 and Forward Creep: Bill Robie, 67-23/25

It was one of those beautiful, blue sky days somewhere around Mineral Wells in one of those big, rolling, grass covered fields, dotted with an occasional big, stand-alone deciduous tree with a tall, spreading canopy. It was hot and humid, and under my flight helmet I was frustrated, hot and sweating. This was my second or third week in primary flight training and I still hadn't been able to bring that noisy, self possessed Mattel Messerschmidt under some kind of reasonably controlled hover. Vertical control with the collective, and even side-to-side with the cyclic wasn't too bad, but for some stupid reason it was beyond my physical and mental capability to pull the cyclic far enough back to keep the darn thing from hovering forward.

I would be one of the last in my Blue Hat Class 67-23 A2 to solo and my instructor, George Forrester, was beginning to lose his patience at about the same rate as I was becoming more and more exasperated. Here we were, all alone, buzzing erratically a few feet over this big field and despite my utmost attention, my hover kept creeping forward. Suddenly, my intense concentration was interrupted by the cyclic stick making huge and violent circular gyrations followed immediately by a dramatic nose-low attitude and rapid forward flight just skimming the top of the grass.

One of those big trees with the tall spreading canopy loomed just ahead. To my greatest horror and trepidation, the tall tree kept getting closer and closer. Very quickly, I am certain to this day, we went well under the canopy and came to an abrupt halt with the main rotor less than 25 feet from the big, massive, ugly and threatening trunk of that tree.

I then heard very calmly in my ear phones: "YOU GOT IT". (The problem was solved.)

Bill Robie
WORWAC Class 67-23/25

"Harold Huff" <haroldhuff@charter.net> writes:

I reported to Rotary Wing Primary School in October 1960 and Mr. Richard Strauss was my Instructor Pilot. Mr. Strauss was in the National Guard as a fixed-wing pilot, and was sent to the helicopter transition course. Upon completing the course he was hired by Southern Airway as an instructor pilot-with a total of eighty hours in rotary wing aircraft.

I was his first student, and he was rather nervous most of the time. He would tell me that I had the controls, but then he would remain on the controls himself to "monitor" how I was doing. A few weeks into the training, after I had learned how

to hover, we were at one of the stage fields preparing to take off. The helicopter turned ever so slowly to the left, and made a 360-degree turn.

When we were again facing in the direction for take-off, Mr. Strauss asked me why I had made a clearing turn to the left. All of the clearing turns (only a ninety degree turn by the way) were always made to the right. I told him that I was not flying the helicopter; I thought that he had the controls. He thought that I had the controls, and I guess that both of us were keeping the helicopter over the numbers, even though it turned to the left.

A few weeks later, he was preparing me for my solo autorotation. We approached the touchdown area and Mr. Strauss proceeded to call out all of the check items: we are at the right altitude, there is our sight picture, roll the throttle back to idle, maintain 60 knots, the rotor rpm's are good, we a hundred feet above the ground, level the skids, pull the pitch.

The pitch was not pulled and we hit very hard and bounced back into the air ten feet. He immediately got a hand full of rpm's and got the helicopter under control, then landed and asked me why I did not pull the pitch. I told him that I thought that he was flying the helicopter, and he obviously thought that I was flying it. He allowed as to how I had frightened him, and that he was going to get out and I should go around and make a solo autorotation. I did, and it was a piece of cake! I knew that I had the controls!!!

I received my wings in May 1961 at Fort Rucker, and flew until I retired in July 1980. I was fortunate to be able to retire as a Master Army Aviator.---thanks to the good instruction I received from Mr. Richard Strauss and later Mr. Jim Philips.

When I arrived in Korea in December 1970, I was a Major and a Rotary Wing Instrument Examiner. On my orientation ride, I was told not to cross the river between Yangson and Seoul, and that if were to cross the river I would be shot down and questions would be asked later. There were thirty-eight (38) gun emplacements around the Presidential House, which they called the Blue House. I was very careful during the thirteen months I was assigned to Korea to never come close to crossing that river.

When I returned to the United States from Korea, I was assigned to the United States Army Executive Flight Detachment flying in support of President Nixon and later President Ford. We alternated trips with Marine One, and in 1975. they were assigned to fly President Ford in Korea, but they did not have anyone qualified to fly the CH-47 Chinook that was to be used to fly the reporters. I was sent there to fly that mission.

When President Ford left the DMZ on Marine One, I flew ahead of them to drop off the reporters at the Blue House. I was to be the first helicopter to cross the river, and I wondered if everyone in those thirty-eight bunkers had received the word that it was all right for me to land at the Blue House. My heart was really pounding when I crossed that bridge, and I was nervous until I had dropped my passengers and had safely crossed the river again.

