

**Chapter 1 : Bob Vanderstok (Author of War Pilot of Orange)**

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I had to sit in the seat and cover my eyes with my hands. The defenders held the perimeter through the night, but in the morning, enemy machine guns drove off six Marine Choctaw helicopters attempting to deliver reinforcements. Hickey recalled a wave of fear and disappointment among the survivors. But then a single Huey swooped over the treetops, door guns blazing. The Army crew cleared a path for the relief helicopters to return. I was 20 years old in flight school. Of all the helicopter pilots who flew in Vietnam, 95 percent passed through the center at Wolters. Located in north-central Texas, the school, which ran from until the end of the Vietnam War in , was an essential part of the pressure cooker process that transformed anybody who qualifiedâ€”from teenagers to grizzled combat officersâ€”into world-class helicopter pilots. Wayne Brown, who worked at Wolters as a flight instructor for contractor Southern Airways. I had to show some of them how to buckle a seat beltâ€”they were that green. These were cheaper to operate than the Hueys and in many respects were trickier to flyâ€”hence good trainers. None of them came with instruments for flying in cloudsâ€”such advanced training happened elsewhere, such as Fort Rucker, Alabama. Studentsâ€”mostly warrant officer candidates, but commissioned officers tooâ€”flew day and night. Flight school had two phases of instruction, each eight weeks long: Primary I and Primary II. Some 41, students would train there. When actor Harrison Ford bought a Bell and needed a world-class instructor, Brown got the assignment. Southern Airways pilots like Brown taught basic skills in Primary I, and military pilots just back from the war typically handled Primary II. After the war Williams stayed in the rotary-wing world, including working as chief test pilot for manufacturers like Bell and MD Helicopters. Instructors took three students at a time and got to know them well. Now, 50 years on, veterans of the program still remember class numbers and hat colors, flying buddies and instructors. He spent a second year in Vietnam as a Sikorsky CH heavy-lift cargo pilot. Now Messinger teaches computer science at nearby Weatherford College. He devotes his spare time to setting up the National Vietnam War Museum, to be located in Mineral Wells, just over the hill from one of the wartime heliports. After filling his garage with memorabilia donated for the future building, he found space in a hangar. When we visited the metal building, he showed me a box with dozens of framed class photos circa I asked about faces marked out with red grease pencil: Some washed out of the program, Messinger said, and others died in action. It was just too hard. Practice at the stagefields helped build the complex skills needed for landings and takeoffs. Instructors threw inflight emergencies at the students without mercy. At the peak of activity, just before U. There they learned instrument flight rules, tactics, formation flying, and how to operate the bigger, turbine-powered Huey. The entire processâ€”from boot camp to Wolters through graduation from Ruckerâ€”took less than a year. In that time, a high school graduate was transformed into a UH-1 pilot, holding the rank of warrant officer. A teenage enlistee at the recruitment center might have had visions of an exciting, all-expenses-paid helicopter career, but he may have missed the part about having to go through not just one but two spit-and-polish phases called boot camp. The second, at Wolters, was called preflight school, and for warrant officer candidates it lasted four miserable weeks, a purgatory ruled by a living terror known as the TAC Training, Advising, and Counseling officer, who specialized in finding all levels of imperfections, down to misalignment of socks in the drawer, uniforms in the closet, and notebooks on the desk. An infraction by one WOC could bring down fire upon his entire preflight class. If the sink was too clean, they took it apart to find something wrong. They got us up at midnight and turned us into the hallway. But after four weeks it got easier. An aircraft commander in Vietnamâ€”even if too young to voteâ€”was going to hold life-and-death power over his copilot, crew, passengers, and many others within range, so he needed a cool and steady temperament. Occasionally a senior pilot was injured, and brand-new copilots had to take command. And they could face such trials very soon after landing in Vietnam. Williams recalled that one of his classmates, having been called into action while on an orientation flight with a veteran aircraft commander just four days into his first tour in Vietnam, was killed in action. Jim Martinson, another student, had been in-country just a month

