

7 April 2006

From: Maj. Franklin A. Gullede, Jr., USMC (Ret)

To: LtCol. John A. Chancey, USMC (Ret)

Subj: Hospitalman Jack Sparky Ehrhardt, USN, B407890, authority to wear
Combat Air Crew Wings

Ref: (a) History of HMM-364 in Vietnam <http://www.hmm-364.org>
(b) Marine Corps History and Museum Division, Vietnam CD# 099
(c) Marine Corps History and Museum Division, Vietnam CD# 101

Encl: (1) Medevac Helo Destroyed Near Hue City
(2) Thomas J. Miller's letter of 26 June 2005
(3) HMM-362 After Action Report of 30 Jan 68
(4) HMM-364 After Action Report of 5 Feb 68

Hospitalman Jack S. Ehrhardt was assigned to Marine Air Base Squadron 36, Marine Aircraft Group Thirty-Six, First Marine Aircraft Wing during January and February of 1968. On at least three occasions, that have been documented, he volunteered to fly on medical evacuation missions in support of the Marine Corps during the Tet Offensive of 1968. Reference (a) contains the account of Ehrhardt's last mission that ended his tour in Vietnam when a CH-46 transport helicopter of HMM-364 was shot down near Hue City while en route to the ninth medevac mission assigned to the crew of YK-13 on 5 February 1968. Ehrhardt was the sole survivor of that incident which is described in Enclosure (1).

Ehrhardt spent about one year in the US Naval Hospital Oakland, CA and the US Naval Hospital Philadelphia, PA. Upon being discharged from the Navy during April 1969 he was granted a service connected disability of 100%. He underwent additional corrective surgical procedures in 1981, 1982 and 2003. On June 1, 1982 Ehrhardt dedicated his life to assisting veterans when he became a counselor for the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Erie, PA. on 6 July 2005 he retired from the Veterans Affairs Medical Center with multiple salutations for 23 years of dedicated service to the veterans of his area.

Ehrhardt was not recognized for his selfless contributions to the Marine Corps Air/Ground Team. Specifically, he was not awarded the Combat Air Crew Wings. References (b) and (c) contain After Action Reports (AARs) for the squadrons he flew medical evacuation flights with from 30 January to 5 February 1968.

Enclosure (3), the AAR from HMM-362 for 30 January 1968 lists Ehrhardt as a crew member aboard YL-36 acting in the capacity of Corpsman. On that day the crew flew 5.7 hours, carried three emergency, one priority and three routine medical evacuees as well as two passengers. They landed in nine insecure landing zones (LZs) represented by the coordinates that have been circled. Enclosure (4), the AAR from HMM-364 for 5 February 1968 lists Ehrhardt as the Corpsman aboard YK-13. This AAR was probably reconstructed from the records of Marine Medium Observation Squadron 3 who supplied the UH-1E gun ship escort. The pilot would normally have completed this AAR report to include both secure and insecure LZs, this enclosure only represents nine insecure LZs and the three locations the aircraft received hostile enemy fire. Enclosure (2) is a letter written by Thomas J. Miller, a former Corporal and crew chief of YK-14 that was read to those gathered for Ehrhardt's retirement. Miller relates that for a short period of

time YK-13 suffered some minor mechanical, electrical or radio problem and that his aircraft was utilized for one additional medical evacuation and was subjected to enemy fire which damaged the synchronization shaft of his aircraft. No AAR was found for this mission of Miller's aircraft since the pilots were killed.

A recapitulation of the credits that should have been recorded toward the issuance of Ehrhardt's first Air Medal (Strike/Flight Award) follows:

Date	Aircraft	Flights	Strikes	Total Credits
30 Jan 68	YL-36	9		9
5 Feb 68	YK-13	9	3	12
5 Feb 68	YK-14	1	1	2
	Total	19	4	23

For the time Ehrhardt served as a Corpsman, Air Medals were awarded for each accumulated total of 20 flights and/or strikes (HN Ehrhardt was awarded one Air Medal). It is my understanding that Combat Air Crew Wings were awarded to those enlisted crew members who had accumulated at least 20 qualified flights into insecure LZs as well as receiving hostile fire at least three times.