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Army Helicopter Pilot Class 68-519
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December 17 th: Two great events in the history of Aviation. December 17, 1903: Orville Wright flew the world's first flight in a heavier-than-air powered aircraft. December 17, 1968: Warrant Officer Rotary Wing Aviator Class 68-519 graduated at Fort Rucker, Alabama. We "earned our wings"

Almost all of us in class 68-519 started together in Company B-4-1 in basic training at Fort Polk, Louisiana. In boot camp there was a cadence song for formation running and we learned to sing it very loudly, because that was preferred to doing pushups. But one of our fellow trainees had learned from his older brother that there were different words to the same tune in flight school. Almost every man in the fifth platoon was a prospective Army Aviator. The gung-ho "Airborne" drill sergeants did not fully appreciate that until one day in the fifth week of boot camp, when the "trainees" began to realize that the drill sergeants could not, indeed, kill us. On that fateful day, the flight school-bound trainees in the fifth platoon agreed that the next time we had to sing "I want to be an Airborne ranger" we would, instead, all sing very loudly: "I want to be an aye-vee- aye-tor..."

The drill sergeant's response was as we expected: "All of you *&%#@* %\$@ who think you are going to be flyboys, twenty pushups!" We did the pushups. And then, of course, we sang it our way again. More pushups. We learned to sing "aviator" only on the way to class or something with a tight schedule, not meals. This first act of group defiance was the

beginning of a close camaraderie that lasted all through boot camp and flight school.

In the last week of boot camp, the fifth platoon was allowed to buy a radio. We huddled around it and listened to the important and confusing news about Tet-68.

The first week of March, we were bussed to Fort Wolters, Texas for the first part of flight school, where we became class 68-35. For the first four weeks, we could not even touch a helicopter. An OCS-like environment of classes, harassment, marching, inspections, and cleaning the barracks was easy to accept because we knew we would soon be flying. We were at Fort Wolters, where the sky was filled with helicopters! We were finally WOC's, Warrant Officer Candidates. We learned that when a tactical officer asked: "Candidate: what is a WOC?", we had to reply: "Sir, a WOC is something you frow at a wabbit, sir!" Without smiling, of course, unless you liked pushups.

Four weeks later, there I finally was, sitting next to an instructor pilot in a Bell OH-13 (as in M*A*S*H). I was proud and confident, until I took the controls. May as well have been a bucking bronco! Humility returned. The instructor pilot would say: "OK, I have the cyclic ('sike-lick') and collective controls, you just work the pedals. Keep the nose pointed the way it is." Easier said than done. I was soon over controlling and then spinning. Then he would let me work only the collective pitch, to keep the helicopter "three feet above the ground." I went between about twenty feet high and slamming the poor machine on the ground as the IP kept us perfectly centered. Then finally, I had only the cyclic control with instructions to stay above a 20x20 foot blacktop square. I started swinging back and forth, uncontrollably. While trying to stay over that square, I accidentally took off, sideways. On the quiet bus ride back to the barracks other WOC's humbly reported the same experience, as each of us secretly wondered if we would ever be able to fly a helicopter or if we would be among the high percentage that gets "washed out."

On the fourth day of flying I began to think that I just might, some day, be able to control such a machine. In the third week of flying, the first candidate in class 68-35 soloed. Fortunately, we were flying out of the stage field that required the bus to pass the Holiday Inn on the way back to Fort Wolters. Under the arch made of two rotor blades, with the sign that read "Under these arches pass the world's greatest aviators" we ceremoniously dragged our newly-soloed brother to the swimming pool and threw him in.

Every day, for the next few weeks, the bus would stop at that Holiday Inn or, if coming from the wrong stage field, the muddy Brazos river. Either place was just as much fun, where each new inductee would try to pull his brother WOC's into the water with him. I have a [great photograph of Fred Chase](#) being thrown into the pool on the day he soloed.

In July, while out practicing landing at confined areas, one WOC spotted a "gold mine". A huge patch of large, ripe, watermelons. The farmer had planted rows of tall corn around the edges of the patch so that passers-by in cars would not see the melons. But such camouflage was futile against young helicopter pilots. Our first hot extraction! We picked our own radio frequency and planned every detail. Only three ships went in, I was one of those assigned to provide cover and recon. along the road to the south. The mission went as planned, and that evening, in the few minutes between supper and mandatory study time, we feasted on ripe watermelon; the spoils of war.

