



Hillclimber Press

Volume I

Fall of 2000
Number 3



A Long Overdue Picture

Twenty-Two Hillclimbers Gather in Dallas

Details of the very first Hillclimber reunion are displayed in a special insert in this newsletter. The reunion was a special time for Hillclimbers to come together and celebrate their association with each other as members of the CH-47 community. Reunion 2001 is scheduled for Savannah Georgia from 9 to 12 August, 2001.

Hillclimber Calendar In The Works

There is also a flyer in this issue that is advertising a proposed Hillclimber calendar for the year 2001. Please take time to read the advertisement. Let me know if it is something you would be interested having the association pursue. The production will be in-house so no outside vendors will be involved in the first production run. **R. Brown**

Ladder Assault Attack

"First" For Delta Unit

Reprinted from *The Observer*, Vol. V, No. 21, Saigon, Vietnam Sept. 26, 1966

Bac Lieu (IV Corps IO) - The 21st Recon Company of the ARVN (Army, Republic of Vietnam) 21st Infantry Division and SFC Joseph Beauregard, unit senior advisor, have performed a "first" in Vietnam with the help of a Chinook crew from the 147th Assault Support Helicopter Company.

They are the first ARVN unit to receive training in ladder assaults and pick-ups. The event took place at Bac Lieu, headquarters for the 21st Division (in 1966.)

The ARVN troops and their advisor were briefed on the basics of ladder assaults and pick-ups before they undertook their first flight.

None of the troops had ever been close to a Chinook before, much less having any practice in the art of ladder assaults, so Beauregard led each group in leaving the helicopter.

Although the prop wash set the ladder swaying, none of the men froze on the ladder or refused to go out the hatch. Beauregard later said that he was pleased with the men he advises after observing how they performed.

The men were divided into three groups of approximately 40 each, with Sgt. Beauregard leading each in their first ladder assault and pick-up.

This is just one of the methods used by the 21st Division to "drop in on the VC unexpected and catching him with his black pajamas down," the advisor said.



A *FIRST*—Men from the 21st Recon Company, ARVN 21st Division practice ladder assaults and pick-ups from a Chinook from the U.S. 147th Assault Support Helicopter Company, (USA Photo)



Commander, Major Jack Keaton, is on the far left.

Hillclimber Press
The Hillclimber press is a publication of the Hillclimber Veteran's Association and is in no way affiliated with or speaks for the US Army.

I wish to thank Jim and Judy Boschma and all the people at Bosch Aerospace who make this publication possible.

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NO HILL FOR A CLIMBER

CH-47 Recovered by CH-47 / Another Hillclimber First

The online Hillclimber unit history shows the following entry for 1966:

On 2 October a Chinook flown by MAJ George Martin and CPT Art Eduid was shot down in enemy territory. The Chinook was then secured by gunships and later by ground troops. A CH-54 was requested because the aircraft was unrepairable and could not be flown. It took 3 days to get the recovery team to the site. The S2 reported VC massing units nearby and on 3 OCT at first light the 171st Maintenance led by CPT Leo Wilson was at the site. They stripped down the CH-47, first the engines then transmissions, then blades, etc. At 1600, they lifted all the parts out to Phu Loi; the 178th ASHC (CH-47) then took the aircraft to Vung Tau. This was the first recovery of a CH-47 by another CH-47 under adverse conditions in the Republic of Vietnam



The hookup

The following narrative is an extract of a letter from Jack Keaton written to Rodney Brown:

The 3 photos are the actual FIRST EVER recovery of a battle damaged CH-47 by another CH-47 (Both were 147th aircraft and crews). This occurred sometime in late



The lift off

1966, in the Delta region between Saigon and Vung Tau. I was at the scene throughout the operation and flew the UH-1 that followed it home. Our normal procedure was to repair the damaged CH-47 at the site and fly it out. If this was not possible, we would request a CH-54 Flying Crane for aerial recovery. Unfortunately at this time of the war there were a small number of CH-54's, all of which were operating in the northern areas of South Vietnam.

I had our Maintenance Detachment prepare a detailed plan for a CH-47 recovery (by a CH-47). The plan was approved by higher headquarters. On this particular day we had a need for the procedure or we would lose the aircraft. The CH-47 had



The flight to history

been shot down in hostile territory. All went exactly as planned even though we had to constantly suppress VC snipers. The troops did a great job and there were no casualties. The CH-47 flew again.