Request this recommendation to authorize HN Jack Sparky Ehrhardt to wear the Combat Air Crew Wings receive a favorable endorsement and forwarded to:

LtCol. Sean C. Killeen
Commanding Officer, HMM-364
P. O. Box 55931
Camp Pendleton, CA. 92055-5931

Respectfully submitted,

Franklin A. Gulledge, Jr.
Major USMC (Ret)

Enclosure (1) to FAG ltr. of 7 Apr 2006

Medevac Helo Destroyed Near Hue City

Demko, Leonard Richard, Maj.	Pilot
Burke, John Joseph, Capt.	Copilot
Conner, Gerald William, Cpl.	Crew Chief
Shelton, James Dallas, Sgt.	Gunner
Copeland, Norman Ottis, Cpl.	Gunner
Ehrhardt, Jack Sparky, HN	Corpsman



On Friday, February 5, 1968 the above crew of YK-13, Bureau Number 153986, was tasked for a medical evacuation (medevac) in the vicinity of Hue City. As the aircraft approached the landing zone it was hit by an unknown number of small arms/automatic weapons rounds prior to picking up the three seriously wounded Marines. Since the mission was rather close to the HMM-364 base at Phu Bai, operations could monitor the radio traffic. Maj. Demko radioed that they had been hit and the hydraulic and control systems were affected. They were still at a low altitude when the aircraft pitched up, rolled inverted and crashed at coordinates YD 790230. The escort gun ship helicopter landed and rescued the injured from the crashed CH-46D. A squadron maintenance team retrieved the wreckage with another CH-46D. It was a shocking chain of pieces held together with pipes and cables that bore no resemblance to a helicopter.



Photos by, Cpl. John Sabol, Jr.

Information available to the web master indicates that Cpl. Connor survived the crash, was rescued by the chase aircraft and delivered to a medical facility in the area. It appears Cpl. Connor was then transferred to the USAF Hospital, Cam Rahn Bay where he eventually died fifteen days later on February 20, 1968.

For thirty three years the fate of the Navy Corpsman remained unknown other than he was critically wounded. During November 2000 Kelly Lea, who is the niece of Major Leonard R. Demko, became aware of this web site dedicated to the Marines of HMM-364 and directed her efforts toward locating the sole survivor of this terrible incident. Kelly turned to the "power of the internet" and posted several requests for additional information relative to the crash of YK-13 on various sites dealing with the Vietnam War. An employee of the Erie Veterans Affairs Medical Center of Erie, PA. read her posting and believed that a friend of his, Jack Ehrhardt, well could have been the Corpsman in question. What follows is Jack "Doc Sparky" Ehrhardt's memories of that fateful day.

We launched for the third or fourth time that day in response to three emergency medevacs in the vicinity of Hue City. We were flying low level and jinxing left and right to avoid enemy gunners being able to draw a good sight picture on the aircraft. We had been airborne for a very few minutes when Maj. Demko initiated another left hand turn which rolled the aircraft to a position

that allowed me a view of some troops on a road we were flying along. The aircraft then rolled over to the right and all I saw was the sky followed by another turn to the left which, to my surprise gave me a view of those same troops seen earlier firing upon us. I grabbed my M-14 and took a few shots out the left side of the aircraft. We moved beyond their effective range but very soon we were taking fire again from another source. As I sat on the troop seat seeking the source of the rounds which were plinking through the skin of the helicopter, a round apparently came up through the floor and struck my right thigh approximately three inches below my pelvis, proceeded upwards taking out the ball joint of my hip and exiting through the cheek of my right buttocks. The impact of this round literally lifted me from the troop seat air and I crumpled to the deck of the aircraft. Both gunners were firing and the crew chief was also occupied looking out for additional enemy positions and did not notice my predicament. I yelled, "I'm hit - I'm hit" as loud as I could to overcome the noise of the engines, screaming transmissions and the two .50 caliber's which were belching led out either side of the aircraft.

Again we passed the effective range of the enemy gunners and one of the gunners noticed me in the floor and came to my aid. He tore my right flight suit leg off to assess the wound and grabbed by medical kit. I instructed him to use my M-14 as a splint to immobilize the leg and hip joint. He ripped up my flight suit and soon had the M-14's but tied tightly half way between my right arm pit and waist with additional strands of flight suit material wrapped around the make shift splint down to the muzzle of the barrel which was below my right knee. I further instructed him to remove some gauze compresses and stuff them into the entry and exit wounds. I was in severe pain by now and asked the gunner to administer a syrette of morphine which he found and injected into my upper arm. I was placed on the stretcher and it was positioned at the rear of the helicopter along the hinge point of the ramp. A discussion ensued between Cpl. Connor, the crew chief, and Maj. Demko about my condition and the feasibility of continuing to the site of the three wounded Marines whose position was now relatively close. I told Cpl. Connor I would be OK and to continue complete the mission.

