



BAN ME THUOT BARB

Feb 97



155 AHC REUNION IS GREAT SUCCESS

If you weren't at the 155 AHC reunion held over Veterans' Day weekend in Arlington, VA and Washington, DC, you missed the best company party never interrupted by 122mm rockets. Our gathering was a tremendous success, as many of the nearly 60 attendees saw each other for the first time in 25+ years. Dean Owen came all the way from Fairbanks - thanks Stagecoach 6. A great time was had by all!

A highlight of the festivities was "Major" Owen's presentation of the Purple Heart to Johnny Gann. Seems that through some bureaucratic snafu (remember REMF's*?), Johnny just never did get his "Heart." After all these years, it was a touching ceremony, with many a misty eye in the crowd - but not for long. In his closing remarks, Six remarked that some things never change: Johnny sure could use a haircut, and his sneakers were definitely not spit-shined!

The weather gods smiled on us for most of the weekend. Many of our group visited the Smithsonian museums, the Wall, and other Washington sites, and we sampled several area restaurants. Lots of stuff to see and do. But the evening get-togethers were the best of all. Many, many handshakes and hugs, and lots of "Do you remember when . . .?" At least two pilot/crew chief pairs got to talk for the first time since the crew chiefs were wounded (separately), and last seen being loaded into Dustoff ships to start the long trek home.

Another highlight was being able to look at the pictures and slides (and even a movie) that some brought. Ah, we were all so young and so thin and had hair! One wife was heard to comment, "You all looked alike." Another special thanks to those of you who brought pictures. Those who didn't, start digging them out for the next time.

If you weren't there, shame on you! (We have pictures of many of you.) For sure, your ears should have been burning because we talked about you - Tom, Craig, Cecil, Keith, Jim, Dennis, etc, etc. I can't guarantee that everything we said about you was totally truthful, & it certainly wasn't totally complimentary - so you'd best make plans now to attend the next gathering to defend your honor (& help impinge on that of those who don't show).

Of course, a few war stories were told. The best PG-rated anecdote came from Falcon H.C. "Nook" Watters. It seems that when Nook and Bob Nickle were short-timers, the Falcon pilots built a new bunker behind their hootch. As the final step, the sandbags and roof from the old bunker were used to finish the new bunker. As Nook told it, he and Nickle had been celebrating their shortness for several hours when the mortar attack came late one night. Out of habit they ran to the old bunker - drinks in hand - and continued to toast their shortness as the

mortars rained down. After a couple of minutes Bob looked up and, seeing flares in the open sky overhead, muttered, "Damn, Nook, somebody stole our sandbags!"

Some of the stories got us talking, and wanting to know more about:

- 1) the B-50 mission (May 69) when 392 went down across the border;
- 2) the night resupply to LZ Kate (Nov 69);
- 3) who threw the CS grenade into the officers club during Major

Luisi's banquet for the battalion commander?

If you took part or have any knowledge of these, let us know.

Finally, special, **VERY** special thanks go out to Mary & Tom Mullen and Mary & Earl Baldwin, who made it all possible. Those four have put forth an incredible effort (to say nothing of money) over the past 2 or 3 years to find us and get some of us together again. At one point I asked Earl how much the reunion had cost, and he told me I didn't want to know. We passed the hat, & I hope collected enough to let them at least make their mortgage payments - but we all owe them, big time! Next time you see them, hug the Marys & thank their lugs (or, if you're so inclined, hug the lugs, or whatever). Short of an organ transplant, I'm not sure we can ever really thank them enough.

Les Davison

THE TEACHINGS OF CHAIRMAN ORRIN

This first issue of the Ban Me Thuot Barb marks the first newsletter of the newly formed 155th AHC Association. The association is the dream of Mary & Tom Mullen and Mary & Earl Baldwin, and they put their hearts, lives, and money into making it a reality. I am going to speak for the association in saying a very heart-felt "THANK YOU!"

Finding words to describe the LZ-DC experience is next to impossible. You had to be there to experience the excitement, the renewal of old friendships, seeing that guy whom you last saw leaving on a medevac ship and have been wondering "how is he doing?", hearing the war stories, and best of all going to the Wall as a group. It was very moving to stand there as a group and honor our departed brothers.

We were just a small helicopter company way up in the hills, the red-haired stepchild of the beach patrol battalion. Camp Coryell was our residence but we made it our home and that makes us family and those of you who weren't at LZ-DC missed one whale of a family reunion!!!

Somewhere during those festivities, a few of us got together to lay the groundwork for the 155 AHCA. As part of that, the first slate of leaders was largely selected by committee. That lineup is as follows:

President: Orrin Messinger
V-P: Ken Donovan
Treasurer: Jeff Schrader
Newsletter: Les Davison
LZ-Ft. Worth Coordinators: Bob Gardner & John Grow

I am very proud to be the first association president of such a great group of guys!! We still need a secretary and a chaplin: any volunteers?? The Two Marys and Earl and Tom have agreed to serve as "Members at Large," pitching in where they see a need. As I write this, I'm already sensing some cyclic feedback. You're thinking, "Geez, what a bunch of bozos! How do we get rid of those losers?" Our plan is to hold an election in Ft. Worth to throw the bums out (or whatever), so please be thinking who you would like to have lead the association from there.

We only have two real goals for the next two years. The first is to reach the many former 155ers that have not yet been found. If you have any old orders with a social security number of anyone not yet on the roster please send copies to Tom and he will take it from there. The second goal is two part: 1) to make LZ-Fort Worth a very memorable experience, and 2) to get as many people there as humanly possible.

Money, money, money. Sorry, I put this off as long as I could, but I'm almost out of space so here it is. We're asking everyone to contribute \$25 per year to help cover the costs of the newsletter, the revised directory, and start-up costs for LZ-Fort Worth. If I can get my stupid computer to draw up the clip art images of our unit patches, you will also have an outstanding membership card in the near future.

