

veteran remembers to say 'thanks'

camps had no beds for the mattresses or plumbing for the sinks but he loved playing jokes.

"After a while, every time we'd go into an Air Force base, they'd search us coming out," he laughed.

He got to meet Ann Margaret, Martha Ray and Bob Hope, he said. He was a guard for Bob Hope's tour, too, though that duty had been assigned as punishment rather than a reward.

In 1969, he was promoted from a warrant officer to a commissioned officer through an Army conversion program, becoming a captain by the time he went off active duty.

He flew 5,315 combat hours during his time in Vietnam, spending five years on active duty and 10 on reserve duty.

When he came home, he faced ridicule and a hard adjustment.

Duncan said he saw lots of protesters — and fought with a few. He and his fellow soldiers wore civilian clothing when traveling to avoid being hassled by protesters, but Duncan said they were easily recognizable anyway with their short haircuts.

He said friends and neighbors he'd known since childhood refused to talk to him when he came back.

His girlfriend, however, was still there for him. He had met her through a friend, but all of their dating had been via letters.

Even his proposal was by letter, he said, but they married four months after his return and have been married for nearly 43 years now.

"Thank God for a loving wife," he said. "She got me through it."

He had nightmares and malaria attacks after his return, and he missed the excitement of the military. He raced cars and motorcycles to slake his thirst for adventure and even worked as a rodeo clown.

A month after his return, Duncan started at the railroad

where his father worked. They were long hours, he said, but for good wages and a good retirement. Lots of veterans worked there, too, so it was a close-knit community.

He received his final discharge papers in 1980, but tried to re-enlist during Desert Storm. The recruiter sent him home, he said, since he had done too much already.

In 1972, he brought his wife here for a visit to introduce her to his northwest Kansas family, and she decided she wanted to return to the area after the couple retired. Duncan had spent summers in the area as a teen.

Her goal was realized after Duncan retired from the railroad in 2005. The couple purchased property in the Levant area and relocated.

Duncan said he feels lucky to be alive today: he lost nine helicopters in Vietnam, was wounded six times and his base camp was overrun four times in one year.

He still seeks adrenaline rush, he laughed, but "I'm too old to do anything about it now."

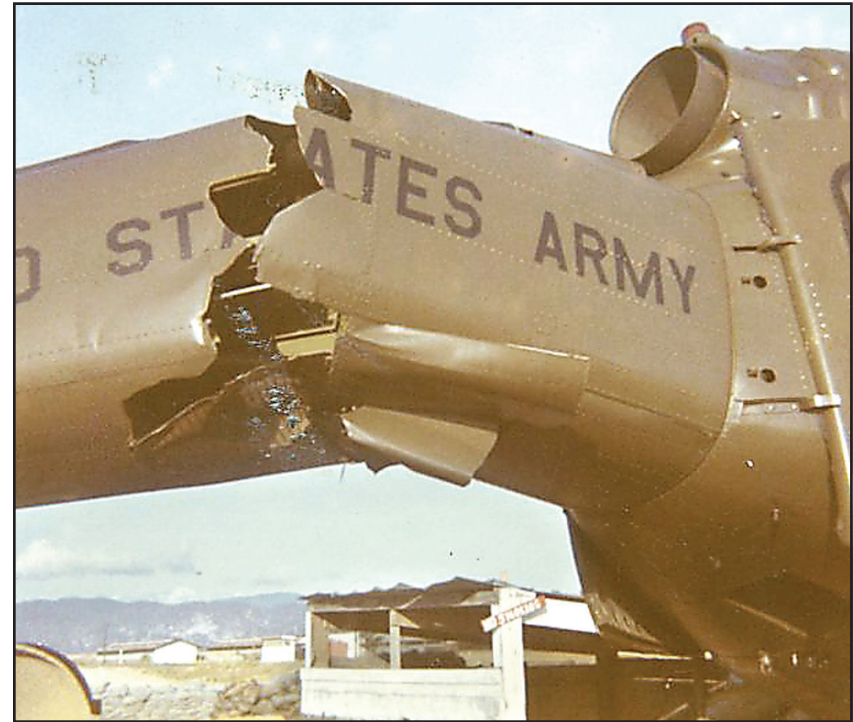
He said he goes out of his way to thank military members for their service.

"That's something I didn't get," he said.

A nephew he helped raise is now a colonel in charge of maintenance at a military base, and Duncan said he is very proud of his nephew's service.

Duncan wouldn't call himself a hero, though.

"The heroes are in Arlington," he said. "Those are the boys who didn't come home."



Jack has kept this photo as a souvenir of the many times his helicopters crashed while in Vietnam.

He visited Arlington on a trip to Washington, D.C., and also went to see the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Finding many of his friends' names on one panel, he said, he sat down and "cried like a baby."

Vietnam "was an experience that I'll never want to forget," he said, "but also something I don't want to remember."

We would simply like to say,

Thank you

to all the men and women that have served this country, both at home and overseas.



ADAMS BANK & TRUST

Five Generations Family Owned and Operated