



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION



Veteran: Bill Otani



Branch: US Marine Corps

Division: HML367 Huey Gunship Squadron ("Pappa Smoke")

Dates of Service: 1966 - 1969

Campaigns/Theatre: Phu Bai, Quang Tri, Dong Ha

Personal Story: I was a helicopter mechanic and door gunner in Vietnam. I started with HMX-1, Presidential Helicopter Squadron in Quantico before I was assigned to duty in Vietnam. When I arrived, my officer took me up in a chopper, kicked a 50 gallon drum out into the water, handed me a M60 and asked, "Can you hit it?" I aimed at the drum bouncing around on the waves below and shot. I hit it. That's how I became a door gunner. We would go on chopper gun runs – going in hard and fast and then bank out hard – always gave me a rush. We'd really pull some Gs!

I have three fellow marines I stay in touch with – they're in Indiana, Texas, and Virginia.

Dong Ha - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWMLhD-Kn8c>

Documented by: Nan Darbous

American Legion Post 234 Vietnam War Commemoration Committee

22909 - 56th Avenue West | Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

www.americanlegionpost234.org