We are looking forward to seeing you, YES YOU!! at LZ-Fort Worth. You will be glad you came, I guarantee it.

Sincerely, *Orrin Messinger*

IN MEMORIAM

Sadly we report the passing of Ernie Plummer on 26 Dec 96. Ernie was a 2nd Platoon door gunner in 69-70. Those of us who knew Ernie remember him as quiet, with a quick smile for his friends - and, perhaps the ultimate compliment - we knew we could depend on Ernie if it got rough. Some of you may have been there when it did get rough, on 23 May 69 when 392 was shot down "across the fence." Ernie was on another lift ship, and he volunteered to go down to help get the wounded out. As a result of his actions that day, Ernie was awarded the Silver Star. Ernie was a good man, and a good friend - we'll miss him. He is survived by three children. I'm sure the family would appreciate cards; 519 Collet Street, Danville, IL 61832.

ASH & TRASH

WHAT WE ARE & WHAT WE AIN'T. The new 155 AHCA is most definitely NOT just a pilots group, NOR is it just for fliers (front seat or back). It's for ALL the men (sorry ladies, we're talking ancient history here) who made the 155 AHC a great organization. Whether you were the

strackest company clerk or the best crew chief who ever snipped safety wire, or the cluelessest Wobbly One or the lowest private who got busted every time he made E-2 - if you were 155, we want your ass(ets). We're all Ban Me Thuot brothers, and we'd like you to rejoin us now.

Neither is the 155 AHCA not just a bunch of geezers reliving the glory days of our youth (but if that's your bag, see Mike Stark). Well, gosh, golly, yes - we may tell a war story now and then. But more, we're about friendship: old friendships renewed, and new ones joined - the 155 AHC is our common bond. And the ladies are most definitely a part of that. Many wives, friends, daughters, hangers-on, etc. came to the November reunion, and I think had a good time - and we're glad they came!!! It's much more fun to share. Ladies, we want YOU, too.

COMPANY ROSTER. The roster continues to grow as we find more of our guys all the time. We'll try to send an updated roster soon. (If you haven't gotten a roster, contact any 155 AHCA occifer.) In the meantime, PLEASE send copies of old orders to Earl or Tom, they can use the social security numbers to search out more former 155ers.

FALCON GUNSHIP FOUND. One of our old Charlie models, #551 (circa 1967) is at the National Military Heritage Museum in St. Joseph, MO. We're told it's in pretty sad shape, but the museum hopes someday to restore it. We'll try to find out more & pass it along. Does anybody out there remember flying 551?

PATCHES. Ken Acker had some Stagecoach & Falcon patches made, & I'm told they're well done. If you want some, send \$5 per patch to cover his costs. 33 Blue Jay Way, Litchfield, NH 03052, or online at "kenacker@aol.com". (Ken expects to be out of the country in April, so get to him early or be patient.)

NEWSLETTER. We're going to try to put this thing out about quarterly. (Note for RLO's, lifers, and E-6 and above: that's 4 times each year.) This first issue tries for some news, some humor, some comraderriere - but it's your newsletter, let us know what you want it to be. And, I certainly don't plan to write the whole darn thing. PLEASE tell us your 155 stories - whether messy paper cuts in the head shed, or hot missions into impossible LZ's, or guard duty shenanigans while pilots slept soundly on our featherbeds, every #%*&!! night - and I just know some of you on KP duty hawked prodigious amounts of lungers into the water buffalo gravy in the officers mess! The statute of limitations has run, so let's hear about it. Also, recent goings-on, get-togethers, "just had a call from _____ who I hadn't seen in 27 years . . .", whatever. Send in a blurb, we'll clean it up & consider printing it for the masses. I beseech you . . .

155 CONTACT. If you're like me, you're probably a bit hesitant about contacting old friends - even if they were your **best** friends - after all these years. **155 Contact** is your excuse. In accordance with the authority vested in me from Chairman Orrin, I hereby order you to drop a postcard to a different 155 friend just once each month (more are optional, but encouraged). Put **155 CONTACT** on the top of the card, and say I made you do it. I'll bet you will enjoy the responses. Try it.

THE NEXT REUNION. It's very tentative, but there's a good chance it will be in or near Ft. Worth over the October Columbus Day Weekend, 1998 - that's NEXT YEAR. Let us know if that works (or not) for you.

155 AHCA POLITICAL SCANDAL? The inside scoop on how Chairman Orrin got to be Chairman? I have it on good information that during the organizational meeting, Orrin was the first one to excuse himself to visit the facilities. As chance would have it, the group voted to select a new president during his brief absence. Mere coincidence?

155 AHCA DUES. We're asking everybody to chip in \$25 per year to cover expenses. Please send checks to Jeff. If that's too much, send what you can. We'll give you an accounting at the next reunion.

WE'RE ON-LINE! Earl's got us on the Web, he says it's just a start. Check it out at "www.vhfcn.org". And, please send e-mail addresses to Earl, so we can minimize mail costs for the newsletter.

FYI for FLIERS. VHPA is the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Ass'n (pilots only). VHCMA is the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Ass'n & VHFCN is the on-line Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crew Network: both are open to all fliers (pilots, crew chiefs, gunners, observers, medics, PJ's - etc). VHFCN has an evening on-line chat session. If you're looking for long lost non-155 friends, they may be on the roster of one of those orgs. For more info, contact: VHPA - Orrin or Les; VHCMA - Tom; VHFCN - Earl.

*REMF - Rear Echelon Mellow Fellow

Orrin Messinger Ken Donovan Jeff Schrader

Earl Baldwin Tom Mullen Les Davison

