



BAN ME THUOT BARB

Remembering the 155 Assault Helicopter Company - Sortie #8 - Nov 98



VETERANS DAY I REMEMBER

Terry Chip Welty was born on January 12, 1948 (my same birthday) in the same hospital that I was born at, just a few hours apart. We grew up together several miles distant from each other. We went to grade school and high school together and formed a firm friendship through the years. Upon graduation, Terry and I talked of joining the Army under the buddy system. We both wanted to be Army Aviators and fly Hueys. For whatever reasons, that I can't even remember now, I decided to take the delayed entry program for a year, but Terry went on in. He tried to make it through flight training but scrubbed out. The next best thing to flying one was to ride in one, so Terry became a door gunner after getting sent over to Vietnam. About the time he arrived in country I was taking basic at Ft. Polk, LA. Terry corresponded with me while I was in flight school. He calculated that I would be sent over about the time his year was up. He told me that he intended to extend so that we could finally fly together, I being his pilot with him protecting my ass from the back seat. We would finally fulfill our dream of flying together as we had talked about so often those years before. I wrote and told him to come home. "Do not extend," were my words, but Terry extended for another six months. The day I landed at Tan Son Nhut, September 3, 1968, Terry crashed and burned on a routine mission. They suspected hostile fire. I never got a chance to fly with him. Maybe someday, I tell myself, we can fly together as we talked about as boys. Now I am an old man, I envy him sometimes of staying young forever. I feel the cold wall next to his name each time I visit the Wall and have a talk with him, until tears fill my eyes. Then I have to walk away . . . but I know he has heard me. Why did I live, and he die? I have carried this forever in my heart and will to my last day. To all vets, living and gone, I will never forget!

Jeff Schrader, Falcon 7, '68-'69

BAN ME THUOT HOLIDAYS, 1966

We had just been assigned a new Mess Sergeant (my apologies, I wish I could remember names better), who hadn't hit it off so well at Battalion HQ where he was previously assigned. But I do remember the quality of our food improved immensely when he arrived, as he did have a knack for food preparation. Soon after he arrived, I was approached by a group of persons (including the new Mess Sergeant) who had a plan to " . . improve company morale," or so they said. Word around the compound was that the 155th was scheduled to pick up eight new Charlie model Huey gunships in Saigon in the near future, and the group knew it. The new Mess Sergeant stepped up and said, "Sir, if you get me to Cam Ranh, I can get us all the turkey and trimmings for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners." With some trepidation, I took him up on his offer.

I instructed Jim Hayes, the Operations Officer, to have the flight leader of the group headed to Saigon drop the sergeant off at Cam Ranh Bay. Then, on the way back, each aircraft would stop at Cam Ranh for refueling - and to pick up the sergeant and anything he might have been able to round up. By the time our guys left for Saigon, the whole company knew about the flight, and about the hoped-for cargo. We knew when our guys had departed Cam Ranh, but didn't know their route. Everyone was on pins and needles, waiting for the flight to arrive. It was already dark, and a thin overcast had set in. And I was concerned, because I knew that a few of the pilots were FNG's. They might have been on their first mission as pilots, and I'm not even sure they had copilots. Finally, in the southern sky, we could make out the blinking lights of all the helicopters in trail formation. When they landed, the whole company was in the Corral to meet them - and to see if the Mess Sergeant had come through.

The answer came soon enough. Over the whine of the cooling turbine engines, the sergeant's voice boomed, "Get the ice cream in the freezer, NOW!!! The turkeys can wait." Just then, rank was irrelevant. Everyone pitched in to carry frozen foodstuffs to the freezer. The 155th would have it's Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

Bo Atkinson, Stagecoach 6, '66-'67

DOES ANYBODY REMEMBER . . . ?

During the summer/fall of 1966, I was the avionics on-site repairman at the Oasis. One day we were flying back to Pleiku as a flight of 5 slicks, I was sleeping on the jump seat if I remember, and I heard someone say that they saw some triple-A 12.7 mms on the ground near the edge of a clearing. We swooped down and picked up three brand new tripod-mounted weapons, several full cans of ammo, and about a half dozen packs. The pack I got still had warm soup in the mess kit, a complete North Vietnamese khaki uniform, a plastic poncho, and a pair of tennis shoes along with personal toiletry stuff. I really thought I had a prize to bring home, but S2 at Holloway (Pleiku) took all the packs and guns - probably for their own souvenirs - telling us we would get them back. Never did? As we lifted out of the zone, here came Charlie with his small arms popping. Only one ship got a superficial hit. Charlie was like any GI, try to catch some ZZZ's whenever possible.

David Smith, 208th Signal Detachment

CAN YOU HELP US FIND . . . WO1 **Howard Gifford**, Falcon peter pilot wounded in spring, '69 (we tried to name him "Gibson" last issue, thanks to Harold "Ben" Gay for setting us straight); **Jim Hayes**, Operations Officer, '66; SP/4 **Richard Skinner**, Falcon C/E, '65; Capt. **John Geurin**, '65. If you have any idea as to the whereabouts of any of these guys, please contact any 155 AHCA occifer.

MAIL CALL - sharing commo from our friends:

David Churilla - Great job on the Home Page. I really appreciate the hard work, dedication, and unit loyalty. I've often thought to myself how lucky I was to get assigned to the 155th. I got shot at a lot, just like we all did, but everybody knew we could depend 100% on our guys when it got rough. *Stagecoach 26, '69 - '70.*

Jack Ross - Falcon crew chief, Jun '65 - Jun '66, and Falcon platoon sergeant, Jan '66 - Jun '66.

Keith Lane - My son is an Apache pilot in Korea, we have some great "arguments" about who's better, the young guy just starting out or the old reservist with tons of hours in type. Of course, nobody ever wins those arguments - but I just know that youth and vitality can't begin to match age, experience, and deceit.

William C. Bruce - This is my first visit to the Home Page, but I assure you there will be many more. Reading over the rosters brings back a lot of faces I have not thought of in years. But there is not a day goes by that I don't think of "Stagecoach." A trivial point to some, but very important to me is the fact that Mike Coryell was my roommate at Wolters, and we were on the same orders to go home when he went down. (Just a bit of survivor's guilt there.) Anyway, keep up the good work, I'll try to dig up some pics and memories to send in.

Stagecoach/Wrecker, '65 - '66

Larry Ingram - Apr '69 to Apr '70. Great job, folks. Keep up the good work.

Harold "Ben" Gay - I live near Williamsburg, VA, if anyone gets close give me a call and I'll pop smoke.

Orrin Messinger - The last "Barb" sure brought back memories of the company party/rocket attack for me. I was on the boresight pad with Craig Mosher and his bird when the first rocket came in. I sprinted the length of the Corral and hopped in a bird, Captain Grasshopper (Jim Cunningham) got in the left seat. The gunship picture in the Hawk might have been us taking to the air that day.

Robert Moore - I just found this site and cannot believe what I've found. I was with the 155th from Apr '69 to Oct '70 as a Prop & Rotor Repair-man. This Home Page just blew me away!

Wally Foster - I can't tell you how good it was to see friends from Ban Me Thuot at the Fort Worth reunion.



Tastes terrible!! More filling!!
Bob Slate, Stagecoach door gunner.

David Smith - I was a SP5 in the 208th Signal Detachment in Ban Me Thuot from Jan 1966 to Jan 1967.

Captain Johnson was our Detachment CO until Captain Kervahn came. Major Parlas was the 155th CO, then Major Atkinson took over. I enjoyed the memories on the Home Page by LTC Atkinson, I remember many of those events personally. Doc Paulk is in private practice in Enterprise, AL.

Neill McDonald - I was injured in the rotor meshing crash in the corral in early March of '68. Darn, we sure were young back then.

Chuck Markham - Just got back from the mini-reunion in Canton, OH. Great people, great food and lots of liquid refreshments. The videos and slides invoked a lot of forgotten things for me. It was a great time, thanks.

Harry Martin - GREAT PAGE!!!! Hi guys, I've been receiving the *Barb* & just found out about this. I was Stagecoach 19 in '68-'69. Right now I'm working in sunny but hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico with Rocky Mt. Helicopters as an EMS pilot. I'd really like to get in touch with my crew chief [sorry, CRS] who helped me run the O-club - after we rebuilt it from numerous mortar & 122 hits in '69.

GOOD VIBRATIONS

I was reading Bo Atkinson's accounts (on the Home Page) of his adventures as the CO. I remember that during my tour with the 155th we had a .50 Cal that we used on the flare ship during night standby. The tripod was mounted on a piece of plywood that could be quickly inserted into the ship. Some of us were very uneasy about using it. We had been told many stories about how the gun would explode if the head spacing was not correct. I flew only one mission with it. As I recall, we had approximately 125 rounds of ammo and 20 flares. We were scrambled one night in Sep '68 when an ARVN outpost just west of BMT was attacked. We climbed to 2000' AGL and flew to the compound. Sure enough, we were able to see where the mortar fire and tracers were coming from, and I cleared the door gunner to fire. I don't think that anyone could have anticipated the noise and vibrations that followed! I just about jumped out of my skin, and I'm sure that the aircraft performed some strange gyrations. Despite that, our fire was accurate and "Charles" decided not to try us again that night. We never did get a damage report, but I wouldn't have wanted to be on the receiving end.

Jim Koch, Stagecoach 13, '68

Editor's note: In '69, we used a "Starlight" ship, an H model configured for night missions. It sported a bank of C-123 landing lights and a .50 cal machine gun, besides the two M-60 door gunners. I can't recall if it carried flares, too, or if we had a separate flare ship. Then in '70 we stopped using the Starlight ship, perhaps due to the vibration of the .50. Can anyone tell us more about Starlight ops?

FLASHBACK 1967: CRASH RESCUE TEAM SAVES VILLAGES

BAN ME THUOT - Twice during month of February, '67, the men of the 155th AHC's crash rescue section at Camp Coryell have been called upon to combat large brush fires threatening the lives and property of the civilian population here. During the dry season, the tall grass covering thousands of acres on the Central Plateau becomes tinder dry, presenting a real danger to thatched homes and grain supplies of the Montagnards scattered throughout the plain.

Many times the tiny villages, most of them inaccessible except by foot path and all without means of fire protection, are seriously damaged by the flash fires which develop spontaneously and rage for days, pushed by the fierce winds across the arid land. But the people at Ban Me Thuot are rapidly learning that they need no longer fear the fires. Commanded by Major Robert Johnson of Fayetteville, NC, the 155th crash rescue section boasts a shiny red fire truck with a 500 gallon water capacity, three hardworking, enthusiastic firemen, and five equally capable Vietnamese assistants.

On February 14th, the team was called to a fire near a Montagnard village east of the city. When they arrived, they found that the villagers had already evacuated their personal belongings. Coaxing the villagers to action, the men from the 155 pitched into the flames and had doused the fire within fifteen minutes. Within the next hour, the grateful villagers were back safely in their homes and the fire squad back at the compound. On February 23, a more serious fire, raging out of control 1/4 mile north of Ban Me Thuot, threatened to leap into the city itself. Spread along a two mile front, the flames were fanned by a 20 knot wind. A group of Montagnard houses in the path of the blaze was already on fire when the crash rescue team arrived. Seven volunteers from the compound's security force led by Sgt. Garrison Thomas of Gordon, GA, rushed to the aid of the villagers. Using only branches and other implements

they found in the village, the volunteer force fought alongside the Montagnards, climbing onto the thatched roofs to get at the flames where they had gained a foothold. Meanwhile, the crash rescue squad brought the fire truck on line with the heart of the fire. Plunging into grass towering above their heads, with flames crackling all around them, they methodically attacked. Four hours later, every man was suffering from heat exposure and smoke inhalation, but the fire had been stopped short of the city.

Not one life was lost in the holocaust. No injuries were sustained and only a minimum amount of property damaged. Each deserving man participating in the fire fight received a hearty handshake from the villagers. By extending a helping hand, gaining the confidence and friendship of the local population, our men in Ban Me Thuot are proving once again that the war in Vietnam is not being won by "beans and bullets" alone.

Reprinted from DRAGON NEWS, dated 25 March 1967.

STAGECOACH 6 SEZ . . .

It was a great honor for me to command the 155th Assault Helicopter Company from June to December, 1969, and in June 1998, I had the good fortune to be elected President of the 155th AHC Association during the reunion at LZ FTW. It is not often that a person has a second opportunity to work with soldiers as fine as those who served in the 155th. Whether you were slick drivers, gunnies, crew chiefs, door gunners, mechanics, cooks, clerks, security folks - whatever, all of you were there doing the very best you could. That is what made the 155th such a great company. Those same folks, with the same attitude (although a bit older and wiser) are what makes the 155th AHC Association such a fine organization today.

The main purpose of this note is to encourage all former members of the 155th to plan to attend Reunion 2000. A decision was made to change the meeting dates to coincide with Veterans Day, November 11, 2000. The Site Selection Committee discussed various locations, and selected Las Vegas, NV as the next LZ. If you have attended one of the previous Reunions you know what a great experience it is. If you have not, you have an extra special event to look forward to. I have attended the first two reunions, and what a fantastic experience! It was a pleasure to see familiar faces and renew friendships and make new acquaintances with former members of the Stagecoaches and Falcons. Additionally it was wonderful to meet the families of many of the attendees. My wife Jan has heard me talk so much about the 155th, the Reunions and the wonderful people involved, she is eagerly looking forward to coming to LZ Vegas. So please, talk to the folks you have kept in touch and encourage them to attend. If each of us can get one new Falcon or Stagecoach to attend, it will be a huge success. **If you want to have a great time, keep a few days around November 11, 2000 open, and plan to spend them in Las Vegas, with some of the finest people in the world.**

Dean Owen, Stagecoach 6

HOW NOT TO FLY - AND SHOOT - IN FORMATION

At one time or another, most every flight crew had a close call. As a new, inexperienced aircraft commander, this mission was about as close as I ever came to death by heart attack. Please keep in mind, I was only 20 years old at the time this happened.

We were conducting combat assault operations in Happy Valley. On this particular assault, the bad guys were busily engaged in shooting the place up as we approached the LZ. We were in a staggered right formation, I was flying Chalk 3 in the group. We took a lot of small arms fire from the left side, but made it into the LZ okay. For some reason, Chalk 2 was late taking off and did a rapid cyclic climb into the formation. At about the time he was even with the formation, all of a sudden the ship rolled over on its right side about 90 degrees. All I could think was that the cockpit had been wiped out and both pilots were dead and I was expecting a big fireball at any moment.

Meanwhile, in our aircraft, I was yelling at the door gunner to cease fire. (This was before the slicks got gun mounts, and everybody flew with free guns.) My next question to the door gunner was, "You didn't shoot those guys down, did you?" His reply: "Well, sir, they kept flying right into my tracers." At that point I almost gave the aircraft to the peter pilot, because I feared I might have a heart attack!!!

I would later learn that there had been a mix-up with the controls between the AC and peter pilot - and no one had the controls. Needless to say, this was an interesting day for a new AC. Last but not least, I seem to remember that the Maintenance Officer was not too happy with the crew of Chalk 2 for having to pull the guts out of the aircraft and over-stressing just about everything on it.

Ken Donovan, Stagecoach 28, '68 - '69

GUNSHIP MISSION - SALVO AND RESCUE

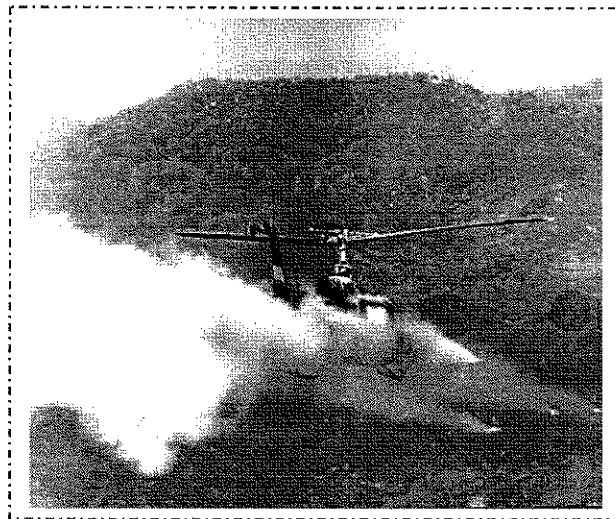
During mid-morning of October 22, 1965, four UH-1B crews were called into Base Operations at Camp Holloway to provide escort support for a VNAF CH-34. We were told that the CH-34 was to drop off supplies at a base camp in the Plei Me area, and then attempt to extract a downed US Air Force A-1E Skyraider pilot a short distance from the camp.

By the time we had been briefed, the VNAF CH-34 was already leaving Camp Holloway without us. We scrambled our four B model gunships and took off in hot pursuit. Attempts on all known frequencies to contact the CH-34 were unsuccessful, and we watched the VNAF ship make a spiral approach to the camp. Then we watched it lift off, and immediately depart the area without making any attempt to extract the downed pilot. About that time, a USAF L-19 spotter plane contacted us and told us he knew the approximate location of the downed pilot. It would have been an additional thirty to forty-five minutes to have one of our own UH-1D's come out to attempt the extraction. Since I was flying the UH-1B that was armed with banks of rockets (24 on each side), I volunteered to salvo the rockets and make the extraction attempt.

The L-19 led us to the area and advised us to change to the emergency frequency. The pilot had an emergency hand-held transmitter/receiver, which he used to communicate with us. After the L-19 made an initial pass to indicate the vicinity of the downed pilot, we contacted the A-1E pilot on the ground and made our approach. We landed in the closest open spot which would hold our ship - and it was a tight one - but the downed pilot was able to run to our helicopter. When he got close, the crew chief (SP/4 Richard Skinner) pulled him on board and shouted for us to take off. With a call to the other three gunships covering us, we took off and returned to Pleiku without further incident.

We never received any fire on this mission, even though we were led to believe that there was a .50 cal machine gun emplacement within range of the entire pick-up operation. I never did get a chance to talk to the pilot, or even get his name. He was taken from the aircraft immediately upon touchdown and rushed to the medical facility.

Just another day flying gunships in Vietnam.



A Falcon "Hog" brings smoke. Four 2.75" Folding-Fin Aerial Rockets can be seen.
Another great picture sent in by Art Rizza.

Edward T. Pledger, Falcon

ANOTHER PILOT RESCUE

October '65 seems to have been Company A's month to rescue A-1E pilots. There's this from the official company history for 1965 (compiled by Capt. John Geurin):

"Thirteen troop carriers and six armed helicopters from Company A were flying from Tuy Hoa North, taking part in an operation to secure the fall rice harvest. At 1130 hours on 12 October '65, a "MAYDAY" call was received from an A-1E which had been flying air cover for the operation. The A-1E had suffered elevator control failure on a strafing run and the pilot was forced to bail out at sea. A Stagecoach UH-1D piloted by Capt. Leonard L. Boswell and CWO Charles Gibson rescued the pilot from an extremely rough sea."

ASH & TRASH

THE END OF THE 155TH A future issue of the *Barb* is likely to tell about closing down the company. If you were there during late '70 and early '71 when that happened, we'd like to hear your memories and share them with others. Please contact co-editor Bo Atkinson.

KA-CHING! KA-CHING! KA-CHING! Stagecoaches West! And Falcons, too! The next reunion will be two years from now, November 10 & 11, 2000, in Las Vegas, Nevada. As Tom Mullen remarked, "Air fares are cheap, hotels are cheap, food is cheap, entertainment is cheap - it sounds like us!" Don't be put off by the "Sin City" tag; several people mentioned that Las Vegas is much more family-oriented than it used to be. Word on the street is that Mark Cornwall, Bud Henry, Dennis La Joie, John Grow, Tony Giordano, Curt Seiler, Norm Simpson, and Al Arredondo are among those likely to appear as Elvis impersonators. We're looking for someone to organize the event. If you'd like to help out, contact any 155 officer.

1999 VHPA REUNION: LZ NASHVILLE Several guys have mentioned that they're planning to attend the Nashville reunion over the 4th of July weekend. If you'll be going, please let John Grow or either editor know, and we'll try to link up all the 155 people who will be there.

155 ON-LINE NEWS (NOTE: Webmaster Earl has a new e-mail address, see below.) I know a bunch of you guys don't have a computer, and don't have a clue what all this "on line" stuff is all about. Well, you're really missing the boat because "www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Quarters/1517" has a wealth of info about the company, some great pictures, past newsletters, and recent messages from 155 friends. If you don't have a computer, I'll bet your kids or grandkids or a neighbor or a good friend do. Next time you're over visiting, ask them to fire up their machine and check out the site. You will not be disappointed!

