

# Vets Restore Vietnam-Era ‘Ugly Angel’



[ By LCpl. Randall A. Clinton, MCAS New River ]

**DURING THE EARLY 1960S**, when Marines needed transportation to or from combat zones, they didn't call in MV-22s. For Marines on the frontlines in Vietnam, their savior was the UH-34D, ancestor of the CH-46E and the MV-22.

At the March stand-up ceremony for Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron-263, the first operational MV-22 Osprey squadron, Marines from the Marine

Medium Helicopter Squadron-361 Veterans Association displayed a piece of the squadron's past, a static display of a fully restored, operational UH-34D.

The UH-34D was flown by HMM-361 along with other Marine squadrons in Vietnam. While it wasn't the most beautiful helicopter, it got the job done, bringing Marines back from the front, earning the nickname "Ugly Angel."

As a crew chief on medical evacuation missions in Vietnam, Frank Flag saw first-

hand how important the helicopter was.

"You're going in and getting Marines who need medical attention," Flag said. "We could get them to a hospital in 15 minutes; anywhere they were it was only 15 minutes to a hospital," he said.

While he understood the risk of his job, he accepted it. "You can get a Marine to do stuff that's dangerous, but you can't get them to do things that are boring," he said.

The impact of the helicopter and how it helped save the lives of so many Marines compelled the members of the HMM-361 Veterans Association to build a fully operational UH-34D helicopter.

More than 50 corporate sponsors, including the Marine Corps League, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legions have aided the restoration of the UH-34D from a pile of scrap in a Cochise, AZ, junkyard to a fully operational piece of history. The project was finished 13 November 2005.

The HMM-361 Veterans Association (631-827-5526; [www.34Restoration.org](http://www.34Restoration.org)) relies on donations to support its mission of traveling the country to display its UH-34D. Send donations to the Marine Helicopter Squadron-361 Veterans Association, P.O. Box 429, Cutchogue, NY 11935.