when he was shot down twice in one day. We were on the second lift, and every time a slick [on the first lift] would get on the radio you could hear the gunfire. There were gunships flying over the targets, [white phosphorous] smoke, and the enemy firing from the treelines. It was surreal, like: How did I end up in this movie? The next day, Hughes officials sent 9, pounds of replacements parts, plus three engineers. For sustenance, he tossed a couple of sack lunches into the bubble cockpit. Courtesy Mike Wegner Students in Primary II practiced maneuvers in small clearings typically surrounded by trees and boulders, recalls student Dwayne Williams. Courtesy Bill Jeczalik A flight commander observes takeoffs. The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association estimates that the Huey had more combat time than any other aircraft in the history of warfare. Under the arch sit two or the three helicopters used in training: Chuck Wilkson A few flight instructors carried the tradition of torment past the preflight barracks and into the air, screaming at their students and rapping them on the helmets with a stick. By comparison, commissioned officers who came to Wolters for identical flight training enjoyed the good life. They avoided the first month of hell and received a stipend to live off-base, so they usually had enough cash for amenities and weekend misadventures. To stretch his salary he shared an apartment in Weatherford, a half-hour east, with other officers. They commuted in style. There were constant tests and emergency drills. The most hair-raising of the flight maneuvers required trainees to cope with complete engine failure: They had to take their hurtling, unpowered machines all the way to a screeching stop on the ground. After the instructor pulled off the power and left the main rotor to windmill, students had only seconds to adjust the controls and find a safe landing spotâ€”which could be out of sight behind them. This taught them to scan instruments constantly, and be aware of traffic, terrain, and wind direction at all times. Over his career of flying and instructing, Brown practiced the maneuver more than 80, times. Mistakes during autorotation practice at Wolters caused aircraft damage, injuries, and a handful of fatal crashes. If the students failed a key test along the way, they washed out of helicopter school. During the peak enrollment years, and , about 15 percent failed to graduate from Wolters. While noncoms and officers could go back to work they had been doing, a newly arrived Warrant Officer Candidate who failed had no such fallback, and likely would end up slogging through rice paddies in Vietnam. Some students never developed the hand-eye coordination to keep the aggravating machines steady in a low hover, and so never got a chance to fly solo around the field three times and move on. The strict timetable at Wolters required students to qualify for soloing after 10 to 15 hours of dual instruction. Students who survived the solo saw immediate and happy changes. One happened on the bus ride at the end of the day: The vehicle pulled over at a Holiday Inn, and fellow students dragged the new soloist out and threw him into the swimming pool, regardless of weather. He also got a wings emblem to sew on his cap. Fear of failure also eased slightly. With each successive week, the Army became more invested in fledgling pilots, so flunking a test was more likely to lead to remedial instruction than to being tossed out. In , with Vietnam demanding more helicopter pilots, the fort added two big heliports and 21 stagefields. The Army gets credit for starting the pilot pipeline as early as it did: When the program started, no war was under way, nobody had worked out the cavalry-like tactics, and the gasoline-powered helicopters then in use were barely adequate even for war games. Students in the small, piston-engine helicopters learned to cope with marginal performance: In summertime, the OH models could barely get off the ground. Bumping and scraping the skids along the pavement was a skill all students at Wolters learned, no matter which model they flew. For one, it was a simple but effective safety precaution at the crowded heliport. Because so many helicopters were parked on the apron, and because beginners find precise hovering so difficult, the school feared collisions during taxiing, so instructors had their novices skid down the traffic lanes on the way to takeoff, applying just enough power to be light on the landing gear but not so much as to rise off the ground. That noisy practice would come in handy later: Most of the concrete expanse, once home to helicopters, is covered by rusty fences and heaps of even rustier oilfield equipment. Thanks to a cadre of veterans and volunteers, though, a restored main entry looks as good as ever: Visitors to what is now an industrial park drive under a helicopter-theme archway. On the left side of the orange, steel-frame archway sits a restored Hiller OHD. A similar version is still sold today by the Schweizer division of Sikorsky Aircraft. The third helicopter type used at Wolters was the H, the military version of the bubble-canopy Bell 47 civilian models made famous by old movies and television shows. At the peak, the fort

had swept up nearly 1, helicopters for its trainees. A tornado in April damaged of them. By the end of , the three heliports were handling at least 2, takeoffs and landings daily, five days a week. There was no sign of activity. The only suggestion of something valuable was a padlock on the gate and a sign reading Junco Inc.

