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AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER

Spring 2025

WWW.ECAVIATIONHERITAGE.COM

Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation

May 2025



A View From Above

Guest Speaker: Guy Nelson

2025 ECAHF Gala

*Friday, February 21, 2025 @ 5:30 p.m.
Havelock Tourist & Event Center*



Tom & Susan
Braaten



Richard & Wanda
Hazlett



Edward Jones
Mike Sprague



EASTERN CAROLINA AVIATION HERITAGE
FOUNDATION IS PLEASED TO PRESENT THE 2025

Aces Honor Roll

IN MEMORY

All Fallen Aviators
Col James K. Clark, USAF (WWII)
MSGT Vince Morgan
LtCol James McGarvey, USMC, MIA
LtCol Daniel "Dano" Seifert, USMC

Capt Jim Casti, USMC
Maj Todd S. Denson, USMC
MGySgt Albert "Sandy" Sandoval, USMC
Capt Reginald "Woody" Underwood, USMC
Andrew Hazlett, Seaman 1st Class, USN

IN HONOR

MajGen Tom Braaten, USMC (Ret)
LtCol Edmund Hughes III, USA (Ret)
Col Brendan Burks, USMC
LtGen Harry Blot, USMC
Maj Fred Hollinger, MS ANG (Ret)

Col Jimmie Green, USMC (Ret)
Col Ben Hancock, USMC (Ret)
Capt Timothy Clark, USAF (Ret)
MGySgt Richard Hazlett, USMC (Ret)
Guy Nelson, USMC

Thank you for your service!

2025 ECAHF Gala Sponsors

Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow
Anonymous in Memory of All Fallen Aviators
Craven 100 Alliance (C1A)
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A View From Above





WITH SUPPORT FROM
The City of Havelock
Fleet Readiness Center East

**ANNOUNCE THE 2025 EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA
SUMMER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENGINEERING CAMP**

Havelock Tourist & Event Center
July 21-25, 2025

Rising 4th, 5th and 6th graders

The Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation will offer an exciting, aviation-themed weeklong summer day camp this July for elementary school students (rising fourth, fifth and sixth-graders) at the Havelock Tourist & Event Center.

The camp will provide students a fun and positive glimpse into various fields of engineering by using hands-on, creative investigations and real-world building activities. Throughout the week, students will work to design solutions to real world issues. They will be led by local elementary school teachers and engineering staff from the Fleet Readiness Center East. Students will be given the challenge to individually design and build various devices related to aviation and engineering. Students will learn engineering fundamentals by exploring various experiments related to aviation and safety.

The camp is from 8:30am - 12:00noon Monday through Friday and a snack is provided. No lunch is provided.

Cost for the camp is \$125 per student. Scholarships may be available for students with demonstrated financial need. Send no money until the selection process is complete and your child has received notification of acceptance.

If you are interested in sponsoring a camper, please contact Pam Holder at events@havelocknc.us.

The application process opens **February 3, 2025** and closes on **April 10, 2025**. To apply, go to www.eeaviationheritage.com and follow the link to "2025 Elementary Summer Camp."

For more information, contact Pam Holder at (252) 444-4348 or email events@havelocknc.us.

Mission Liftoff: Defying Gravity



Eastern NC Summer Middle and High School Engineering Camps at Craven Community College – Havelock Campus

Middle School Summer Engineering Camp: June 9-13, 2025

High School Engineering Camp: June 17 - 18, 2025

High School Aviation Camp: June 23-27, 2025

High School 3D Modeling Workshop: July 9-10, 2025

High School 3D Printing Workshop: July 29-30, 2024

High School 3-D Innovation Camps: July 9, 10, 16, 17, 2025

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 252-444-6002



Scan the QR Code

SAVE THE DATES

FREE Family Fly-In STEM Night:

August 15, 2025

Fall Partnership Event:

October 21, 2025

Gala:

February 20, 2026

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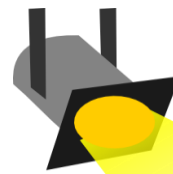
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Aviation Curator

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Spotlight ECAHF Chair



Huge congratulations to Maj General Tom Braaten!

We are thrilled to announce that Maj General Tom Braaten has been awarded the Champion of Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education Award by the North Carolina Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Center!

This prestigious recognition honors General Braaten's incredible dedication to fostering innovation and inspiring the next generation of leaders in STEM fields. His commitment to education, mentorship, and creating opportunities for students is truly outstanding.

Thank you for all you do, General Braaten, and for making such a lasting impact on the future of STEM!



