



BAN ME THUOT BARB

Remembering the 155 Assault Helicopter Company - Sortie #16 - Dec 00

THE STORY OF KIM DIN - PART II

Kim Din was a joy to watch; her rosy cheeks shined and her facial expressions were so playful when she was happy. She had deep corrugated furrows between her eyebrows when quizzical and questioning, which happened frequently trying to understand our English. When exasperated, her cheeks puffed out like she was blowing a tuba. When she laughed, her crossed and locked eyes danced independent of each other and the corners of her eyes wrinkled up tightly like she was squinting. Her smile creased her whole face when she was pleased. When she laughed out loud, she shook all over.

And she laughed a lot. She and her friend "Sparkle," so named by then-LT Tony DiBenedetto of New Jersey, were always seen working playfully as a pair. They helped each other to understand our conversation, and responded in their broken English, frequently employing the universal "number one" and "number ten" to signify approval or extreme disapproval. While Kim Din was a little chubby and apparently well endowed by Vietnamese standards, Sparkle was lithe and lively with her own bright smile and cheerful nature. Her movement was as graceful as a ballet dancer. They worked in the mess hall cleaning tables, sweeping floors, and washing dishes. And they served meals in the Officers Club tent. Later, they worked in the quarters tents, cleaning floors and straightening up.

Kim Din and Sparkle were different from all the other girls. Though they were also peasant girls, it was an adventure for them to be thrown into this group of Americans. They tried desperately to understand what was being said to them, and urgently tried to please every request. Kim Din's facial expressions, alternating between surprise, concern, and exasperation, and Sparkle's smile and graceful movement were about the only pleasantries that we could enjoy. The underlying survival theme was felt all the time deep down in our souls. The pilots and crew chiefs and door gunners began to take an adoptive attitude toward Kim Din especially. They began to ask me about her crossed eyes. Why were her eyes so tightly crossed? She was cute as a button already, but wouldn't she be pretty if her eyes were straight? She was just a peasant girl, but she adapted well to this GI environment of kidding and poking fun and playful jibes.

After a few months, helicopter flights to Saigon for supplies, beer, and PX items became routine when we were not deployed on missions. Telephone communications were possible to Tan Son Nhut airbase. At the urging of some of our pilots, I made contact through an old field telephone with the flight surgeon at Tan Son Nhut who came over on the Iwo Jima with us. He promised to find out if any ophthalmologist was available who might possibly help Kim Din's eyes. A few days later he called back to say that a Vietnamese lady doctor, trained in America, was on contract with the U.S. Navy in Saigon. He arranged for us to meet her at a charity hospital in Cholon, the Chinese section of Saigon, if we could get Kim Din down there somehow.

Travel throughout Vietnam was restricted. Papers were necessary from the government for citizens to travel. Kim Din was shy and an inexperienced traveler and would not and could not go without her older sister to chaperone her. They could not afford to travel even if they had been inclined, so good old American ingenuity intervened. I convinced Kim Din and her sister to fly with us in a Huey to Saigon to get her eyes fixed. I warned her she would be patched over both eyes for a week or more after surgery, so her sister would have to lead her around like a blind beggar. Somehow she trusted me and all of us enough to go through with it - after being urged and encouraged by all the guys she had grown to know.

So the adventure began. She and her sister dressed in their best long pants and flowing long slit overskirts (ao dais) and high heels, and got on board the Huey. After a long and exciting flight at low level and high we finally arrived at Tan Son Nhut airbase. By arrangement, the flight surgeon there brought his ambulance out, backed up to the helicopter tightly, and Kim Din and her sister were quickly sneaked under sheets on the gurneys in the back of the ambulance. The siren was turned on and we roared out the gates of the airbase without any inspection by police. The siren was turned off a few blocks away, and we pulled into an alley and quickly unloaded. I hailed a cab, and off we went to Cholon. The Vietnamese lady ophthalmologist met us at the charity hospital, examined Kim Din's eyes, then explained to the sister and Kim Din what she could do. I was asked to scrub and assist at surgery, which I did appreciatively. After the surgery Kim Din and sister stayed overnight in the hospital while I went out bar hopping.

Next day, I caught a cab back to the hospital. I was in uniform for the flight back to Ban Me Thuot, with my .45 on my hip. As I walked toward the hospital entrance, a group of disgruntled old Chinese homeless people formed

a partial circle around me and started grumbling something that sounded unpleasant. I was unsure of their intent, but I looked them in the eye and patted my .45, and they parted so I could walk unimpeded into the hospital. Kim Din's bandages were changed and I was briefed on her continued post-op care by the ophthalmologist. We thanked her, said goodbye, and I sent the sister to hail a cab to pull up close to the hospital door. We took the cab to the same alley near the airbase, disembarked the cab, and as arranged previously, loaded our civilian patient and her chaperone into the ambulance hiding Kim Din and her sister under sheets. As we approached the gate, the siren was turned on again, and we proceeded through the gate passing the Vietnamese police and military guards. We drove straight to the Huey, where we backed up tightly against the door and clandestinely off loaded Kim Din and her sister, hiding them between stacks of beer and PX supplies.

Kim Din had been scared nearly to death before the flight to Saigon. Her crossed eyes got even bigger and more crossed when the day for the flight finally came. She was super excited during the flight and hyperventilated a little as she watched the countryside below. It had been her first flight of any kind ever. Now she was blind with thick patches over both eyes and totally frightened. It took constant reassurance by me and her sister to keep her calmed down. But she trusted us totally, and cooperated wonderfully considering her extreme fear in her blinded state. The flight was uneventful, and finally we landed back at BMT where she finally relaxed and was taken home by her sister. Regularly she was brought back to the 8th Medical Detachment clinic so I could remove her bandages and redress her eyes. In about 10 days the dark black circles around her eyes faded, the swelling subsided, and I could see that her eyes were perfectly aligned. Her vision was excellent in each eye independently. I handed her a mirror. When she opened her straightened eyes and gazed into the mirror, she cried big tears of joy and relief. Her alternating amblyopia which she had from birth was not a hindrance. She of course did not have true stereoscopic vision. The chance for that was lost by age three. But she had darkly beautiful, straight, sparkling, expressive eyes. The whole compound cheered when they saw her with her new straight eyes.

Kim Din was a hero to us. She took a risk to trust strange Americans who wanted to be helpful. She flew in a combat aircraft over hostile terrain without government papers to a far away city she had only heard about. She entrusted her eyes to an unknown surgeon, and endured 10 days of blindness. She had a lot of faith in these Americans. With her eyes straightened, we saw a transformation of her personality. She appeared to have more confidence and pride, and some of us believe she became two inches taller. We stood a little taller, too, for having helped this peasant girl achieve a better life. And I became her idol. I could do no wrong. She saw to it that I was pampered beyond belief. I could no longer scrub my muddy boots. I could no longer make up my bed and tuck in the mosquito netting. When I went to the Officers' Open Mess tent to eat, I was invited in to sit down and my meal was served to me at my table. And boy was I fed! When I bought one of those ubiquitous wardrobes with the light inside to go in my corner of the then-concreted floor tent quarters, my clothes were always hung perfectly straight, clean socks were carefully arranged in the sock drawer, underwear placed neatly in underwear drawer, boots at attention under my cot, and the surfaces of everything neatly dusted.

Thus my life at Ban Me Thuot - after we got settled - was one of luxury by comparison, interspersed periodically with nights of terror as we dove for the slit trenches when mortars were heard. My concrete clinic was eventually completed and equipped with my 91 days-delayed medical supplies. I had x-ray, surgical, and laboratory equipment and a generous pharmacy. I even had a phoropter for examining eyes and prescribing glasses, but I never used it. I had my own jeep, an ambulance, and a truck. My seven medical corpsmen were young and eager, and excitedly flew missions with our choppers. They were well trained and enthusiastic. PFC Brabrandt even started speaking Vietnamese. My sergeant, an amateur private investigator, met Raymond Burr on his good will visit while we were still in a tent using crates. However he had to be sent back home because of a drug abuse problem.

We later hired a Vietnamese medical assistant to help treat the civilians employed at our camp. Her name was Phuong and she spoke a little English. We also hired a janitor who turned out to be a Viet Cong. He was caught going through the gate with a roster of our unit personnel hidden in his pants. Every once in a while "Zip," a pet monkey claimed by the whole compound, would sneak through the tents, find somebody's medicine bottle, and swallow a bunch of pills - which caused everyone to be upset about the fate of our pet. Pumping out a monkey's stomach was not a picnic! Zip would periodically chase Kim Din and Sparkle around the camp screeching. The girls screeched, too!

When my DEROS was up in April of 1966, I was extended for a few weeks due to the short time left in my active duty commitment and a delay in the arrival of my replacement, Dr. Paulk, a good ol' Alabama boy. (The fact that my R&R in Hong Kong was overstayed two or three days I am sure played no part in my extension at BMT.) That period was a sad time for me. Most of the guys I went over with rotated back on schedule. The departure from

my voluntary services at the longhouse part of the Vietnamese hospital where the Montagnards were treated was sad. I saw a lot of unusual medical problems there not seen since. Things like tetanus, plague, giant intestinal parasites, bladder stones the size of softballs, etc. are not seen back here in South Georgia. And I knew I would miss treating the patients from the Leprosy colony some 10 miles from Ban Me Thuot. They were sneaked through Viet Cong territory at night to a shack behind the Christian Alliance missionary house where I operated on their large "buboes" (neuromas) by lantern light.

The atmosphere around the compound was funereal when Kim Din and Sparkle learned that my departure was imminent. They walked around with lips trembling and eyes streaming water for several days. The day I left I dressed in my Class A khakis, burned my jungle fatigues that were ragged out, put on shiny boots, turned in my M-16 and .45 pistol, and felt absolutely naked. And scared. I feared something would happen at the last minute that would keep me there. Kim Din and Sparkle and Kim Din's sister dressed up in their Sunday best *ao dais* over long white silk pants and high heel shoes to come bid me goodbye. Tears streamed everywhere. They could not talk for sniffing. Somewhere in the good-byes they mustered enough strength to break through their traditional reserved behavior to come up and actually hug me. I must admit I shed a tear or two as well.

This story is about Kim Din. She was a bright and shining light to us in an otherwise dismal and dangerous time. She symbolizes the trust the Vietnamese placed in Americans, and America's ability to positively affect foreign lands. And she symbolizes the wish of the American people to do good unto others which we all harbor deep down inside ourselves. I have not heard from or about Kim Din since the NVA offensive in Ban Me Thuot in 1968.

Leon E. Curry, M.D....Flight Surgeon, CO, 8th Med Det, BMT, 5/1/65—5/1/66

FLASHBACK: 1967

Aviation Camp Dedicated to WO Coryell

Ban Me Thuot (1st AVN-IO) Camp Coryell dedication ceremonies were held here recently in honor of a warrant officer who was shot down last October 30 on a resupply flight. Warrant Officer Michael N. Coryell, his co-pilot, and his crew lost their lives when shot down by enemy small arms fire on a mission near Plei Djereng, 25 miles west of Pleiku. Unit orders naming the 155th Assault Helicopter Company compound were read and the 23rd Infantry Division (ARVN) band began the Star Spangled Banner as the American colors were raised over Camp Coryell for the first time. The band played the Vietnamese national anthem as the Republic of Vietnam flag was also hoisted above the aviation compound.

From THE ARMY REPORTER, 25 Mar 67

CAN YOU HELP US FIND . . . ? Awards and Decorations clerk **Gene Wilkinson** (from Oshkosh or Shiocton, WI); **James P. Avery** (from Madison, WI). If you know the whereabouts of any of these guys, please contact any 155 occifer.

MAIL CALL - sharing commo from our friends

Pat Avery - I sure had a great surprise the other day. My old friend and pilot HC "Nook" Watters stopped by. What a shock! I really didn't know what to say. But to all the guys who flew me around everyday and got me back in one piece I SALUTE you and thanks to you all. HC, I hope to see you again soon.

Denny Fenlon - Here's my dues check, have a beer for me in Vegas.

Howard Wiggs - Last night I had a nice talk with **Lynn Chandler**, remembering our time at BMT in '69. We were both 2nd Platoon crew chiefs back then.

Lawrence Gardner - I'm sending some long overdue dues. I look forward to reading the *Barb*, as it brings back so many memories. Keep up the good work.

H.C. Watters - Thanks for all the work that's gone into this site. September 8th is the day Red Koppel died, if anyone knows the location of his parents I would really appreciate an E-mail or a call. Thanks *Falcon 8*

Rod Waddell - It's too bad that some guys have no interest in attending the reunion, they are missing a great deal of friendship and healing. Thanks for sending the *Barb*.

Stephen Birchall - Its been a long time. Several names on the roster are familiar; but I can only put a face to a few of them. Gerry Bourquin was a good friend and we were at Ft. Stewart together after Vietnam. Jack Finn I remember, as well as Muldoon, and who could forget Lt. Sperling. I ran into Reid McQuinn about 12 years ago. Since 1995, I have been living and working in Thailand, still flying. *Falcon 11*

Howard Wilson - Thought I had better get off my duff and mail some past due dues in. Really enjoy the *BMT Barb*.

Stephen Grushetsky - My father, **Phil Grushetsky**, flew in the 155th in 1965-66. I just wanted to say thank you to you all for fighting in Vietnam. I am proud of my Dad and all of you.

Royce Campbell - I was at Ban Me Thuot with the 165th and 155th from Feb '68 through Apr '70. I have some diary notes from my tour, would you be interested in seeing those? *Ed. - Yes, yes, yes! Please send!*

Dan Miller - Hi to all from a former Purple Gang crew chief, unscheduled maint mech, and F troop squad leader. Sept '69 to '70. I'd love to hear from others who were there then.

Phil Watson - In 1969-70, I took some super-8 movies of our unit area and some unit activities. This summer, with the dedication of the Marlin Johnson Building, I realized that the years are slipping by, and it was time I shared these movies with the people on them. I transferred the movies to video, and sent copies to all those I could recognize and whose address I could find. I hope you all enjoy the tape. *Stagecoach 13*

Calvin Hilton - To all of my Stagecoach friends I am sorry to tell you that I will not be able to attend the Las Vegas reunion. I look forward to reading about what happened and who was there. *Stagecoach 25*

Frank Uhring - Here's my dues, and something for previous years; I feel that I should have been a member a long time back. *Stagecoach 19*

Rick Farlow - Give my regards to all at the reunion, maybe the next iteration of a get together I can make it.

Jerry Bourquin - I must tell you that I had the greatest time in Las Vegas with all you guys. I think that is one of the MOST important things a group (TEAM) like ours can do, we need to stay in touch as the bonding that we made in the 155 will last forever.

Bob Beaudreault - It doesn't appear that my schedule, which now includes another play for the Christmas season, will permit me to attend the Vegas fete. But know, as always, my heart and my prayers are with you guys.

Stagecoach 16 Zulu

Roger Elliot - Hi! It's been a long time since I have written. I need to get a hold of Poulan and Flyer. My hard drive crashed and I lost all my addresses. You are doing a great job the website. Talk to you later.

Frank Alotta - Keep in touch and I will make it some time to the 155th reunion, so say "Hi" to the guys for me.

Stagecoach 13

Leon Curry - The musical tribute at the banquet was moving and marvelous...as was the whole weekend.



Anthony Polo & John Smith, the crew of Stagecoach 314, '70. Smith photo.

THE 155 GUYS WHO CAME TO LAS VEGAS WERE . . .

Ken Acker, Bob Alberts, A.F. Amos, Al Arrendondo, Robert "Bo" Atkinson, Pat Avery, Earl Baldwin, Jim Bales, Alan Borsella, Jerry Bourquin, Gene Breslin, Jerry Burton, Jack Coonce, Jim Cunningham, Leon Curry, Les Davison, Larry Dinkins, Ken Donovan, Jim Ferris, John Finneren, John Gann, Bob Gardner, Tony Giordano, Bobby Goolsby, Charles Green, John Grow, Gus Gustafson, Dan Gwaltney, Sonny Hampton, Dennis Harris, Rein Hofgesang, Gene Hoover, Doug Kahler, Bill Lambert, Chuck Markham, Larry Matthews, Vince McDonough, Cecil McGee, Ralph Osteller, Dean Owen, Joe Parlas, Jim Paulk, David Pollock, Gene Powless, George Robinson, Jeff Schrader, Dave Skoog, Warren Smith, Davey Stanley, Mike Stark, Richmond Stephens, Charles Thibodeau, Roger Thompson, Fran Tiner, Mike Trux, Frank Uhring, Rod Wadell, Fred Williams, Howard Wilson. Special thanks to the family members who came - having you there made the reunion even better. (Apologies in advance if I left anyone out. If I did, please let me know so I can grovel appropriately in the next issue.)

SHORT STORY

Stagecoach pilot John Vagnini and crew were on an ash and trash mission in the vicinity of Gia Nghia sometime in '69 or '70 when they heard a MAYDAY call on Guard. A US Navy jet was in trouble, and the pilot would soon have to eject. John responded immediately, and the jet pilot knew help would be waiting when he punched out. The pilot had a good chute, and the 155 crew were nearby as he descended. He landed in a clearing, and very soon thereafter so did the Stagecoach slick. Carrying his parachute, the downed pilot ran to the helicopter. When he drew near, "Vags" leaned out the window, took the soggy little stub-end cigar he always chewed on out of his mouth, and was heard to ask, "Hey, starched-wing, you lookin' for a ride?"

Phil Watson, Stagecoach 13

MONTAGNARD MESSAGE

Hi Earl, and every member of 155 AHC Assn. I am very sorry that I can't make it to this gathering. As you know, I am really wanted to meet with all your guys, specially who have worked with my people (the Montagnard PRU/ Truong-Son/ Trail Watcher etc...). I am very happy that each Newsletter comes, our association always mentioning/talking about BAN-ME-THUOT, now the Vietnamese Communist call her BUON-MA-THUOT. The real name was BUON-AMA-Y-THUOT meaning BUON= Village, AMA= father and Y-Thuot= name of a person (Village of Y-Thuot's father).

