

# HONORED VET

Vietnam Vet Restores a Huey Helicopter



Above: Ray Branch, retired from the U.S. Marine Corps, Joy Ream and Jim Zeifler formerly of the U.S. Air Force Special Ops Division all agreed that the Huey 425 helicopter is a "veteran" worth saving. Left: Mike Carroll lights a candle during the Missing Man ceremony.

Photos by Lynda DiMatteo



## PROJECT 425

The most widely used military helicopter, the Bell UH-1 series Iroquois, better known as the "Huey," earned its fame during the Vietnam War and is best known for its ear shattering "whomp whomp" sound. Vietnam Veteran Mike Carroll of Loxahatchee who served as a crew chief in Vietnam with the U.S. Army's 147<sup>th</sup> Assault Support Helicopter Company, known as Hillclimbers, has spent two years and tens of thousands of dollars on **PROJECT 425**. The restoration of a Huey, which logged almost two-thousand hours in Vietnam. A private dedication ceremony was held on Carroll's property.

See story and photos on page 9.





Palm Beach Pipes & Drum



PBSO Color Guard

## Vietnam Vet Restores a Huey Helicopter

By Lynda iMatteo  
Associate Editor

The most widely used military helicopter, the Bell UH-1 series Iroquois better known as the "Huey," earned its fame during the Vietnam War and is best known for its ear shattering "whomp whomp" sound. Thousands were used during the war but many were destroyed, left behind or have since been left to corrode in the elements. But the fate of one forgotten Huey, left in shambles at a PBSO gun range near 20-mile bend, changed when a friend of Vietnam Vet Mike Carroll of Loxahatchee alerted him that the sheriff's office was looking to dispose of the Huey's rusted carcass. Carroll was uninterested until tracing its tail numbers and learning that this Huey logged 1977 hours in Vietnam. The restoration of "The 425" took two years and

tens of thousands of dollars. According to the large crowd at a private ceremony celebrating "Project 425" on Carroll's sprawling Loxahatchee property, "she is a 'veteran' worth saving." The ceremony was held on Saturday, June 9.

At age 20, Carroll began his tour of duty in Vietnam in 1966 with the U.S. Army. He was a crew chief with the 147<sup>th</sup> Assault Support Helicopter Company known as Hillclimbers based in Vung Tau.

The versatile Huey was used for MedEvac, command and control, air assault, to transport personnel and material and as gun ships. She saved many lives according to Carroll.

As news of Carroll's restoration project spread, parts to restore the 425 began arriving from all over the country. Although it may never be able to log flight time again due to the

extent of corrosion, the 425 was painstakingly restored right down to the white "X" of the 147<sup>th</sup> and its detailed stenciled lettering in all the original locations. Interior pilot seats, sound blankets, crew seats, dash instruments, rotor blades, windshields along with almost every moving part have been located and installed.

The 425's dedication ceremony included many from Carroll's community along with fellow Hillclimbers, all with Huey related tales to share with the crowd. The ceremony also included an opening prayer by Loxahatchee's Vice Mayor Marge Herzog, a blessing of the 425 by Father Michael Vecchio, the National Anthem sung by John Giliberti, a moving speech by Major General Wayne P. Jackson, and the sobering sound of "Taps" played on a bugle by Carroll's

granddaughter Laurel Adams who was a major partner in the restoration project according to Carroll. A modest Carroll did not speak during the official ceremony but did light a candle at a symbolic place setting in memory of all missing soldiers.

The 425 has finally come to rest with dignity on the peaceful property of someone who served with her and is respectful and grateful for all she did in her prime. On the 425's side door are the stenciled names of Carroll along with the men he served with in the 147<sup>th</sup>. On the nose is the Hillclimber's distinct image.



Vietnam Veteran Bill Jeczalik of the 178th A.S.H.C. Boxcar 47 honored Mike Carroll for Project 425.



Laurel Adams played "Taps" during the dedication ceremony.



Above: Carroll stenciled the names of the men he served with in the 147<sup>th</sup> on the Huey. Below left: Major General Wayne P. Jackson. Below right: Johnny and daughter Olivia Bohmer enjoy the ceremony, a day filled with music, games and an Irish-Cuban Luau.





Dedication Ceremony  
of the  
Huey 425  
Restoration

POW ★ MIA... YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN