



American Military Heritage Foundation

Dedicated to preserving, in flying condition, a Vintage PV-2 Harpoon in memory of all who fought on behalf of the United States of America

“It’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”

Abraham Lincoln

March 2021

It is hard to believe March 20 is the first day of spring. Now here in Indiana we could be buried in ten inches of snow or we could be running around in short sleeve shirts, I have seen both ways! Each year I am amazed at what this group of individuals can accomplish when all the energy becomes channeled in a direction that completes a given task. With the above information the BOD would like to issue a challenge to all the friends and members of the AMHF that we raise \$12,000 by April 15, you know that day you end up giving more money to the government. Therefore, if you would donate some to the AMHF that could help your tax line next year. To raise the above amount, it figures out at about \$270 per day average. We have not had a capital funds drive in some time so now is the time to try one.

To all of the members and friends that may not be involved in the day-to-day operation of the organization, there is a lot goes on into keeping this plane available to the public and no two years are ever the same. Every five years we have a propeller AD (airworthiness directive) that must be complied with. There is no choice on this, it must be done if we want to fly the airplane. This will set the organization back about \$7,000. This is in addition to our normal monthly bills such as hangar rent and insurance. We also must purchase engine oil, and miscellaneous hardware for use during the inspection. Every one of us should be proud of the maintenance that is performed on this plane. Each procedure is double checked before it is signed off. That is our safety protocol and that is just the way it works no short cuts allowed. Now this is a 76-year-old airplane so it does require many hours of tender loving care and during some of those hours it can try your patience's. Believe me!

What does all this mean? OK! For starters We believe the men and women of the AMHF can do anything once they decide that is the direction they are going. Just look at what you were able to accomplish last year during the shutdown caused by the pandemic! We were able to raise enough money to get us through the winter months until spring. There is no reason we can't do that again. Yes, it might cut into our maintenance time, staging the plane for an open house. However, remember March 20 is the first day of spring and each day is getting longer and the sun is moving back our way. Therefore, in our infinite wisdom we start day light savings time on March 14th. Naturally, this means we will be able to work later into the evening and have some extra workdays during the week. Therefore, we should be able to complete the D-Check in April.

What I am saying is that we need to take better charge of our destiny. We cannot sit around and wait for a windfall; we need to be more proactive. I believe we are not marketing our product adequately, and that by putting a challenge in front of everyone we will have established a concrete goal which I believe we can achieve. Up until now we have been dealing with issues on a day-to-day basis. However, just doing the normal maintenance and bill paying is not getting us ahead. We need to facilitate our organization becoming greater, and I feel this is one path that can work towards that goal

Remember the American Military Heritage Foundation is a 501c3 and all donations are tax deductible. You may mail your donations to either of the addresses listed below.

American Military Heritage Foundation		Gaylon Piercy		Islanddoll.org
P.O. Box 29061	OR	945 W. 300 S.	OR	go to donation page
Indianapolis, IN. 46229		Shelbyville, IN. 46176		

I was fortunate to have a conversation with another veteran for this month. I would like to thank Mr. Kell for taking the time to share his story with us. You will find his story below and it should be quite interesting. If you should ever meet Mr. Kell ask him about his sailing experiences in Viet Nam, another story much to long for this issue. To those who have been there you will have more than one chuckle and no doubt a smile or two and those who haven't will shake their heads with amazement. Now give me a count. How many had a chuckle or two and how many just shook their head in amazement?

Have a great month,

Gaylon

Mike Kell, US Navy August 30, 1966 till August 25th, 1970

I joined the Navy during the Vietnam war to avoid being drafted. Nearly all draftees were drafted for the Army and I understood that meant a good chance of visiting that war zone tropical paradise.

Bootcamp, at Great Lakes, Illinois was a real eye opener for me and all my fellow "boots".

I was assigned to Company 543. There were 90 of us eighteen and nineteen years old, who still thought of ourselves as boys. We learned the Navy way to s..., s....., s...., and get it done in 5 minutes, to make a bed with hospital corners, wash our uniforms on a concrete sink using Fel's Naptha bar soap, dry them on a line and how to fold our clothes so they could fit in a seabag or locker.

We learned we could do as many push-ups as we were told, run as far as ordered, we could take all we wanted but had to eat all we took. We learned the general orders by heart and to precede and follow every utterance (which was, generally, “aye aye”) with “sir”, “drill sergeant” or “chief”.

The fourth week of Navy bootcamp is called “service week” because, in addition to doing your own laundry and barracks cleaning, recruits also do all the grounds-keeping, gate guarding, cooking, and cleaning for the mess halls, hospital and training facilities.

