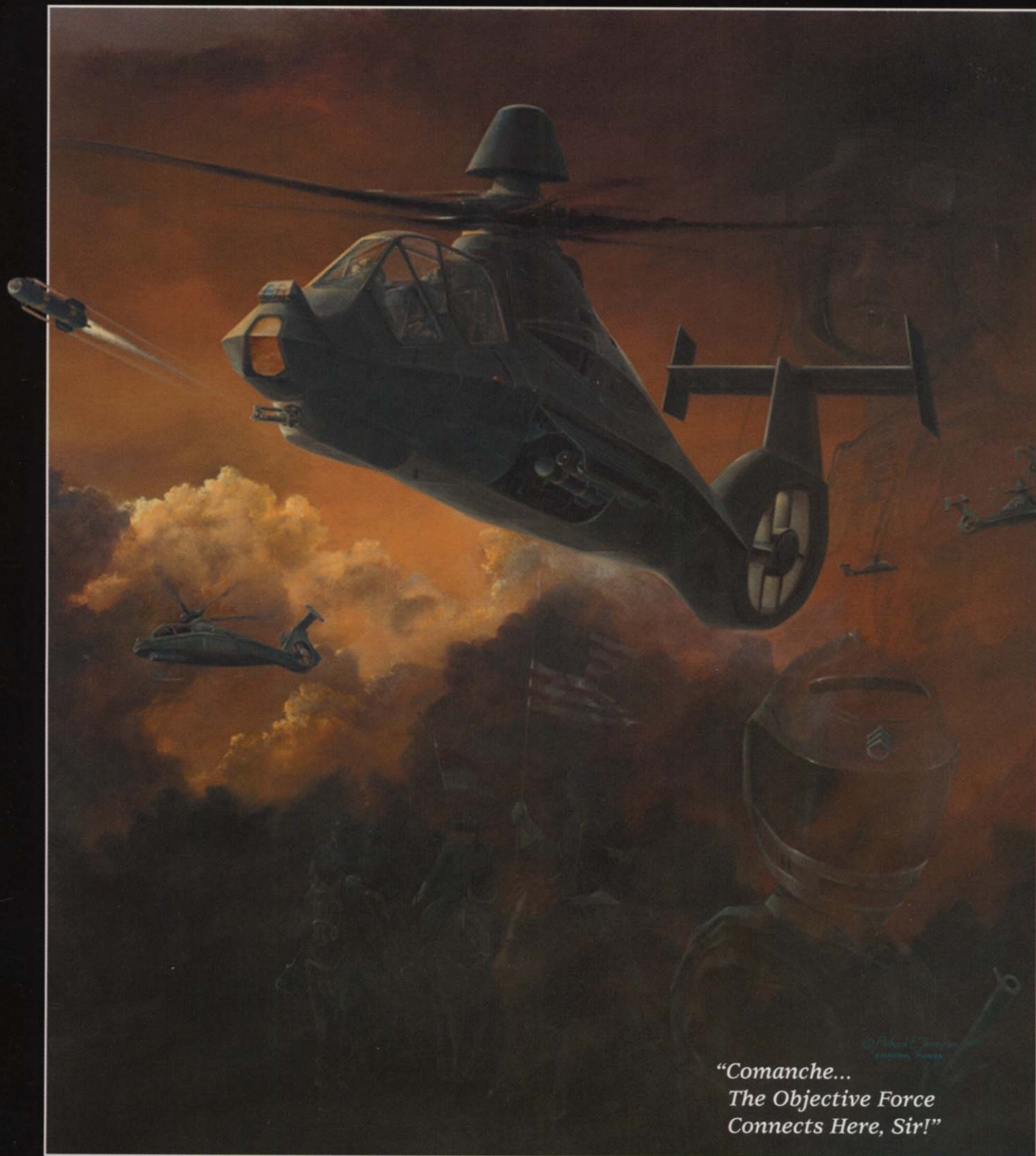


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*"Comanche...
The Objective Force
Connects Here, Sir!"*

BOEING SIKORSKY
RAH-66 COMANCHE TEAM

Historic AAHF Aircraft Visit Fort Rucker

By Richard R. Teipel
Photos by Glenn Carr



Alfred "Dutch" Schultz and MG John M. Curran discuss Schultz's WWII flying experiences with the AAHF's L-4B "Janey" in the background.