Even though there was official Army photo coverage, this event received little publicity primarily because the other CH-47

units did not want this to be considered a regular mission. The "Can Do" 147th professionals considered this operation just another one of those "There is No Hill for a Climber" challenges. During the remainder of my tour with the 147th, we never had the need to repeat this exercise.

Jack Keaton

Did You Know

that the original CH-47 was built to haul the Honest John Rocket?

The Aurora Company produced a model CH-47 in 1969 and published some very interesting pictures that are associated with this model kit.

Picture # "1" shows a Chinook off loading an Honest John. If any of you Flight Engineer types ever wondered what those "Missile Heat Plugs" were about, then look at this picture and wonder no more. The profile in this photo is of an "A" model with the power steering rear wheel. However, the "A" model nose antenna is missing. Picture # "2" is the model box. This clearly shows a "B" model outline. Another interesting aspect of this photo

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSEMBLING THE

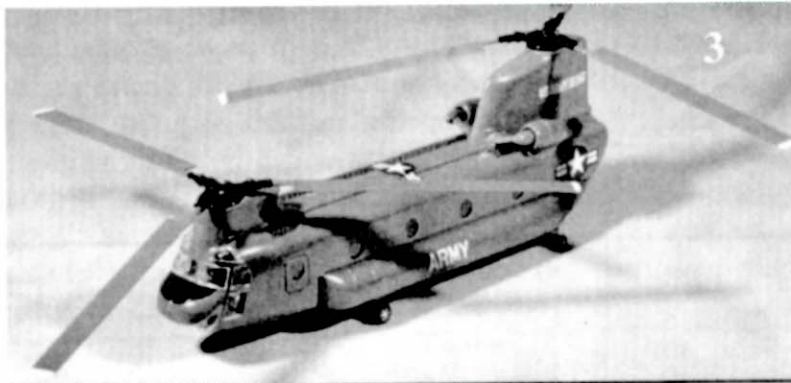
"CHINOOK" HELICOPTER

350

AURORA



concerns the missing FOD (foreign object damage) screens on the engines. By the time the "B" model made it to production every one I saw had the FOD screens. If I'm wrong, then please let me know.



Picture # '3' is of the finished model. This clearly shows an early double wheeled "A" model. Everything here is as it should be except for the missing nose antenna. I just don't understand why this detail was missed.

However, the most interesting thing in this kit is the narrative describing the CH-47. I have reproduced it here for everyone to read. The words in red are editorial comment from me.

THE CHINOOK HC-1B HELICOPTER

The U. S. Army's requirements for an advanced battlefield mobility vehicle is fulfilled by the Chinook HC-1B Helicopter, built by the Vertol Division of Boeing in Morton, Penna. Some of the features of the HC-1B which are not in current transport helicopter include a 30-foot long unobstructed payload compartment with straight-in rear loading; able to accommodate any standard Army vehicle it can lift; a rear-loading ramp which can be removed, or left partially opened or fully open to facilitate free-drop delivery or in-flight parachute missions, and all the advantages of multi-turbine engines with the elimination of the "dead-man's curve". (Does anyone know what this means?) The cargo compartment has a 7' 6" wide rear entry with a 6 degree 40 minute slope on the loading ramp; and a height of 6' 6", width 8' 3", length 30' 2". Complete world-wide ferry capabilities can be had by the Chinook with the installation of standard U. S. Army auxiliary fuel tanks in this cargo compartment. This feature is important for reaction to aggression anywhere in the world which calls for rapid deployment of CONUS based STRAC units.

The Chinook can absorb the full see (Their spelling) level power output of its two T55-L-5 engines with 2200 shaft H.P. each. The pilot section is low in the airframe providing a better view for judging clearance above obstructions, while the rotors are high on the airframe to permit landing in brush. This tandem rotor helicopter has excellent hovering characteristics and low rotor downwash velocity. (You can stop laughing now.) According to the assigned mission and loading of the HC-1B, average cruise speed is 125 to 130 knots, vertical rate of climb can reach 3,500 ft/min, service ceiling is some 17,800 feet and hovering ceilings range to 12,400 feet and are excellent regardless of wind direction. With a gross weight permitting hovering out of ground effect at 1900 feet/59° F, the powerful Chinook can handle an outbound internal cargo of 6 1/4 tons over a radius of some 100 nautical miles, or an outbound external payload of 7 1/2 tons over a radius of 20 nautical miles. A ferry range of over 1000 nautical miles is possible carrying no payload.