September turned cold in 1966 and, in that fourth week of a 12 weeklong bootcamp, I contracted pneumonia and spent a couple of weeks in the hospital and another week in a recuperation center.

When I was well, I was put into a new bootcamp company, 558, and started bootcamp all over again. It was one of those few times in life where one gets to take immediate advantage of recent experience. It turns out that among a group of newly arrived “boots”, that a guy that has been in the Navy nearly two months is an old salt and gets to chart his own course, to a degree.

I volunteered to be the Educational Petty Officer (EPO) in my new company. I had observed that the EPO mostly kept records of who had attended, or not, which classes and whether they had learned the assignments. It meant I had to miss much of the calisthenics and some of the close order drill and nearly all the window and floor scrubbing.

When we took our swim tests, the job developed a new wrinkle. Three of the recruits in our company didn’t pass (running off a ten-foot-high platform, in mass and remaining afloat long enough to reach the other end of an Olympic-size pool) and had to take lessons until they could swim. I was told they had to be able to swim by the end of two weeks or they would be “ASMO-ed”.

I never knew what, exactly, “ASMO-ed” meant but, those that were, were never heard from again. Anyway, I explained to our non-swimmers the situation and that we were going to have to give up running, marching, close-order-drill and calisthenics for a couple of hours every day that it took them to learn how to swim. You know, I should have figured it would take the full two weeks for those sailors to get the hang of it.

When I finally graduated from bootcamp I was asked if I wanted to be a corpsman or a cook. Since I had always been kind of a gearhead, I explained that my recruiter had assured me that I would have my choice of schools and that I wanted to be a mechanic.

I was gently informed that I did have my choice of schools and that the choice was between cook and corpsman.

I had heard that corpsmen spent their first year with a front-line Marine company and that didn't appear to fit with my long standing minimize-chances-of-being-killed philosophy. So, I chose to be a cook. And I'm glad I did!

Before I really got a good start at learning to cook, Engineman Chief Spooner came to one of our classes and said the Navy had suddenly developed a need for Enginemen and was anyone interested? Two of us raised our hands and he said, "OK; you two and these two rows, here, follow me."

I graduated from Basic Propulsion and Engineering School and then Engineman "A" School. I was a gearhead and did better than most and got to pass up the first two set of orders, I was handed. They were both to River Patrol Boats, "PBRs", in Vietnam. The next set of orders (and I had to take them) was to the USS Bulloch County, LST 509, homeported in Guam, in the Mariana Islands.

That was just the kind of assignment I wanted. Someplace with palm trees and gentle breezes.

The Navy flew me there but when I got there my ship wasn't. They explained it mightn't be back for several months and were arranging to fly me to meet the ship.

I finally caught up with the 509 at a place called Tan My, Quang Tri Province on the Dam Tuitu (Hue) River.

I spent 18 months, 6 days, 18 hours in her having the time of my life. I made many friends that I still cherish and learned more about myself and others than I have since. I was able to indulge my love of mechanisms to my heart's content, working on engines, transmissions, pumps, refrigeration units, generators, compressors, evaporators, boilers, and winches.

When I left the Bulloch County, I joined the crew of USS Vancouver, LPD 2 homeported in San Diego but, reportedly, due to be rotated back to Vietnam.

I was in "A" gang. The Vancouver was steam powered, so the main and auxiliary engine rooms were run by Machinist Mates and Boiler Techs. "A" gang cared for the ship's, landing craft (LCM-6s), Motor Whale Boats, 41-foot Utility Boats and LCPLs (landing craft, personnel lighterage), emergency generators, ballast/DE ballast compressors, cranes, and a weird bunch of hydraulics.

I had been aboard several months when the Navy sent orders for an Engineman 3rd to report to Vietnamese Language School at Coronado. Being the only EN3 aboard the orders were given to me. When I finished that school, I was sent to SERE (Survival, Escape, Rescue, Evasion) School at Camp Pendleton and finally to Mare Island to learn about River Patrol Boats (PBRs).

Those last orders had some initials (FFT) at the end of them. Turns out that FFT is Navy talk meaning "for further transfer". That finally put me back at Tan My, Quang Tri Province, on the PBR Mobile Base One.

There, I spent 12 months and 28 days training Vietnamese Enginemen (Kỹ sư Việt Nam) how to operate, maintain, diagnose, and repair Detroit Diesel 6v53 engines. Almost the only thing I remember now is the engine firing order; một, năm, ba, sáu, hai, bốn (1, 5, 3, 6, 2, 4).

I would not take a million dollars for the experience of having done this, once. My recall is poor enough and time has dulled those memories, to the point where I might pay as much as six dollars to do it again.

USS Bulloch County, LST 509 Danang



USS Vancouver, LPD 2



PBR Mobile Base One at Tan My