Then, our first night cross country navigation exercise. We took off five minutes apart, two students in each helicopter. We probably didn't really need to navigate, just follow the lights of the helicopters in front of us. But they were students, too! Better navigate. "What's that little symbol on the map, directly on the pencil line of our course? Why, it's a drive-in theater! Yes, I can see the drive-in ahead, looks like the helicopter in front of us is almost over it. Look, you can make out the movie!" Then the screen went white. A few seconds later, the movie was visible again. Then as we were almost over the drive-in, wouldn't you know it: one of us bumped our landing light switch, too. Damn: I hate it when it does that.

Graduation from Fort Wolters was the first week in August-- then on to Fort Rucker where we became class 68-519. Some guys went to their home towns to get married; Ed Sholar married Joyce, and I married Judy. Since boot camp Ed and I had almost always stood next to each other in lines which were always alphabetical.

There was no OCS-like environment at Fort Rucker, just serious flying and classes about flying. I loved every minute! On my first day of instrument training, the IP asked if I wanted to try a ground controlled approach, where a radar operator on the ground gives the pilot instructions to follow a course to the ground. My track on his radar screen probably looked like I was drunk. A few weeks later when I tried my first instrument takeoff, I took off backwards! Not good; the instructor pilot gave me a pink slip for that day.

Finally, in mid-November, we transitioned to the UH-1. The Huey. I shivered with awe as I touched the door handle to get in. Big, heavy, stable, responsive, and with smooth controls: the Huey was a modern, powerful, proud machine. And they were letting me fly it. Me! I could hardly believe it. Flying an H-13 was like wrestling with it, but a Huey wanted to be stable, and it wanted to fly.

Forget all that technical stuff they've been giving us, this machine is alive! With my left hand, I wound up the throttle and heard that 1100 horsepower engine respond. Then I pulled up the collective pitch control and asked the machine to hover. It did! A love affair began.

One of the most notable events was during low-level navigation training. We were all listening to the same frequency. Blackhawk 35 was the call sign of two students in a Huey; Paddy Center was the call sign of instructor pilots in an airplane, simulating a flight following station.

"Blackhawk 35, this is Paddy Center, what is your location?"

"This is Blackhawk 35, expecting checkpoint bravo in ten minutes."

"Roger, report crossing checkpoint bravo."

About 12 minutes later: "Blackhawk 35, this is Paddy Center, what is your location?"

"This is Blackhawk 35, we are over Lake Cassidy, heading south, expecting checkpoint bravo in ten minutes."

"Roger, report crossing checkpoint bravo."

Another 10 minutes later: "Blackhawk 35, this is Paddy Center, what is your location?"

"This is Blackhawk 35, we are still over Lake Cassidy, expecting checkpoint bravo in ten minutes."

"Blackhawk 35, please describe Lake Cassidy."

"This is Blackhawk 35, on the North side was a white sandy beach and some hotels. We can't see the south side yet."

"Blackhawk 35, immediately turn north and climb to one thousand feet. When you get back to the United States, please note that the Gulf of Mexico is much larger than Lake Cassidy."

"This is Blackhawk 35, roger."

It wasn't me. Honest! I just heard the conversations.

December 17, 1968 we became Warrant Officers and could wear the wings of an Army Aviator. Joyce pinned on Ed's wings; Judy pinned on mine. Judy bought an 18 inch wide replica of the small wings. Had to hang it on the wall, didn't look right on my uniform.

One pilot actually had orders to Germany! Could be because he already had two tours in Vietnam as an enlisted man. A few guys had orders to Chinook, Cobra, or Medevac school, but most of us would be in many different units in Vietnam within three weeks. I lost track of most of my flight school classmates until I joined the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. In the VHPA directory I found that many of their names were etched into history, carved on that black granite Wall in Washington, DC.

On the 90th anniversary of man's first powered flight, and the 25th anniversary of earning their own wings, I salute the special graduates of class 68-519 whose names are etched on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial:

Ed Sholar 04Jun69	Orval Baldwin 05Oct69		
Jack Barnes 01Feb69	Sam Bosenbark 06Jun69	Dennis Brault 26Jun70	Jim Casey 18May69
Fred Chase 14Mar69	Will Clemons 03Apr70		
Jim Dunn 23Apr69	Ben Haire 20May69		
Rich Holman 05Jun69	Van Joyce 12Mar71		
Steve Martin 31May69	Doug Moore 22May69		
John Reilly 22May70	Bob Williams 19Jun69		
Fred Walters 22May69	Jon Vars 17Jul69		

Rest in peace, brothers.