The Chinook was designed from its inception to "live in the field with the troops". It can be maintained in combat

areas with only the U. S. Army mechanic's standard tool kit. All major service areas are outside with many at ground level. Integral walkways and steps eliminate supplemental ladders and all cowlings and panels are safely hinged to avoid loss. Fluid level are on sight gauges, thus doing away with the necessity of dip sticks. The rotor system has no grease fittings which eliminates the need of daily greasing. (Does anybody else remember the joy we all felt when they went to grease filled swash plates instead of the MIL 7808 filled model?) All systems can be checked with the integral APU making it unnecessary to operate rotors or main turbines. The main landing gear, the left and right engines and fuel cells can be installed on either side and cancels out the need for separate stocks of left or right components. The rotatable (Their spelling) components are built for 1200 operating hours between teardown inspections. Simple replacement of major components is possible with quick-

change packages. An engine package includes supply lines, cowling and tail-pipe. Interchangeable left to right, engines can be changed by 3 men in about 45 minutes. A forward rotor drive, a 1700 pound package, can be replaced in about an hour. The built-in work platforms and hoists in addition to portable hoisting davits eliminates ground support for repairs or replacements. With an extreme height of 18' 7" at the top of the aft rotor and an overall fuselage length of some 51', a track of 10' 6" and each of the tandem rotors describing a 59" diameter circle, the Chinook is self-sufficient and possesses terrific potential as a CONUS-based STRAC unit. Two 315-gallon integral fuel tanks provide for the normal 100 nautical mile radius missions. After the aircraft has been lightened by the consumption of a certain amount of fuel, single engine operation is possible, increasing the range by about 80 nautical miles.

If any of you have this Aurora model kit in your attic and it is still in the original wrapping do not unwrap it! This kit is worth a lot of money to collectors in spite of the obvious problems. Contact Frank White on the Hillclimber Roster if you or a friend has this model kit. If unable to get Frank, contact the Hillclimber Veterans' Association at the address listed on page two.



The history of the 171st is the history of the 147th. In future issues we will examine the ways that the 171st and the 147th supported each other. None of what the 147th accomplished would have been possible without the 171st.



A Flight To Hell

by

George Miller



Major John Caron and CW3 Harold Miller came down the main street of the Vung Tau Army Airfield at approximately 100 feet altitude looking for the 36th EVAC Hospital landing pad with a load of wounded. Painting by Frank White

On 12 March 1967 the unit history reports the following:

A freak accident happened on aircraft 62-2132 piloted by CW3 Harold Miller and Major John Caron when a fragmentation grenade accidentally exploded inside the aircraft after leaving the pickup zone (PZ) with a 105mm slung and a gun crew of eight inside. After the explosion, they returned to the PZ and found that the aircraft was still flyable but 6 soldiers were wounded and one dead. Crewmember PFC William Campbell was wounded. His flak vest saved his life. The crewmembers saved three of the six soldiers by using CPR and first aid. Both crewmembers received the Distinguished

Flying Cross and Boeing Vertol Rescue Award.

The Mission:

The Hillclimbers were tasked to move an artillery unit from landing zone (LZ) Barracuda, located at map coordinates XS 933586, Xom Dong Tron, to an unlisted location some 20 miles away. The unit supported was A Battery, 11th Field Artillery Battalion of the 9th Infantry Division. If memory serves, this LZ was across the bay, west north west from Vung Tau, the Hillclimbers home base. The

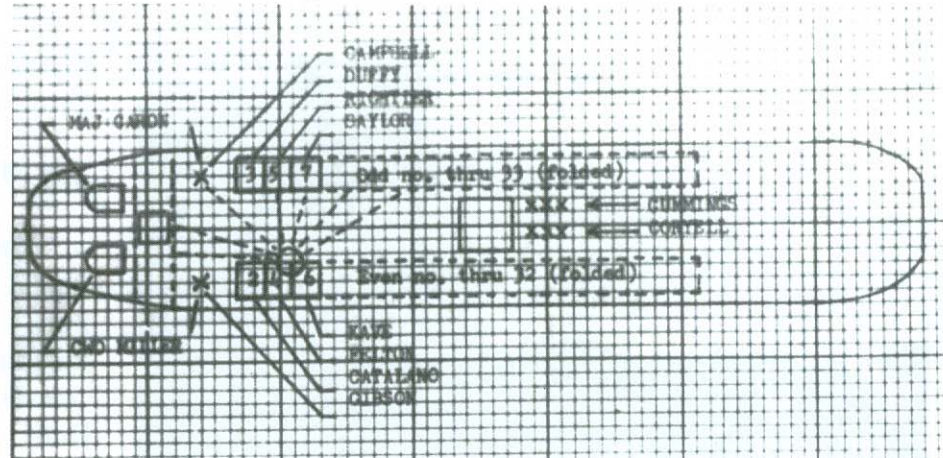
load was a standard load carried in support of the Field Artillery consisting of a 105 mm howitzer, 30 rounds of 105 ammo and 6 passengers. On the first page of the accident report there is a statement that the passengers were a mixed group (as opposed to a composite gun-crew). The weight and balance (DD Form 365F) shows a total take off condition of 32,959 pounds. The balance was well within parameters and though the condition was approaching the 33,000 pound allowable aircraft gross weight, none of these factors contributed to the incident.