It seems that no sooner than those words were out of my mouth that we received a third fire incident at which time one of the gunners was wounded. Additionally we had taken a round in a critical part of the aircraft, and as I recall, I could feel the spray of jet fuel on my face. I motioned for the gunner to come back to my position and I would attempt to administer first aid to his wound. It was then that Maj. Demko decided to abort the mission and turned the aircraft toward Phu Bai.

As I was attending to the gunner from my prone position on the stretcher, I was advised that we were going to set the aircraft down short of Phu Bai due to the severity of the damaged aircraft systems. An M-60 machine gun, which was aboard the aircraft, was positioned by my side and I was given instructions that once the aircraft had landed I was to cradle the machine gun in my arms so that both it and I would be removed from the aircraft together to hasten setting up a defensive perimeter.

Since I was in a prone position, and continuing to tend to the gunners wound, I could not see out the helicopter to get a visual picture of what transpired next. However, I do have vivid memories of what my other senses told me was going on. I remember a sense of slowing down as if transitioning from a level flight attitude to the initial approach to landing phase of flight. Then it felt like the nose of the aircraft dropped rapidly with the tail rising as if the aircraft was doing a forward somersault. The next thing I remember is being outside of the aircraft flying through the air toward a rice paddy where I landed face first in the water and mud. I gathered my wits and looked back over my shoulder to see the helicopter had exploded and fire from the spilled jet fuel was rolling across the paddy toward me. I instantly remembered the survival training technique

swimming in the ocean when your ship had been hit and fire was on the surface. This was not an ocean, and the water was not all that deep, but my face went down into the water and I clawed at the mud and anything else I could get my hands on to drag myself away from the advancing fire. When I needed a breath of air I placed the backs of my hands together and splashed the surface of the water vigorously out to the left and right several times to clear any burning fuel from my immediate vicinity before lifting my head for air. Then back into the water and pull myself and the M-14 tied to my right side through the paddy again. I performed this maneuver three or four times until I was free of the area which contained the burning fuel.

*I lay there for what appeared to be a very long time, but probably not, feeling as lonely as I have ever felt in my life, before or after. There were none of my fellow crewmen around and I wondered just what in the world was I going to do considering the condition of my right leg. I certainly was not going to walk out. Then I heard a helicopter and when I looked toward the direction of the rotor noise I saw a HUEY. I tore off my undershirt and waved it frantically in the air. I was spotted and soon I was being carried aboard. The aircraft began to lift and I screamed out, "My crew! My crew! Where is my crew?" The gunner on the HUEY looked directly into my eyes and without saying a word simply shook his head slowly from left to right as if to say,
"Forget it."*

Within a very few minutes I found myself within the medical facility at Phu Bai. I remember the doctors assessing my condition and one of them suggesting that since I had sustained 2nd degree burns it might be wise to administer morphine for the pain. I was feeling no pain, and did not realize I had been burned. Further, I tried to tell them that I had already been administered a syrette of the pain killer but the words would not form and I lay there silently as another injection of morphine was administered. Forty eight hours latter I awoke in the 106th Army Hospital in Yokohama, Japan.

Information provided by:

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association
HMM-364 Command Chronology
Jack "Doc Sparky" Ehrhardt, former HN USN
Gary W. Gard, former 1stLt. USMCR
Kelly M. Lea (Niece of Major Leonard R. Demko)

Photographs by:

John Sabol, Jr., former Sgt. USMC

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Franklin A. Gullledge, Jr.
Major USMC (Ret)

Enclosure (2) to FAG ltr. of 7 April 2006

Rice Lake Diesel, Inc.
1704 MaCauley Avenue
Rice Lake, WI 54868
June 26, 2005

Dear "Doc Sparky",

Congratulations on your well deserved retirement. I wish I could share this in person. One of these days I have a feeling we will meet again.

For those of you present here today, let me introduce myself. My name is Thomas J. "TJ" Miller and I was a crew chief in HMM-364, the "Purple Foxes" from November 1967 through November 1968. I have a special interest in Corpsman Jack "Doc Sparky" Ehrhardt. I was the crew chief on a Medevac mission just prior to the fateful crash of YK-13. "Doc Sparky" was my corpsman. As I remember, we landed on a dirt road a mile South of Hue City. I do not remember the number of Medevacs we picked up. My "grunt" brothers were behind a rice paddy dike for cover with the wounded.

