

Vietnam Medevac Pilot To Talk About His Experiences

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MENTONE – Phil Marshall, 69, had no flying experience prior to serving as a Huey medevac helicopter pilot in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War.

While attempting to rescue three seriously wounded American soldiers on Nov. 14, 1969, Warrant Officer Marshall was wounded when an enemy's bullet came through the helicopter door and struck him in the arm, he recalled during a telephone interview Wednesday. The shot caused nerve damage and he was sent home to the States instead of recovering in Vietnam.

He will recount his experience about flying the unarmed Huey medevac helicopter at 11 a.m. Saturday during the Rotors Over Mentone, an annual event at The Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum, 210 S. Oak St., Mentone.

All of Marshall's flight training was in the Army, he said. Flight school lasted nine months, and then he took a five-week medevac course. In Vietnam, he flew the helicopters with the Red Cross and went by the radio call-sign of "Dustoff."

"I had no prior flying experience before the Army. That was typical for Army pilot training," he said. "No experience necessary."

But he said he absolutely enjoyed it.

"It was the hardest thing I had to do and the most rewarding. Flight school was not easy."

When Marshall was shot in the arm, he said they had just picked up three wounded soldiers.

"We almost crashed. The co-pilot took over, but then he froze on the controls. With no feeling in my hand, I grabbed the controls back. Then the co-pilot settled down and he flew us to the hospital with the wounded," Marshall said.

Surgeries and recovery took about three months.

"I was suppose to receive a Distinguished Cross, but it never showed up. I did get a Purple Heart out of it," he said.

In his Springfield, Ohio, home, he keeps a display of his medals and patches.

A Dayton, Ohio, area resident all of his life, he married after the war and has three children. He became a motorcycle dealer, starting his business from scratch.

"The Army gave me the confidence to do that," Marshall said of his business. He's now retired and sold the dealership.

"I continue to fly with American Huey 369, which will be there Saturday with our helicopter," Marshall said. "Our gunship is restored (on the Huey). It's very rare. There are none like it flying in the U.S., probably the world. It's a very rare thing."

The museum will honor the pilots and crews of medevac helicopters at the eighth annual Rotors Over Mentone Fly-In Saturday.

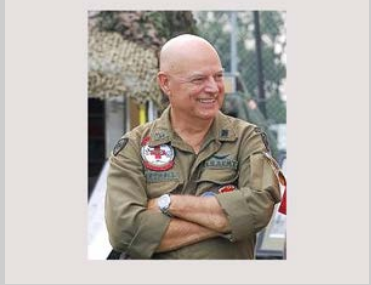
The event begins at 10 a.m., with the program beginning at 11 a.m. Museum President Tim Croy will give opening remarks, followed by an invocation, placing of colors, the national anthem, recognition of veterans and an introduction of Marshall.

After Marshall's program, which will include photos and a Power Point presentation, a meet-and-greet and book signing with Marshall is planned.

Marshall wrote seven books, which document the "sometimes unbelievable, but true, rescue missions flown by all helicopters in Vietnam," according to the museum's website at bellaircraftmuseum.org. There are over 140 missions described in the books, mostly first-person accounts by the crews, many never published elsewhere.

Helicopter rides will be offered by American Huey 369 with membership and by Goshen Helicopter Inc. beginning at 10 a.m. Several other helicopters also are expected to be on hand. The helicopter rides will resume after the program and continue until the event concludes.

At 9:30 a.m. Saturday, the food tent opens.



Phil Marshall, 69, of Springfield, Ohio, will be the guest speaker Saturday at Rotors Over Mentone. Photo provided.

Food and drink will be available all day at the concession tent outside the museum. Admission and parking are free.

The American Red Cross will be accepting blood donations beginning at 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Sign up in advance at www.redcrossblood.org and put in the zip code 46539.