

Huey Helicopter Dedicated At Mentone Museum

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Photo by David Slone, Times-Union

Warsaw American Legion Post 49 Color Guard (R) presented the colors Saturday morning during the dedication ceremony of the restored Huey 801 helicopter at the Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum in Mentone. All members of the Color Guard are Vietnam War veterans. The Tippecanoe Valley High School Pep Band (L) played the National Anthem and the songs of each branch of the U.S. Military.



Photo by David Slone, Times-Union

U.S. Army veteran Neil A. Stickney (R) sits in the pilot's chair of the 1963 Bell UH-1 helicopter 63-08801 at the Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum fly-in 'Rotors Above Mentone' Saturday morning, with Lee Huber (L) in the co-pilot's seat. Stickney and Huber flew together during the Vietnam War. Stickney was assigned to the Huey 08801 as an instructional pilot during the Vietnam War. He flew in last week from North Las Vegas, Nev., for the dedication ceremony of the restored Huey.

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MENTONE – Vietnam and other war veterans gathered Saturday at the Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum in Mentone for the dedication ceremony of a 1963 Bell UH-1 helicopter restored by the museum and its volunteers.

Some of those Vietnam veterans who had flown in for the ceremony from all across the United States had flown the Huey helicopter – serial number 63-08801 – during the war. Others praised Huey helicopters for saving thousands of lives during the Vietnam War.

Vietnam veteran and pilot and guest speaker Bill Hunziker told the crowd, "These birds you see sitting out here are amazing." He said the Huey helicopters did what was asked of them and more than what was expected.

"We've got about 60,000 brothers on the (Vietnam Memorial) Wall, but if not for birds like these, there'd be a lot more," Hunziker said. "I wouldn't trade the Hueys for the Blackhawks they've got now."

Neil A. Stickney flew the Huey 63-08801 in Vietnam. He was sent to Vietnam in January 1966 as part of the See HUEY– Page 2A

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229th Winged Assault. He was an instructional pilot for the 229th Charlie Company in An Khe, Vietnam. He served two terms in Vietnam with more than 6,000 flight hours. He retired from the military in July 1980.

During the dedication ceremony, Stickney said, "The 801 was near and dear to all of us." He said the museum crew that restored and prepared the Huey did a beautiful job.

Marsha Scott, museum board member, said, "We want to dedicate the 801 to all Vietnam War veterans, all who are here today and those who are not."

Warsaw American Legion Post 49 Color Guard presented and placed the Colors for the ceremony. Every man in the Color Guard was a Vietnam War veteran, according to Scott.

The Tippecanoe Valley High School Pep Band performed the National Anthem and the songs of each branch of the U.S. Military. Billy Steele gave the invoca-

tion for the ceremony.

At the end of the ceremony, Hickney and Museum Board Member Steve Rogers placed a Vietnam Service Medal on the inside of the 801. Rogers said the Huey never had one before for its years of service.

The 801 was manufactured in 1963, and went into service in 1965. The first documentation of the helicopter the museum could find was that in 1966 it was stationed in An Khe, Republic of Vietnam, as a utility helicopter. It was used to train new pilots, sprayed some defoliant and transported officers.

Scott also recognized all the members of the 229th Air Assault in attendance at Saturday's ceremony.

Lee Huber was sent to Vietnam the first time in 1962. After attending flight school in 1965, he was sent back to Vietnam as a member of the 229th. He retired

from the Army in January 1976.

Mac Huddleston was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army in June 1965.

Howard Williams was the first student from South Carolina State University to graduate flight school. He served in Vietnam, retiring with 3,663 hours of flying and 30 years of service to his country. He received the Bronze Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal and the Army Commendation Medal.

In late January 1968, Al Rhoades entered Vietnam at Cam Rahn Bay. He returned from Vietnam in mid February 1969.

After graduating high school in 1955, Robert "Buzz" Sisk enlisted in the U.S. Navy. In 1965, he was accepted into the U.S. Army's Warrant Officer Rotary Wing flight program. Upon graduation

from flight school, he was assigned to C Company, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry, Republic of South Vietnam. Completing a year with C Company and accumulating 1,059 combat flying hours, he spent another year in Southeast Asia.

Sisk's last duty assignment before leaving the Army was as a test pilot for various new weapon systems mounted on helicopters. He also has written a book, "Wing for the Valiant," which mentions the 801 in chapter six.

After the ceremony, Hickney said he remembered the 801 "very, very well. It was my assigned helicopter" for about eight or nine months of the tour.

"I was the instructor pilot so it was my assigned helicopter," he said.

"Really, they were already pilots, but what I did was I introduced them to the envi-

ronment of flying in Vietnam. Flying with the air assaults because it takes a particular finesse to do this. I probably flew with everybody ... because we had a responsibility to maintain awareness of emergency procedures," Hickney explained.

When he visited Mentone last week and saw his 801 for the first time in decades, he said it was wonderful.

"801 was near and dear to me. It was wonderful and I tried to help a little bit," he said.

The fly-in was the first opportunity some of the guys Hickney flew with in Vietnam got to see each other since the war.

"When I saw (Williams), I gave him a big hug. He was the leader, but we all had a comradery that we didn't really realize was as much as it is," Hickney said.

Williams was the unit commander for Hickney around five months. Huber,

who was the lieutenant, and Hickney also flew together.

"It was just wonderful to see each other," Hickney reported.

Hickney also said the Huey was the backbone of the Vietnam effort.

"It was responsible for not only combat assaults and lifting people into the air, but also extracting them for medevac, for taking logistical supplies, supplying ammo, carrying Doughnut Dollies. The whole nine yards. The Huey was the backbone," he said.

The Aircraft Museum fly-in, "Rotors Above Mentone," also featured food, helicopter rides, the American Red Cross Bloodmobile and a booth for American Huey 369. For more information on the 369, visit the website www.AmericanHuey369.com

The Aircraft Museum is at 210 S. Oak St., Mentone. Its website is www.bellaircraft-museum.org