As we touched down, we started taking fire. I had no idea where it was coming from and am not sure if we returned any fire. We had friendlies out there and were not sure of their positions. The rear ramp dropped and "Doc Sparky" was headed for the dike, oblivious of the fire we were receiving, only focusing on the wounded. He had totally disregarded my earlier instructions, "Do not leave the aircraft. The grunts will bring the wounded to us. If things get too hot and heavy we may have to leave expeditiously. I do not want to leave you out there." It wasn't the first time that had happened. I knew full well the tenacity of the "Doc's" we flew with. They could not render aid if they didn't have their hands on the wounded. They always only had that one focus - "administer aid to the wounded no matter the circumstance". "Doc Sparky" was no exception. It is what "Doc's" do.

After dropping our medevacs off at the Med Center we returned to our squadron area to ready for the next mission assignment. Upon post flight of my aircraft I found some battle damage. A round had entered the tunnel area above the fuselage and hit the sync-shaft. The sync-shaft connects and synchronizes the forward and aft transmissions so the rotor blades do not hit each other. This is a flight safety issue. Zero tolerance for battle damage to that shaft. My aircraft was down. The gunner switched guns to YK-13 and "Doc Sparky" stowed his gear aboard the aircraft.

If my recollection is correct. YK-13 had flown a mission or two earlier that morning and was down for some particular reason, possibly a radio problem. I had picked up the mission assignment. By the time we had returned from our mission, YK-13 had been returned to the "up" status so they were reassigned Medevac standby. At any moment a Medevac mission could be assigned and they would launch.

I told Cpl. Jerry Connor, YK-13 crew chief, the gunner (I do not remember his name) and I were going to check with the line chief and probably go to chow. When I got back I told Jerry I would standby for him and then he could go eat. As the gunner and I walked to the mess hall YK-13 passed overhead. I wondered who was flying as gunner. In the gunners absence Cpl. Norm Copeland, a crew chief, jumped aboard to fill in for the missing gunner. The standing rule was no more than one crew chief per aircraft. My section leader, Sgt. Jim Shelton, grabbed an extra M-60 machine gun and was going to serve as a stinger on the ramp. On the way back from the mess hall I ran into a couple of squadron mates and they asked if I had heard about "Mr. Lucky", YK-13 as Jerry had called his aircraft. "It crashed and everyone was killed." I said "That can not be, it must be someone else, I talked to Jerry but a few minutes ago". It was true. In a heart beat, 2 pilots, 3 qualified crew chiefs and a "Doc" were gone forever.

For 35 years I believed all were lost on that mission. Two and a half years ago I got on the internet for the first time. I was in total disbelief when I found the "Purple Fox" website and the narrative of YK-13. "Doc Sparky" had survived. After a bit of searching I stumbled onto Kelly Lea, niece of the pilot on that mission, Major Leonard Demko. Capt. John Burke was the co-pilot. She had been searching for

information about her uncle and in some correspondence made contact with Clifford Hayes. Once I had "Doc Sparky's" address I sent him a letter.

Ladies and Gentlemen you are in the presence of one of Americas finest. Ask any Marine - especially a "grunt" - no one is held in higher regard than the "Doc". From me to you "Doc Sparky", hand salute.

Semper Fi "Purple Fox" brother,

/s/ Thomas J. "TJ" Miller

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Franklin A. Gullede, Jr.
Major USMC (Ret)

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19.175

MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 362 After Mission Report. DATE 30 Jan 68

	EVENT	Y	EVENT	Y	EVENT	Y
PILOT	SHAWER	✓				
CO-PILOT	DAVIT	✓				
CREW CHIEF	BLOMERC	✓				
GUNNER	DEWSE	✓				
CREW MAN/WINCH	CHURCH	✓				
FLY TIME/USKO	5.7					
PAT/NEPVACS	7					
SCHEDULED/ALOPS	18					
ORD ESTIMATED						

Mission Number	Code	Supt	Plt	Plt	Coord	Number of A/C	Op	ID	ES	LT	LT	REC	TACA	TAR	A/L
155BC	IRB	3rd	5.7	DA	MANG	1		4H	()	()	LT	()	()	MED	(8) (7)
2D-E-F											LC	()	()	REC	() ()
34-F											GAR	()	()	TACA	() ()
4											SUP	()	()	TAR	() ()
											VER	()	()	A/L	() ()