### Chapter 2 : War Pilot of Orange by Bob Vanderstok

*This is an excellent accounting of what it was like during WWII Holland, RAF England, concentration camp of Germany and traveling/escaping or avoiding the detection of Germans in general.*

What Is Agent Orange? The various herbicides used during Operation Ranch Hand were referred to by the colored marks on the gallon drums in which the chemicals were shipped and stored. In addition to Agent Orange, the U. Each of these "manufactured by Monsanto, Dow Chemical and other companies" had different chemical chemical additives in varying strengths. Agent Orange was the most widely used herbicide in Vietnam, and the most potent. It was found in varying concentrations in all the different herbicides used in Vietnam. Dioxins are also created from trash incineration; burning gas, oil and coal; cigarette smoking and in different manufacturing processes such as bleaching. Dioxin is a highly persistent chemical compound that lasts for many years in the environment, particularly in soil, lake and river sediments and in the food chain. Dioxin accumulates in fatty tissue in the bodies of fish, birds and other animals. Most human exposure is through foods such as meats, poultry, dairy products, eggs, shellfish and fish. Studies done on laboratory animals have proven that dioxin is highly toxic even in minute doses. It is universally known to be a carcinogen a cancer-causing agent. Short-term exposure to dioxin can cause darkening of the skin, liver problems and a severe acne-like skin disease called chloracne. Additionally, dioxin is linked to type 2 diabetes, immune system dysfunction, nerve disorders, muscular dysfunction, hormone disruption and heart disease. Developing fetuses are particularly sensitive to dioxin, which is also linked to miscarriages, spina bifida and other problems with fetal brain and nervous system development. However, because the material was to be used on the enemy, none of us were overly concerned. We never considered a scenario in which our own personnel would become contaminated with the herbicide. The controversy over Agent Orange and its effects has persisted for more than four decades. As late as June , debate continued over whether so-called "Blue Water Navy" veterans those who served aboard deep-sea vessels during the Vietnam War should receive the same Agent Orange-related benefits as other veterans who served on the ground or on inland waterways. Various challenges to the settlement followed, including lawsuits filed by some veterans, before the U. Supreme Court confirmed the settlement in In , President George H. In addition, Vietnam claims half a million children have been born with serious birth defects, while as many 2 million people are suffering from cancer or other illness caused by Agent Orange. In , a group of Vietnamese citizens filed a class-action lawsuit against more than 30 chemical companies, including the same ones that settled with U. The suit, which sought billions of dollars worth of damages, claimed that Agent Orange and its poisonous effects left a legacy of health problems and that its use constituted a violation of international law. Wilcox, author of *Scorched Earth*: This would open the door to lawsuits that would cost the government billions of dollars.