No one seems to remember whether a World War II-vintage Army L-4B Grasshopper had ever landed on Howze Field, the parade ground at Fort Rucker, Ala. But one did, recently, and it was followed by a U-10 Helio Courier, an OH-13 Sioux, an OH-6 Cayuse, a UH-1 Iroquois and an AH-1 Cobra.

The arrival of the historic aircraft — all part of the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) — was something of a command performance. By way of an invitation from MG John M. Curran, chief of the Aviation Branch and commander of Fort Rucker, and AAAA's Cairns Chapter, the aircraft fly-in and static display supported several post events.

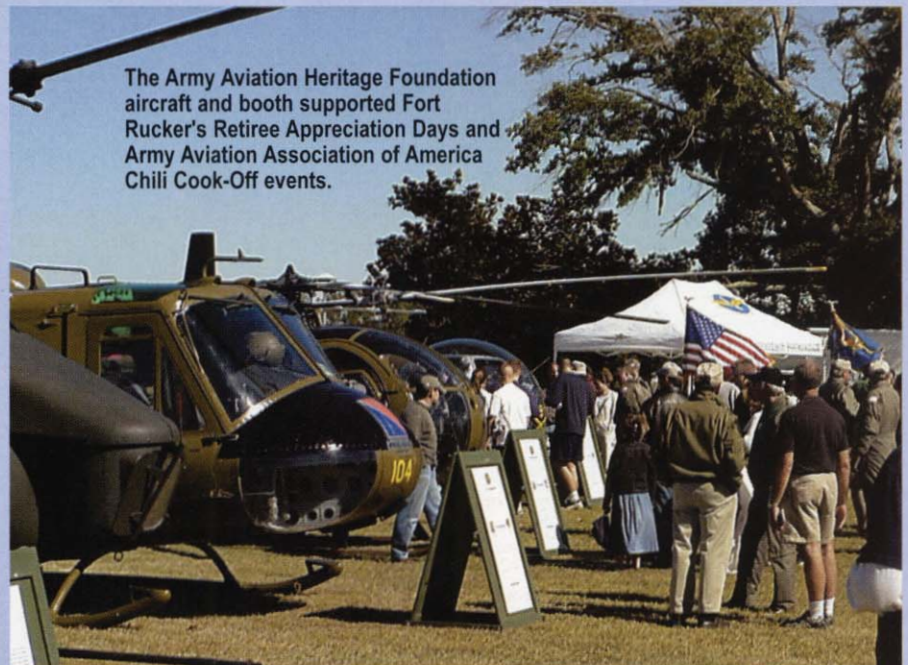
The arrival of the historic aircraft — all part of the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) — was something of a command performance.

The aircraft provided a distinctive backdrop for the "Honor Eagle" ceremony, during which Curran presented awards and retirement certificates to military and civilian personnel. Following the ceremony the aircraft were repositioned near-

by on the field. There they were on static display as part of the post's annual Retiree Appreciation Days and AAAA Chili Cook-Off. Retirees and their spouses participating in the retiree event, and the general public attending the chili competition, delighted in viewing the beautifully restored vintage aircraft and talking to crewmembers.

One of the very special moments in the two-day event was Curran's presentation of the Civilian Superior Service Award to Army

aviation pioneer and AAHF member Alfred "Dutch" Schultz. The former Army aviator spent the day alongside "Janey," an authentic WWII L-4B fully restored to replicate the one he flew during WWII fighting in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France and Germany. Named for Schultz's college sweetheart (and later wife of more than 50 years), "Janey" carried GEN George Patton, field commanders and artillery observers of the 3rd Infantry Division safely until the



The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation aircraft and booth supported Fort Rucker's Retiree Appreciation Days and Army Aviation Association of America Chili Cook-Off events.

war's end.

