



## Historic 'Huey' donated to NJ Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley

Soldiers from the New Jersey Army National Guard on Monday delivered a UH-1 "Huey" helicopter that flew hundreds of combat missions during the Vietnam War to members of the NJ Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation.

Foundation members, including Vietnam helicopter pilots Carl W. Burns and Ken Gurbisz, will lead a restoration effort they hope will transform the airship to its former luster for display in front of the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Holmdel.

The aircraft served two Vietnam tours, the first with the 116th Assault Helicopter Company in Cu Chi and the second with the 118th Assault Helicopter Company in Bien Hoa. After the war, the helicopter flew for a time with the Army's 10th Mountain Division and later with the New Jersey Army National Guard. The aircraft has been retired for more than 20 years and had been on display at Joint Training and Training Development Center on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.

On Monday, Soldiers transported the aircraft from JBMDL to a hanger at Monmouth Executive Airport in Wall Township where the restoration will take place.

Bill Linderman, executive director of the NJ Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation, said his organization's effort to obtain a helicopter to restore began more than two years ago and began to bear fruit when he met Jorge Martinez, a retired New Jersey Army National Guard colonel and former state aviation director. New Jersey National Guard

leaders, including Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General, assisted the organization in obtaining the necessary Department of Defense approvals to allow the aircraft to be restored and displayed.

"This helicopter is the real deal," Linderman said. "A lot of people worked with us to make today possible."

As they awaited the helicopter's arrival, Burns and Gurbisz could barely contain their excitement.

"We've waited a long time for this opportunity," said Gurbisz, whose Vietnam tour ran from 1969 to 1970.

"I'm sure I'll get misty-eyed when she comes rolling in," said Burns, who served from 1965 to 1966. And when the Huey arrived, Burns was.

"It's a beautiful thing to see," he said.

The pair will be leading a group of more than a dozen former pilots, door gunners and crew chiefs for the restoration effort that is expected to take at least until the end of the summer.

The Foundation will launch a fundraising effort once it's determined how much the restoration will cost.

Linderman said the ultimate goal is to have the Huey in place in front of the Memorial in time for its 15 year anniversary on Sept. 27.

"If we're able to meet that goal, it will be a beautiful thing," he said. "We hope all the many people from the New Jersey National Guard who had a hand in this are there to join us."