A Personal Remembrance:

The news of this incident spread like wildfire throughout the then small Chinook community. Perhaps I got the news a little sooner because of John Caron's role. After repeated tries on the ancient telephone system, I was able to talk to Harold. He talked about the confusion in the rear of the aircraft and that everyone seemed to be talking at once. He initially thought, as the rest of the crew, that they had taken a hit from something big. Hal remembered taking control of the aircraft and returning to the LZ wanting only to get on the ground with no further damage. By the time he landed the Flight Engineer, Newton Coryell, was able to assess that something had exploded inside the aircraft. What Hal saw in back when he left the cockpit was unlike anything he'd experienced. He told me how he looked over the aircraft as best he could with it still running. He even crawled up the side to check the condition of the tunnel covers and possible damage to the driveshaft. *Note to reader: The blades of the forward rotor system do not clear the fuselage by very much and it is very dangerous to climb up the side of the helicopter while those blades are turning. The crew knew they had to quickly transport the wounded to a care facility.* It was three or four weeks before I was able to see the aircraft. My distinct impression was that it looked like a mad man had been turned loose in there with a shotgun.

John Caron remembers:

"I had come to Vung Tau with the 200th ASHC advanced party as the movements control officer. Then Hillclimber commander, Jack Moran, and I had served together at Fort Wolters in 1966 so he invited me to do my in-country orientation training with his unit. This was my second mission".



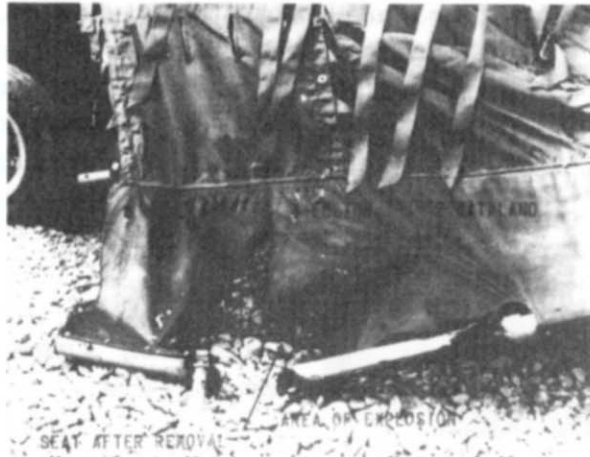
The official army diagram of where everyone was seated that day in March of '67

Conclusions:

Please keep in mind that my conclusions are based on my personal opinions. Though based on my study of the official accident report (of which much was deleted) it is still only my opinion of what happened to Hillclimber 132. For a more in depth view, you would have to see the report in person.

One of the reports diagrams shows the arrangement of the passengers and crew prior to the mishap with three PFC Duffy, PFC Rightler and SP4 Saylor, three of the passengers, seated in the first three seats aft of the right door gunner, PFC Campbell. These seats are numbered 3, 5 and 7 and seats 9 through 33 are folded up. Just aft of the left door gunner, PFC Gibson, sat PFC Catalano, PFC Felton and SP4 Kave. These seats are numbered 2, 4, and 6 with seats 8

through 32 folded. The crew chief and flight engineer were lying on the floor just aft of the cargo hook. Major Caron, the pilot, was in the right seat and CW2 Miller, the aircraft commander, was in the left seat. The extra crewmember on board that day was receiving training as a door gunner.



The official army photo of the actual seat after it was removed from the aircraft.