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Effects of Agent Orange on the Vietnamese people The government of Vietnam says that 4 million of its citizens were exposed to Agent Orange, and as many as 3 million have suffered illnesses because of it; these figures include their children who were exposed. Nguyen Viet Nhan, children in the areas where Agent Orange was used have been affected and have multiple health problems, including cleft palate, mental disabilities, hernias, and extra fingers and toes. The affected residents are living in substandard conditions with many genetic diseases. There is data near the threshold of statistical significance suggesting Agent Orange contributes to still-births, cleft palate, and neural tube defects , with spina bifida being the most statistically significant defect. Extensive testing for dioxin contamination has been conducted at the former U. Some of the soil and sediment on the bases have extremely high levels of dioxin requiring remediation. The Da Nang Air Base has dioxin contamination up to times higher than international recommendations for action. First published in and titled Veterans and Agent Orange, the IOM reports assess the risk of both cancer and non-cancer health effects. Each health effect is categorized by evidence of association based on available research data. Update and published in , the links between Agent Orange exposure and cancer were listed as shown. Note that this table shows only cancers. Other health effects are listed in the next section. Veterans began to file claims in to the Department of Veterans Affairs for disability payments for health care for conditions they believed were associated with exposure to Agent Orange, or more specifically, dioxin, but their claims were denied unless they could prove the condition began when they were in the service or within one year of their discharge. Environmental impact of war Mangrove forests, like the top one east of Saigon, were often destroyed by herbicides. The persistent nature of dioxins, erosion caused by loss of tree cover, and loss of seedling forest stock meant that reforestation was difficult or impossible in many areas. Animal-species diversity was also impacted; in one study a Harvard biologist found 24 species of birds and five species of mammals in a sprayed forest, while in two adjacent sections of unsprayed forest there were and species of birds and 30 and 55 species of mammals. The movement of dioxins through the food web has resulted in bioconcentration and biomagnification. In consequence, the urban population in South Vietnam nearly tripled, growing from 2. The rapid flow of people led to a fast-paced and uncontrolled urbanization; an estimated 1. Many states do not regard this as a complete ban on the use of herbicides and defoliants in warfare but it does require case-by-case consideration. This exception voids any protection of any military and civilian personnel from a napalm attack or something like Agent Orange and is clear that it was designed to cover situations like U. Hartz as their principal client, filed the first US Agent Orange class-action lawsuit, in Pennsylvania in , for the injuries military personnel in Vietnam suffered through exposure to toxic dioxins in the defoliant. Codario, including about articles from toxicology journals dating back more than a decade, as well as data about where herbicides had been sprayed, what the effects of dioxin had been on animals and humans, and every accident in factories where herbicides were produced or dioxin was a contaminant of some chemical reaction. However, on May 7, , seven chemical companies settled the class-action suit out of court just hours before jury selection was to begin. Federal Judge Jack B. Weinstein refused the appeals, claiming the settlement was "fair and just". Furthermore, by accepting the settlement payments, disabled veterans would become ineligible for many state benefits that provided far more monetary support than the settlement, such as food stamps , public assistance , and government pensions. It was disbanded by Governor Christine Todd Whitman in Prior to this, such levels could only be found in the adipose fat tissue. The project studied dioxin TCDD levels in blood as well as in adipose tissue in a small group of Vietnam veterans who had been exposed to Agent Orange and compared them to those of a matched control group; the levels were found to be higher in the former group. Several highly placed individuals in government are voicing concerns about whether some of the diseases on the list should, in fact, actually have been included. At the request of the VA, the Institute Of Medicine

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evaluated whether or not service in these C aircraft could have plausibly exposed soldiers and been detrimental to their health. VA now provides medical care and disability compensation for the recognized list of Agent Orange illnesses. Following the conference, the U. More progress has been made on the environmental front. In , the first U. The committee has been meeting yearly to explore areas of scientific cooperation, technical assistance and environmental remediation of dioxin. In the joint statement, President Bush and President Triet agreed "further joint efforts to address the environmental contamination near former dioxin storage sites would make a valuable contribution to the continued development of their bilateral relationship. Thirty-two million dollars has so far been allocated by the U. Congress to fund the program. On March 10, , Judge Jack B. Weinstein of the Eastern District " who had presided over the U. He concluded Agent Orange was not considered a poison under international law at the time of its use by the U. The United States considered British precedent in deciding that the use of defoliants was a legally accepted tactic of war. Kennedy that herbicide use in Vietnam would be lawful, saying that "[t]he use of defoliant does not violate any rule of international law concerning the conduct of chemical warfare and is an accepted tactic of war. Precedent has been established by the British during the emergency in Malaya in their use of helicopters for destroying crops by chemical spraying. They ruled that, though the herbicides contained a dioxin a known poison , they were not intended to be used as a poison on humans. Therefore, they were not considered a chemical weapon and thus not a violation of international law. A further review of the case by the whole panel of judges of the Court of Appeals also confirmed this decision. The lawyers for the Vietnamese filed a petition to the U. Supreme Court to hear the case. On March 2, , the Supreme Court denied certiorari and refused to reconsider the ruling of the Court of Appeals.

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