

HILLCLIMBER

PRESS

Spring 2010 Vol. 1



1LT Vance, SPC Spiggle, PFC Cherry, 1SG Manuel, and CPT Beale pose with the Vietnam-era Hillclimber flag. The Hillclimber flag previously flew on the Operations jeep at Can Tho Army Airfield, SVN in 1970 and 1971.

2010 Reunion On Track For Huntsville, AL

Hillclimbers Go For "FACEBOOK"

Hillclimbers Currently In Iraq

2011 Hillclimber Calendar "ON SALE NOW"

Gary McDermot Chronicles

Hillclimber Website "Business Board"

Two New Hillclimber Patches Uncovered

The patch on the left was used by the Hillclimbers who stayed behind when the main unit left for Hawaii. The one on the right is from sometime between the mid eighties to mid ninties.



Hillclimbers Handle TF Wing's 'Heavy Lifting' In Northern Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Mike Alberts 25th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

Feb 12, 2010 - 6:06:24 PM

Blackanthem Military News

<http://www.blackanthem.com/>

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq

A CH-47D Chinook helicopter can transport 30 passengers and internally load up to 15,000 pounds of cargo. It doesn't require a landing strip, and there is virtually no operating location it can't service.

So when a unit moves troops or cargo, there is no surprise the twin engine, tandem-rotor aircraft is in high demand.

In United States Division-North that demand is being met by the Soldiers of Company B, Hillclimbers, 3-25th General Support Aviation Battalion, Task Force Hammerhead - the only heavy lift aviation asset in USD-North.

According to Capt. Robert K. Beale, commander, Co. B, 3-25th GSAB, the Hillclimbers' mission is to provide heavy-lift, air assault and air movement capabilities for Task Force Marne.

"Our air assault mission involves moving Iraqi and American troops to objectives at a set time," said Capt. Beale. "As an aviation element, we support the ground force commander by putting Soldiers where they need to be, when they need to be there. But where we really 'make our money' so-to-speak, is with our air movement capability, our transportation of cargo. You name it, and [for the most part] we move it."

"I would estimate that 95 percent of our missions in USD-North this deployment are troop and cargo movements," said Chief Warrant Officer Three Fred Hedgecock, Chinook pilot, Co. B, 3-25th GSAB, a native of Bryant, Ark.

Since operations began in September 2009, the Hillclimbers have flown more than 3,200 hours, transported in excess of a 1,000,000 of cargo

and moved about 10,000 military and civilian personnel. Cargo has ranged from explosive ordnance, disposal robots and dog food to military vehicles and ammunition.



Soldiers of Company B "Hillclimbers," 3-25th General Support Aviation Battalion, Task Force Hammerhead, conduct pre-flight inspections and maintenance before a troop and cargo movement mission at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, near Tikrit, Iraq, Jan. 29. Since operations began in September 2009, the Hillclimbers have flown more than 3,200 hours, transported in excess of a million pounds of cargo and moved about 10,000 military and civilian personnel. (Photo by: Staff Sgt. Mike Alberts, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs)

The unit estimates that it will fly more than 8,000 hours, transport 1.6 million tons of cargo and move more than 40,000 Soldiers before it returns to home station at Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii, later this year.

"We're flying more than any previous heavy-lift unit because we're really the only 'game in town' in USD-North," said Capt. Beale. "We are also significantly involved in the [responsible drawdown] of U.S. forces, which requires us to launch more."

The only other aviation asset that can move the amount of pallets and passengers we do are [larger fixed-wing] aircraft, said Capt. Beale. But those require landing strips and can't access smaller [forward operating bases]. In that sense, the next best option would be to transport cargo and Soldiers by ground," he added

Ground movement, however, is a less efficient and riskier alternative. For that reason, the Hillclimbers take pride in helping Soldiers avoid the heightened risks associated with ground travel.

"Helping move people by air is a mission that's more important than some people might realize," said Staff Sgt. Christopher Caraway, squad leader, Chi-



Sergeant Ruben Torres, door gunner, Company B "Hillclimbers," 3-25th General Support Aviation Battalion, Task Force Hammerhead, scans for obstacles at take-off during a troop and cargo movement mission from Contingency Operating Base Speicher, near Tikrit, Iraq, Jan. 29

nook mechanic and flight engineer, Co. B, 3-25th GSAB.