The sequence of events were text book examples for this type mission and repeated thousands of times throughout Vietnam and training units world wide. The crew may have felt more rushed since they thought they had taken ground fire on a previous sortie. With the aircraft on the ground the passengers filed on as normal. The crew, at this point in the mission profile, is normally distracted by other duties and the gunners were being more cautious than usual because of the reported ground fire. When the FE reports, "Ramp up, ready in the rear," the pilot will normally pickup to a hover and began moving toward the load. At this point the flight engineer is stationed flat on the floor so he can observe the load and guide the pilots to a hook up. His attention must be 100% on the load. The gunners are busy, not only watching for hostile fire, but keeping the aircraft clear of any obstacles to the right and left of the aircraft both up and down. With the crew busy, the passengers are left to fend for

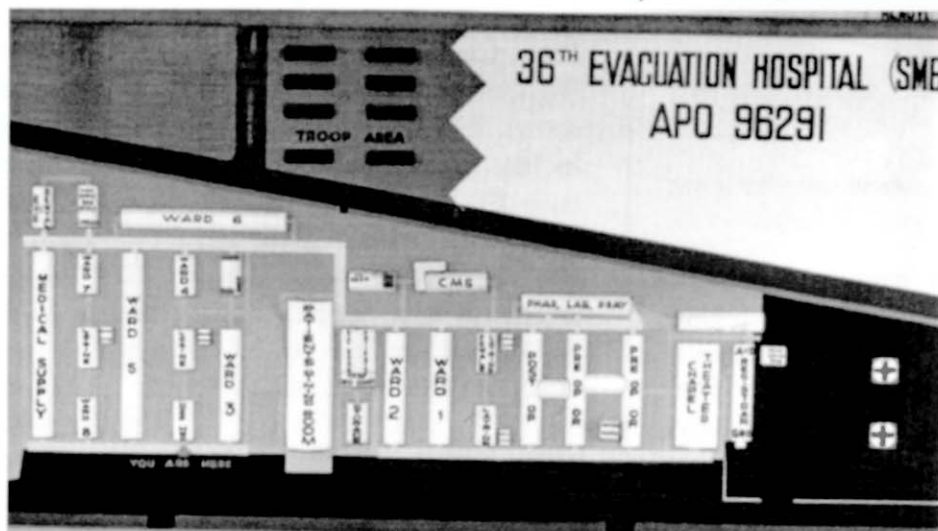
themselves. The crew is now working like a well oiled, precision machine with each crewmember performing well practiced moves to insure the success of the operation. All was according to the script for such an operation until the internal explosion.

From eyewitness reports and the Flight Surgeon's report, I must conclude that the initial blame probably rests with SP4 Kave. Evidence shows that he and at least one other passenger, PFC Rightler were carrying M-26 Hand Grenades. It is assumed that the grenade carried by SP4 Kave, seated in seat six, was improperly carried as evidenced by the grenade that the MSC Captain had seen about to fall from Rightler's left ammo pouch. Evidence shows that the grenade exploded about 18 inches above the floor between SP4 Kave and PFC Felton. When the grenade exploded, the blast effect was forward and to the right and left sides of Kave. SP4 Saylor sitting in seat seven, directly across from Kave, seat six, was killed outright and was dead on arrival at the hospital. Next to Saylor in seat five was PFC Rightler who made it to the hospital in Vung Tau only to die in a hospital in Saigon the same night. PFC Felton, seated next to Kave in seat four had serious wounds resulting in the loss of his left leg. Kave himself also lost his left leg. PFCs Duffy and Catalono received serious fragmentation wounds but no information as to their condition is in any of the literature. The right door gunner, PFC Campbell, had fragmentation wounds on his right leg and arm. A picture of the flak jacket he was wearing shows marks from fragments that would have surly wounded him more seriously. CW2 Miller's helmet was blown forward over his eyes by the force of the concussion. PFC Catalono sitting in seat two just aft of his position shielded the left gunner, PFC Gibson, from injury.

Resulting from an interview conducted by the by the accident board, it is surmised that the artillery unit really had no written policy for carrying grenades or any explosive material. There is a copy of a 9th Infantry Division Daily Bulletin that explains the proper ways to carry grenades. However, the bulletin is dated 15 March 1967. During an interview on 18 March, Major Moran and CW2 Miller expressed the opinion that the troop commander is responsible for ascertaining that his troops are ready for transporting and that the policy should remain unchanged.

endorsement also states, "The command is drafting a proposed Standard Operating Procedure for USARV Headquarters, based on field experience, that will satisfy the safety requirements and still be compatible with operational requirements."