A Waste of Lives and Treasure

**A small part of the Vietnam experience of Ed Hughes,
Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation (ECAHF) Board Member**

By Ed Hughes and Barry Fetzer, ECAHF Historian

Spring 2025 ECAHF Newsletter

Here we are in 2025, ten years since our Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation (ECAHF) inaugural newsletter in 2015. In those ten years, the subjects of the feature column in our newsletter have included Marines, Navy Officers, US Army Air Corps enlisted men and officers, a CH-53E squadron based at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) New River in Jacksonville, NC and a US Army CH-47 crew chief.

This article is a first for our newsletter highlighting a US Army officer and pilot and one of our own ECAHF Executive Board members. This article is also the first in a series of occasional columns about these board members, who, in their humility, would not seek to be featured in our newsletter but deserve to be nonetheless.

The first of our ECAHF board members we'll highlight is Edmund Earl Hughes III who is a native of New Bern, NC. He graduated from New Bern High School in 1966 and after two years of college joined the United States Army in June 1968.

A few details from Ed's biography: He was commissioned an Infantry Second Lieutenant in May 1969. He completed flight school in May 1970 and was assigned to the 116th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC), Chu Lai, South Vietnam (I Corps). In his twelve months in Vietnam, he accumulated over 1,000 combat hours and participated in Operation Lam Son 719, March 1971.



UH-1H, 116th Assault Helicopter Company, *Yellow Jacket* Platoon. Photo by Ed Hughes.

Upon his return to the United States then Captain Hughes was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 50th Infantry (Mechanized) as the Battalion S-2 (Intelligence Officer), Commander C Company and as the Battalion S-1 (Personnel).

Ed has the perfect last name (Hughes) to fly UH-1 *Iroquois* or “Huey’s”. Captain Hughes returned to aviation as Commander of a UH-1 Instructor Pilot Flight at Fort Rucker, Alabama, accumulating over 1,000 hours as an Instructor Pilot (IP) in the UH-1 IP course teaching Contact, Nap of the Earth, Night Vision Goggles and UH-1M Gunnery.

His next assignment was the 12th Aviation Group (Combat), Fort Bragg, NC as the Group Flight Detachment Commander. In 1979 he was assigned to XVIII Airborne Corps as the Corps Aviation Standardization Officer and was promoted to Major in 1980.

Major Hughes’ next assignment was with the 3rd Armored Division, Frankfurt, Germany as the Deputy G-2 (Intelligence), followed by Command of the Division General Support Aviation Company, Hanau, Germany.

He returned to the US in 1985 and was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division as the Deputy G-2.

In 1987 Major Hughes was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) and was assigned to the 18th Combat Aviation Brigade as the Brigade S-3 (operations officer), Brigade Executive Officer followed by Command of Task Force 118 (later flagged as the 4th Squadron, 17th Cavalry) conducting security operations in the Persian Gulf for the US Navy.

LTC Hughes’ final assignment on active duty was with the 513th Military Intelligence Brigade, Fort Monmouth, N.J. as the Deputy Brigade Commander. LTC Hughes retired from the U.S. Army June 1992.

During his US Army aviation career, Ed flew the OH-13, OH-23, OH-58C, UH-1D/H, and the UH-1M Gunship and accumulated over 3500 flight hours.



Ed quips about this photo: “Helicopter pilots doing what they do best, ‘Waiting on the next mission. We were on standby.’” Photo submitted by Ed Hughes, left, reading in the cabin of his UH-1H. Sleeping to his left is David White, a gunship pilot. Note the cyclic stick and armored cockpit seat to Ed’s right and center, top.

In this column, Ed permitted us a view through the window of his assignment and experiences with the 116th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC) in Vietnam. Ed wrote, "The 116th AHC was OPCON to the Americal Division in March 1970 to support their operation to retake Kham Duc. I joined the unit in early July '70, just in time to help get the Americal out of Kham Duc before the monsoons set in and isolated them from resupply.

"People are always asking", Ed continues, "What was Vietnam like? I honestly tell them it was hours and hours of boredom interrupted by a few seconds of stark, raving terror".

"Which brings me to Operation Lam Son 719. On March 4th, '71 revile was at 0430 and we were told to 'pack our trash' (our baggage and equipment in preparation for a mission) and that we were going to Quang Tri. I was lead of the first flight of 4 UH-1H's that left Chu Lai at 0900, stopped in Da Nang for gas, and arrived in Quang Tri at 1700. Since we were the 'new guys' on the block' the Company Commander, Maj. Henry Hagwood (retired as a Maj. General), and the aircraft commanders received an operations briefing. They told us, 'We are getting our asses kicked' and then showed us the list of aircraft that had been shot down, the ones that were still in Laos and the pilots that were either dead or missing. This filled two briefing boards made out of 4X8 sheets of plywood. The 48th AHC lost all of its aircraft; none were flyable.