Schultz — wearing his WWII uniform cap, captain's bars, liaison pilot wings and recently awarded medal — took time to talk with the public and autograph his book "Janey: A Little Plane in a Big War."

After the crowds left and the chili tents and other equipment had been dismantled and cleared from the field, it was time for the AAHF Legacy Flight to return to Tara Field south of Atlanta. "Janey" was the first to depart. I saw Dutch leaning against a red pickup truck watching as 72-year-old Bill James, her pilot, applied the throttle for takeoff. Dutch didn't need to speak ... his eyes told of the emotion he was feeling at that moment.



Richard R. Teipel is the Cairns Chapter public affairs officer.

The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation

The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) was organized in 1977 by a group of concerned citizens and veterans to improve the public's awareness of Army aviation and its professionals. Utilizing flyable historic Army aircraft, the AAHF tells the story of Army aviation to the public through countrywide educational presentations.

To secure the long-term success of the first-of-a-kind organization, the Foundation has:

- Incorporated as a domestic, nonprofit corporation.
- Received IRS approval as a 501 (c)(3) public educational foundation (making donations of money and equipment deductible under IRS guidelines).
- Qualified to receive federal surplus property and supplies through the state of Georgia.

The Weapon Most Feared by the North Vietnamese Soldiers

By MG Ben L. Harrison (Ret.)

"Ripcord: Screaming Eagles Under Siege, Vietnam 1970," by Keith W. Nolan, tells the story of the last major battle fought by U.S. ground forces in the Vietnam War, in 1970. It was fought by the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, on the high ground near the A Shau Valley.

"I've never read a better account of a battle," said Stephen Ambrose about Nolan's book. There are many perceptions of the Vietnam War, and probably even more misperceptions. Nolan gives it to you straight. After writing nine books about the war, Nolan said: "I have never encountered a Vietnam battle as dramatic, tragic, convoluted and bewildering as Ripcord." Over a three-year period of intense research, Nolan conducted hundreds of interviews in person and via mail, e-mail and telephone, and went through thousands of documents in the National Archives.

I was the brigade commander during Ripcord, so Nolan and I had dozens of interchanges during his writing of the book. It is common knowledge that retired general officers can recall with precise clarity the details of events that never happened. Nolan's rule that "facts" must be verified by at least three sources probably explains why some of my input to an early draft did not make the final publication. My long-winded point is that you do not have the "whole story" of Ripcord, but what you do have in this superb book is true and accurate.

What gives me the most genuine gratification with this book is Nolan's telling the individual stories of 356 real soldiers! Shocking, heartbreaking, inspiring; these stories help you to understand the outrage of GEN Dwight Eisenhower when he blasted a war correspondent, saying: "I get so eternally tired of the lack of understanding of what the infantry soldier endures ... I get so fighting mad because of the general lack of appreciation of real heroism, which is the uncomplaining acceptance of unendurable conditions..."

"Ripcord" is not about the Vietnam War. It is about one four-and-a-half-month-long battle in a 10-year war, fought by just one of the 24 American brigades that fought in Vietnam. It is about conventional war, not counterinsurgency war. The enemy troops we engaged during Ripcord were uni-

formed North Vietnamese regulars who outnumbered us at least 10 to one — and they were well supported with heavy mortars, heavy machine guns, recoilless rifles and rocket-propelled grenades.

You will be saddened by this book, as was I. But you will also be filled with absolute and total pride in the young Americans who answered their country's call to duty — they fought and bled, and some died, but most persevered in the finest traditions of the American military.

The major disappointment of the book was the very limited description of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) side of the battle. The author limited his description of North Vietnamese forces involved in Ripcord to the official U.S. estimate of six to eight NVA battalions. My personal estimate at the time was a minimum of 10 NVA battalions (though my later research revealed that initial estimate to be very, very conservative).