WARNING! WARNING! *The previous message may be hazardous to your relationship! We've had one report of a 155 guy who was visiting his daughter and her family. During the visit, she sat him down at her computer and logged him on the Home Page, and then he got caught up in all the neat stuff and couldn't pull himself away. Dinner came and went without him, and it was well past time to leave. As we heard it, his little honey's exact (almost) words were, "If you don't get your assets down here right now, you're cut off for the rest of the month."*

MIDWESTERN HUEYS The Prairie Aviation Museum at the Bloomington-Normal (Illinois) airport recently acquired a surplus UH-1 for display; from the newspaper photo, it appears to be an H model. Also in Illinois, the Air Classics Museum at Aurora Municipal Airport has three Hueys. Plans are to outfit one with headphones and tapes of Vietnam radio commo, to allow visitors to listen in. The museum is also seeking funding for a major memorial to the Huey. But best of all, the Firelands Museum in Norwalk, OH, has a static display Cobra and **two flyable UH-1H's!** The museum often flies one or both to airshows around the midwest, and rides can be had for a price. 155 guy Steve Herbruck sometimes pilots for the museum, and Stagecoach C/E Danny Lauer is a "wrench" for the group. In fact, for the Lauers it's a family affair; wife Pam is training to be a crew chief for the museum.

SWEAT & SANDBAGS - FROM THE EDITOR'S BUNKER Many, many thanks to Pat and Jeff Schrader for hosting a great Columbus Day mini-reunion at their home in Canton, OH. Besides the usual cast of characters, special thanks to brand new 155 AHCA members Chuck Markham and Joe and Kathy Schmitt for dropping by. It's always a highlight to watch "new" people be welcomed back into the fold of the 155th. Happy holidays to all!

COVER PHOTO Falcon Christmas card, '69. Does anyone know who drew this, and when?

155 AHCA officers are:

Dean Owen, Pres.	Al Arredondo, VP	Jeff Schrader, Treasurer	Bob Alberts, Historian	Tom Love, Sgt-at-Arms
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Earl Baldwin, Net Guy
15 Bedford Lane

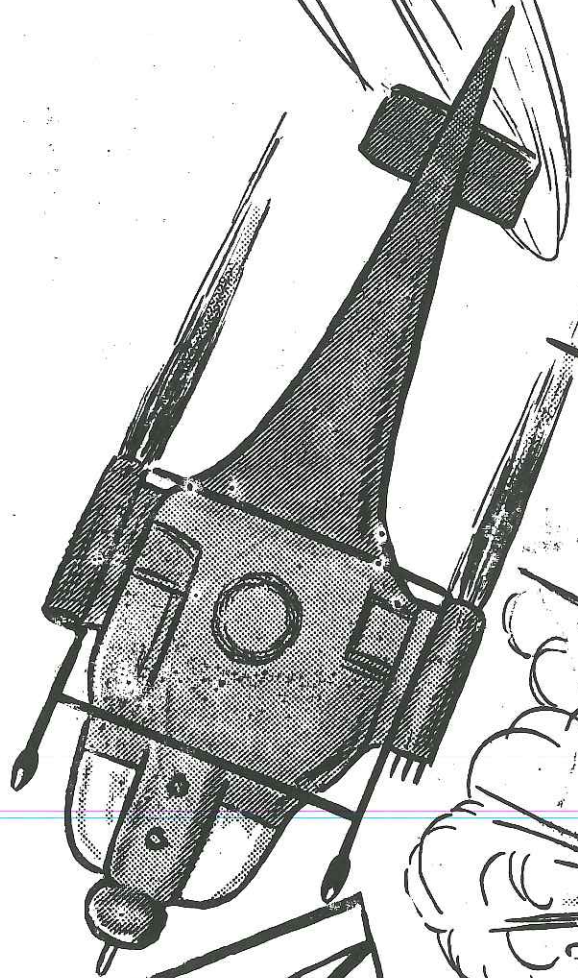
Tom Mullen, Aide-de-camp
610 Louisiana Ave

Bo Atkinson, Newsletter
4240 North West

Les Davison, Newsletter
12000 1st Ave

The Hit Boys

CHRISTMAS



MY BORN

...A