"I know the Soldiers we move want to go home



as much as I do. If we can help them get there by keeping them out of range of a potential improvised explosive device [or other hazard], then we're making a difference," said the nine-year veteran and native of Houston.

"Before every mission, I conduct preventative inspections and maintenance of the helicopter, and get it ready for the pilots to conduct their pre-flight," said Spc. Brandon Poe, Chinook mechanic and crew chief, Co. B, 3-25th GSAB, from Beaumont, Texas.

"I take my job of properly maintaining our helicopters very seriously," said Spc. Poe. "We all do, and the reason is pretty simple; we're the ones that must continually serve those ground troops and others that need to move around northern Iraq. And we must do it safely."

Edited slightly for space considerations - R. Brown

The Gary McDermot Chronicles

I never expected that the Hillclimber Veterans Association would make it to Presidential politics, but that is just what has happened with an incident that has its roots in the 2008 Presidential campaign. Starting in June of that year I began to get emails, displaying a full range of political emotions, concerning something that the authors had seen at various places on the internet.

All of the emails concerned Gary McDermott and a question that he had asked of Presidential candidate Barak Obama at a political event that took place in Iowa earlier that summer.

I spent a lot of time answering questions concerning

whether Gary McDermott was real, was he really disabled, did he serve in Vietnam, did I know him, did he work for the Republicans, and on and on. Once the elections were over I thought that this issue would fade. However, peace is not at hand. This issue is still bubbling just below the surface and I fear will explode again with much more controversy that was evident in the first go round in 2008. In light of that observation I'm going to take the next few minutes and set the record straight using the Public Square that is the Internet.

I'm going to set some guidelines for this conversation before we go any further:

- The Hillclimber Veterans Association is a non political group.
- We do not and will not endorse any candidate, political party, political movement, or campaign.
- We can be expected to support Veteran's issues, but it should be noted that up to this date we have not done so either officially or unofficially.

Facts about Gary McDermott:

- He is a veteran of the US Army and the 147th Assault Support Helicopter Company (ASHC) having served during the Vietnam War.
- Gary and I overlapped in Vietnam by about three months. I do have some memories of him.
- Gary was not disabled in Vietnam. The disability occurred as the result of a diving accident after Gary left the Army. While he may not be disabled as a result of combat he is a Veteran and disabled and by definition is a "Disabled Veteran."

Gary attended a public rally for Candidate Obama sometime in the Spring of 2008. At that rally he got the chance to ask Candidate Obama a question. Sometime after the rally Gary posted the following remarks on some blog somewhere:

Subject: Mudmarine

I am a VHCM member, I spent 12 months in Vietnam (147th CH47-CE**) as most of us did. I am also a disabled veteran; I have been a wheelchair user for 35 years now. A few months ago I went to listen to Barack Obama at a local college. When he was done with his speech I got in line to ask him a question. When my time came, my question was;*

"Senator Obama; I work with disabled veterans throughout the VA Hospital system, what is your plan for our veterans, especially our disabled veterans who use the VA Hospitals for their care?"

I stated we need mandatory funding for our VA system to ensure the care is available when needed, especially in light of the current situation in Iraq and the numbers of troops who are coming home with severe disabilities.



He told one of his aides to get my name, blew me off, did not answer my question and I never heard from him or the aide again. Is this who we want to be our "Commander in Chief?"

He wouldn't even answer a "veterans" question, regarding other veterans. Take it for what it's worth.....just thought I'd pass on my experience with Mr. Obama.

Regards,

Gary McDermott

147th ASH Hillclimbers

Vung Tau, RVN 68-69

CH 47 CE

If you are wishing for hope and change, you better know what the salesman is selling.

*VHCM – Vietnam Helicopter Crew Member Association

**CE – US Army shorthand for "Crew Chief."

Let me explain some things about this posting since this is what most people saw and reacted to when bombarding me with questions about Gary McDermott.