From my personal observation and thirty year old memories, I think we went on with business pretty much as usual and little was done differently from what occurred on 12 March to Hillclimber 132. There seemed to be little procedural difference in the units we supported from the 1st, 25th and 9th Infantry Divisions.



The landing pad (lower right) that Harold Miller and John Caron were desperately looking for when they flew down the main street of the Vung Tau Army Airfield.

Aftermath, where are they now:

I was never to see Hal Miller again. We assumed that we would meet up in Long Bien to wait for our freedom bird together. It didn't happen. Hal was assigned to the 177th Aviation Co (MH) and I to the 154th Aviation Co (MH). We were each

As all analysis, findings and recommendations are edited out of the reports, I can only guess what they may be. I assume that there were some restrictions placed on the troop units and that procedures were written for flight crews. There is a string of letters and endorsements through the chain of command up to United States Army Vietnam and on to USABAAR. At the 12th Combat Aviation Group, the endorsement includes: "A policy of the inspection of passengers insofar as is commensurate with the tactical operation by the crew chiefs has been initiated." The

instructing new Chinook pilots, he at Fort Benning, GA and me at Fort Sill, OK. He left the Army and flew with Air America, both in Vietnam and Laos. In 1971, I was weathered in at Udorn Royal Thai AFB where Harold was based but local flooding prevented us from getting together. We talked on the phone for a short while until the rain knocked out the lines. Harold died of an apparent heart attack in the early 80's in New York state, on the farm he had always dreamed of and often spoke about.

Major John Caron finished his in country orientation with the Hillclimbers

and returned to the 200th ASHC as the Operations Officer. I worked as one of his assistants and unit IP. In November of 1967, he returned to the 147th as Hillclimber 6, the Company Commander. John retired from the army and now lives in Colorado. He is a member of the Hillclimber Association.

SP4 Newton Coryell completed his Vietnam tour and now lives in New Hampshire. He is a member of the Hillclimber Association.

Efforts to locate George Cummings and Ronald Gibson have not been successful. The Hillclimber Association is still looking. William Campbell was killed in a later Chinook accident with the First Cavalry. May he rest in peace.

Passenger, PFC Gordon Ray Rightler from Detroit, Michigan was Killed In Action and is memorialized on the Wall at Panel 16E, line 70. May he rest in peace.

Passenger, SP4 Charles Duane Saylor from Muncie, Indiana, was killed in action and is memorialized on the Wall at Panel 16E, line 67. May he rest in peace.

Passengers, SP4 Stephen L. Kave and PFC Carl N. Felton were likely to have been med-evaced to the States and medically retired.

Passengers, PFC Brendan L. Duffy and Francis P. Catalono may have also been evaced but no further word is available at this time.

The aircraft, CH-47A 62-21132 was transferred to the 388th Transportation Company in April of 67 and then to New Cumberland Army Depot, Pennsylvania in May 67. In January of 68, she was transferred to the 177th Aviation Company at Fort Benning, GA. (I wonder if Harold Miller flew her again while both were there.) In August, she was transferred to the Aviation School at Fort Rucker where she remained for the next four years. She went to Boeing Vertol in Morton, PA and was loaned to the Langley Research Center until issued to the National Guard in 1973. The Gold Book entries end in 1975 and the next reference is found in the Customer Service Analysis Cross Reference. After accumulating 4,484 flying hours, 132 became the 200th production D Model on 22 March 1988. She was last known to be proudly serving with A/159 in Germany.

Captain Paul Berg



I have been collaborating with Paul Berg since this time last year. I felt it was time for all of you to meet him. George Miller kindly supplied this photo of Captain Berg about a month ago. Paul is the major reason that we have had success in finding past Hillclimbers.

He is the person who discovered that our old records from the first decade of our existence had not been properly disposed off. Someone had put them in the corner of one of the unit supply rooms and there they remained until discovered by Paul. We all owe him a great deal. R. Brown

Featured Hillclimber

Ken Bowie



Hillclimber Ken Bowie and wife Martha following Ken's avocation in the race car business. Ken is on several pit crews for the professional NASCAR circuit.



Ken's current life in Florida working for the Boeing Company is twenty-nine years and 10,000 miles away from this 1971 Can Tho Hillclimber photo.



Daughters Melanie (l) and Tabatha (r). Tabatha is mother to one-year-old granddaughter Delaney. Melanie is still home and attending school while working for a cruise line.



Ken Bowie takes a break during his weekend job. He and the rest of the pit crew are getting ready for the 24 hours of Daytona in 1999.