Totals by Type: Flt Hrs 5.7 : Cargo 18 : Tasks 7 : Miss Incidents None

	US	ARMY	NAVY	AF	MC										
Passengers	1														
Medevacs: Evac	2														
Evac	1														
Reev	3														

Comms Expanded: _____ Supp () Rtn ()

Narrative of all points: (Name and coordinates of LZs, unusual events, etc.)
 ATD0750: AT 1840: Phu Bai → 4D 836236 → 4D 752248
 → Phu Bai → AT 905952 → MARBLE MT → AT 913943
 → 4D 898238 → 4D 752248 → Phu Bai → 4D 841533
 → Phu Bai → 2D047008 → Phu Bai → 2D041023
 → Phu Bai → AT 888952 → Phu Bai

WAS

CREDITS: FLIGHTS 9 : STRIKES — : MISSIONS 9

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FOR AWARDS BOARD ONLY

FORM 364 AFTER ACTION REPORT

DATE: 5 FEB, 68

1. Mission # 60, Flt. Code 1R6, Total Flt. Time 6.8, Supp. of _____

2. Event ___ YK ___ Event ___ YK ___ Event ___ YK ___ Event ___ YK ___

PILOT: MAJ. DEWKO - Logged: Q.D.

CO-PILOT: CAPT. BUNNE

CREW CHIEF: COL. COOPER

GUNNER(S): SGT. SHELTON / CAPT. CORLEAND - Logged: Q.D.

CORPSMAN/OTHER: MM-1 SKANMAN

TROOPS/PAX: _____

CARGO: _____

MED EVACS: _____

SORTIES/TASKS: _____

FLIGHT TIME: _____

TIME OF FIRST T/O: _____ TIME OF LAST LANDING: _____

3. NARRATIVE: DEP, COORD OF LZ, CARGO/PAX, HITS RECEIVED ON AIRCRAFT, UNUSUAL EVENTS, OPERATION NAME, ETC:

60-1 - YO 733333

60-2 - YO 624333 (ARC'D FIRE YO 712320)

60-3 - YO 01816

60-4 - YO 64222

4. PAX: US _____ ARVN _____ VN CIV _____ OTHER _____ TOTAL _____

5. MEDEVACS:

EMER _____

PRIOR _____

ROUT _____

6. NO OF A/C _____ NEAREST LB CARGO _____ TOTAL ALL PAX _____

7. NO OF SORTIES/TASKS BY FUNCTION: TOTAL SORTIES/TASKS _____

AH () ()	COM () ()	M () ()	BY CONVOY () ()
CT () ()	SAR () ()	A/L () ()	TAC (A) () ()
CC () ()	MED () ()	RECON () ()	OTHER () ()
LT () ()	TAR () ()	VIP () ()	() ()
LC () ()	TR () ()	PSY () ()	() ()

8. FIRE INCIDENTS: FIRE RECEIVED YES _____ NO, FIRE RETURNED _____ YES _____ NO
TIME/COORD _____ ROUNDS EXPENDED _____

9. NUMBER OF APPROACHES TYPE SIMULATED/ACTUAL _____ GCA _____ TACAN _____

10. ALL BLANKS MUST BE COMPLETED IF MISSION BOARD IS TO BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH CREDITS, PARAGRAPH 3 MUST BE COMPLETE AND CONCISE.

FLIGHT LEADER'S NAME: _____ SIGNATURE _____

MISSION BOARD: FLIGHT (9) STRIKE (2) NO MISSION CREDIT ()

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60 "C" YD 848087
60 "D" YD 774233
60 "E" YD 781209
60 "P" AT 833998
60 "Q" YD 772222
Rec'd FIRE YD 79023 QV

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JFF 1.0 35
 0750-810 60N (1.2)
 VD 838322
 600 VD 684339
 Record for NYD12328

1035-1540 5.0 2D910163 60A
 VD 648281 60B
 VD 848087 60C
 VD 774223 60D
 VD 781209 60E (Record for)
 AT 833998 60F

1530-1704 .6 4D772
 HAF BAMP Record for VD790230

Total 6.8 12 missions
 16 sorties 8 tasks

5 Feb 68

Donko
 Burke
 Shelton
 Copeland
 Connor
 Erhardt

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