The items shown in red are NOT part of Gary's original post. Most people would not have any way of knowing the validity of the "hope and change" comment at the end of the post. The "Mudmarine" comment would have tipped off any military veteran with moderate intelligence who was half way conscious through their period of service. The Marines do not have CH-47 Chinook helicopters (despite their appearance in the Samuel Jackson film "Rules of Engagement"). They have CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters. Hollywood always takes literary license with the truth. It's a really bad personality defect that they have out there. However, the most glaring mistake in the heading is simply that I have never met or heard of a real Marine who would spell the name of their service without capitalizing the first letter if not all of them.

Gary's question to Obama is a legitimate one, but in all honesty I would not have expected Candidate Obama to know the answer. The Reader's Digest version of the question is simply this: All federal agencies except the VA have permanent status as federal agencies. The VA has to be "re-authorized" each year as if it is somebodies new idea. This question should have been posed to Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Bush One & Two. All veterans and none of them moved to shore up the VA and get it out of the permanent "Step Child" status that it currently occupies among federal agencies.

When I originally had to bring this up with Gary to find out how to answer the emails I got the facts and confirmed to the mailers that Gary was real and I supplied them with a copy of Gary's unedited original post. During this process I never did ask Gary if he supported Obama. The reason was simple: I don't care.

This article is being written in March of 2010 and I still don't know Gary's political affiliations, party registration, or whether or not he supports Obama. I will not ask because it has nothing to do with his interaction with Candidate Obama.

This closes all conversation on this subject as far as I'm concerned. What I have said above covers the entire subject. Neither I nor the Association will involve ourselves in "he said, she said" back and forth postings of mailings. Whether you love Obama or hate Obama is something between you and the mirror that you use in the morning to get ready for your day. Individual Hillclimber Association members, if you should run into one, are perfectly free to express any opinion that they wish to express. The Association takes no official position.

This story about Gary McDermot is what I had to post on the Hillclimber website to attempt to shortcut all the questions about this matter when the political season starts up again this fall. **R. Brown**

Hillclimbers on FACEBOOK

Members of the current active duty Hillclimbers have established a presence on Facebook. To find this page you merely need to go to www.facebook.com and put "Hillclimbers" into the "Search" window and you will see *The Official HillClimbers Association Group Redux*. This site was started by a current Hillclimber pilot named Colin O'Shea.



Facebook is a real window into the lives and happenings of the current unit as well as many of the veterans who have elected to join the group. I personally know many of these people through interaction with the Hillclimber Veterans Association over the past ten years. Whether veteran or current unit members they are truly a wonderful group.

I encourage you to visit the site and give serious thought to signing in. You are not required to participate but can do so whenever you choose.

Colin does an excellent job of watching the site because a while back a candidate for governor from some state plowed his way in and tried to increase his "friends" base using the site. Colin removed him.

I only have one piece of advice for Hillclimber Facebook members and that is to remember that this site is public and caution needs to be the order of the day. Do not freely share information without being certain of what you are doing. With that in mind, I hope to see you in the Facebook neighborhood. **R. Brown**

2010 HILLCLIMBERS 2010

REUNION

HUNTSVILLE, AL

SEPTEMBER 9TH TO 12TH
2010



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www.147thhillclimbers.org

Book by 9 August 2010 to be "SAFE."



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HILLCLIMBER

2011

Calendars

Hillclimbers in Iraq

Hopefully they will be home at the end of the year.

See reverse side for ordering instructions.....





HILLCLIMBER WEBSITE BUSINESS BOARD

I have thought for years about having a place on the website that would promote businesses owned, operated, or managed by Hillclimber Veterans or their immediate family members. Over the years as we have grown I have been very impressed with the many conversations that I have held with Hillclimber Veterans and I promised myself that when possible I would establish this page. It is still in the growing process and I invite all Hillclimbers who own or manage a business to contact me with their information for the site. There is no cost to post. The Hillclimber site receives an average of 125 plus "page visits" (defined as a site viewer visiting more than two site pages once in a 24 hour period) per day from all over the world. I gladly invite all Hillclimbers to take advantage of this site traffic for your own business. Please email the webmaster at:

rrbrown@147thhillclimbers.org

Hillclimber Veteran's Association Publication

www.147thhillclimbers.org



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