"Our first mission into Laos was 5 March '71. We crossed the border in one of many flights of twenty. We were told to stay at 3,000 feet above ground level to minimize small arms fire and to reduce the effectiveness of anti-aircraft. 'Our 'pucker factor' was maxed out. As we approached the border all you could see was smoke, fires, and helicopters.

"We crossed the border with loads of ARVN (Army of Republic of Vietnam—the 'good guys') soldiers 12 times that day. In one 15-minute span five helicopters were shot down and one crew was still out there hoping to be rescued. The plan was for a 120-ship combat assault on the 6th, all flyable aircraft going for the objective, 'Tchepone' a major NVA (North Vietnamese Army—the 'bad guys') storage site, acres and acres of military supplies. I did not fly this mission because I had a 30-day flight hour total of 171 hours, way over the limit. The mission was a success and we did not lose any aircraft. The 116th was to be returning to Chu Lai the next morning.

"On March 20th we left for Quang Tri at 2030 hours. I was flight lead of four slicks and two C-model gunships (author's note: a 'slick' helicopter was typically a Bell UH-1 Iroquois 'Huey', specifically configured for troop transport. Unlike gunships, slicks didn't have external weapons pods, giving them a 'slick', or more aerodynamic, appearance. They were used to transport troops to the field, often with door gunners for defense).

"We stopped in Da Nang for fuel. We headed north, tried to cross the Hai Van pass and went inadvertently IFR, the entire flight. Everyone else executed the IFR procedure perfectly and returned to Da Nang. I executed my procedure and ended up at 8,000 feet, still thick in the soup. I finally got ahold of *Angel Control* (the air controlling agency) and they got us back to Da Nang.

"I'm glad I was flying with Maj. Hagwood, who was dual-rated and had a Standard Instrument Ticket. Once we landed, I got out and kissed the ground and spent the night sleeping on the runway.

“March 21st we only put up two aircraft because of bad weather. They only flew three hours trying to resupply Firebase D-1 by using parachutes, not a good idea. One of our aircraft, *Minute Man 21*, was shot down—blown out of the sky by anti-aircraft fire. It blew-up in midair. On the 23rd I flew nine and a half hours, bringing ARVN’s out of Laos. By this time the ARVN were in panic mode, running for their lives. They had no weapons, no military equipment of any kind. We could not land in the Pickup Zones (PZ), because the ARVN would overload our UH-1H’s and those that tried to fly crashed.

“To minimize this problem, we greased our skids and cross tubes with axle grease...so no one could hang on outside the aircraft, hoping to get out of there and not be killed or captured. We would hover over the PZ and pick up ten-to-fifteen ARVN soldiers. On one approach to the PZ my aircraft was hit by a shrapnel from a mortar round. It penetrated the right chin bubble and bounced off of Maj. Hagwood’s leg. I still have that piece of metal.

“That night we were told we would be going back to Chu Lai in the morning and then the enemy’s rocket attack started. One rocket went long...one went short. The short round hit a Hooch (living quarters) next to us and killed six.

“After a few days flying in Laos, I had a sense of how pilots felt in WWII trying to fly through all that anti-aircraft fire and flak, praying not to get hit.

“The 116th AHC—like every AHC—flew every conceivable mission including combat assaults, resupply, medevac, command and control, psychological operations, and spray (Agent Orange) missions, day and night and in bad weather. It didn’t matter. If the ‘grunts’ needed us, we went.

Ed concluded, “When I start talking about Vietnam...I remember the real heroes who never returned home and think about the waste of lives and treasure.”



Ed Hughes looking up as he was counting bullet holes and doing a postflight inspection on a UH-1H at Hawk Hill, I Corps, just south of Da Nang. Photo submitted by Ed Hughes.



Please Join ECAHF Each Year

ECAHF needs your support to share the story of the advancement of military aircraft and those who have made it possible in eastern North Carolina. Your membership helps to provide resources to encourage students to acquire science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills through interactive exhibits and programs.

Together, our joint forces will recognize our neighbors' roles in advancing military aviation since 1942 when MCAS-Cherry Point was commissioned. In addition, your membership will help influence a new generation of aviation enthusiasts and skilled workers for the future. Be a part of this challenging and exciting mission.

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