Several requests were made of the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington seeking information about the North Vietnamese forces engaged in the Ripcord battle. An unfulfilled promise was all that we got from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

A chance meeting with LTG Teddy Allen (Ret.) at the April 2000 national convention of the Army Aviation Association of America brought a sparkling new ray of hope in our quest for the North Vietnamese view. Allen said he was doing business in Vietnam and had made several visits there. I told him of our predicament and he said he would try and help.

Two weeks later Allen put me in touch with Col. Nguyen Ba Van (Ret.), who was living in Cu Chi. Van said I would need the help of the American ambassador in Hanoi in order to get the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. Several communications and months later, I was scheduled to visit Vietnam in early March. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested that I change the visit to late April. Nine days before I was to depart, the Ministry said that would not be a good time, so I changed the dates to June 1 to 11, 2001.

With most of the leads developing after I got to Vietnam and teamed up with Col. Pham Van Dinh, I was able to interview six officers of the Peoples Army of Vietnam



(PAVN) who in 1970 fought in the Ripcord battle. All of the interviews are covered in my forthcoming book, *A View From Hanoi: The North Vietnamese Army at the Battle for Fire Support Base Ripcord*.

The interview that I think the readers of *Army Aviation* will find most interesting was with Brig. Gen. Bui Pham Ky, deputy commander and political officer of the 324 Division in 1970. Here are a few key excerpts:

KY was the only officer that the Foreign Press Center (FPC) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs arranged for me to interview in Hanoi. The interview was conducted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the interpreter was the FPC's Mr. Nguyen The Cuong. My personal interpreter was turned away at the door and not allowed to be in the room! Seated to Ky's left was a man in civilian clothes, whom I presumed to be from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Seated to Ky's right was an officer in uniform, whom I presumed to represent the Minister of Defense.

Ky did not look happy to be there. I asked him where the 324 Div. headquarters was during the Ripcord battle. He immediately turned to the left and conferred with the man in mufti before he would give an answer, and so it

went for virtually every question.

Ky eventually said the division headquarters was just north of the U.S. fire support base (FSB) Barnett. He explained that the area northwest and south of Barnett contained considerable NVA logistical caches and facilities, hospitals and bivouac sites. This is the area where LTC Chuck Shay took his 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, "STRIKE FORCE" and did such a superb job of locating and destroying the base area. This valley was the scene for John Delveccio's superb novel, "The 13th Valley," where he most poignantly described the 2/502's fierce firefights with the NVA and the miserable struggle with the jungle and seemingly endless days in the boonies.

Ky was asked which of our weapons systems was more effective — close air support by jet aircraft or helicopter gunships? He did not say helicopter gunships, he quickly said: "The AH-1 Cobra!" He went on to point out that the jet aircraft had great difficulty hitting their targets in the mountains.

Ky said that the NVA troops did not worry about B-52s. They frequently learned of planned bombings by listening to U.S. radio transmissions. They also knew that when U.S.

troops started backing out of an area a B-52 strike might be coming, so they also left the area. When they saw helicopters flying in the area they assumed there were no B-52 or heavy artillery attacks coming very soon.

Ky said his troops had detailed knowledge of FSB Ripcord, pointing out that it was first established in 1968. When asked about his plan of attack for Ripcord Ky said, almost too quickly, that they used the tactics learned from higher headquarters. He explained these as:

- Besiege.
- Infiltrate the approach.
- Attack with infantry.
- Block all enemy reinforcement routes.
- Quickly withdraw.

Others have explained NVA/VC tactics as "Four Fast and One Slow," meaning "Fast Advance, Fast Assault, Fast Clearance of the Battlefield and Fast Withdrawal, with all actions based on Slow Preparation." These two explanations are not consistent, and that is why they are both believable. Ky described preparation with a long "Besiege" and "Infiltrate the Approach" instead of "Fast Assault." A smart enemy uses the tactics that fit the situation. ■

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