My wife Rhonda went back to Banmethuot 4 times since 1975 and one month ago she went back with my daughter Belle. Banmethuot completely changed, no more L-19 airfield, or 155 compound, all full with building, houses. Most of villages and the Montagnards were disappearing from their original living areas. They were pushed away deep into the jungle near Cambodia. There are over 17 millions Vietnamese now in Central Highland, most of them came from North Vietnam after 1975.

The Vietnamese government still not allow me to visit Central Highland, although the war is over more than 25 years. They still think that, if I go home, I will re-organize the Montagnard Resistance Forces like the FULRO in 1964. However, they including Ambassador Bang, Deputy Prime Minister Triet did ask me to visit Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon - ed.) instead of Central Highland. My brother in Banmethuot said the local Vietnamese government in Central Highland think I am the second Arafat to them. Well, what can I say. All is up to God, how he want how he decide, He is the Man.

Tom, when I reviewed the 155th Ass'n newsletter dated Aug 1998, a photo taken by Robert Slate, Stagecoach door gunner in 1968, I recognized one of the three Montagnard PRU members at that Papa Zulu (Y-Cal Ayun), killed on March 14, 1975 at Mike Forces camp next to Phung-Duc Banmethuot airport. Wonder if you can ask Robert to reprint one set, so I can send them to his family. Please tell everyone at the meeting, that I will see them next meeting. Good luck, and may God be with you all. Thank you so much. Bon courage camarades,

Y-Jut Buonto, President, Montagnard Assn., Lynnwood, WA
(Former Major, Montagnard PRU commander)

(Ed. - A copy of the photo has been sent along to Mr. Buonto. Much thanks to Robert Slate.)

THE LOVE FAMILY DID THEIR PART

Thank you for sending me the *Ban Me Thuot Barb*. I am the sister of three brothers who served in Army helicopter units in Vietnam. Clyde was a pilot, and Bill and Tom were crew chiefs (Ed. - Tom was a Stagecoach and Falcon crew chief in '69). Bill and Tom came home, but Clyde was killed flying a Chinook on his second tour. Despite our involvement, and its impact on all of our lives, our family never talked about the war in Vietnam. A couple of months ago, I got up the nerve to ask Tom to tell me about Vietnam - and we talked for two hours. He told stories, mostly about the great guys he served with: Nachtigall, Arredondo, Owen, Giordano, Dinkins, Foster, Gaines, Cornwall, Mullen, Waters, Cunningham, and Gardner were some of the names. I know he was guarded, and only told about things we could laugh about - but I think it was a great healing experience for both of us. These vets really need to know that somebody out there appreciates what they did.

Judy Thompson

GOING IN HOT FOR THE BLUE BERETS

We were going in on an extraction and the pilot said, "Go in hot." Now that sounded a little strange to me. I asked again and the pilot said, "Go in hot," so I went in blazing. I remember spraying the perimeter and worrying about hitting our guys on the ground. I couldn't see anyone on the ground because of the trees, so I aimed high into the trees, hoping I wouldn't shoot one of our guys on the ground. We flew out of that LZ shooting as well. This was a new one for me, going in hot and coming out hot.

I never rode in the well. I sat in front with two smoke grenade boxes under my seat filled with linked M60 ammo belts and another box that I fed my M60 from. There was a time I tried to get a third box under my seat but it wouldn't fit. I hung my 60 from the ceiling using a bungee cord, and I connected two seat belts together so I could move around in the cabin and hang out the door. That way I could always say I had my seat belt on, if someone asked.

A few days later I was in one of the bars downtown. Normally when I hit downtown I would go to the right of where the main street into town intersects the street with the bars; however this day I went left. I found myself sitting at the bar and some guy was sitting a couple stools away from me. There were a few things I noticed about this guy. He was older, short, black as night, and looked mean as hell - much like my first Drill Instructor. The feature that really stood out about him was that he wore a powder blue beret. I had never seen or heard of any unit that wore blue berets; therefore I was a bit suspicious as to if this guy was a phony, or some new kind of wanna-be. This guy came over to me and said he wanted to buy me a drink. Now I was really suspicious - considering the missions I was flying and the things I was doing. This guy could be a spy or CID. I didn't want to be bad mannered, and at the same time I didn't know who this guy was or what he was, or why he wanted to buy me a drink. In short, my cautious hat went on.

He began by telling me about an NVA who was aiming right at him and was suddenly shot out of a tree. I will always remember him saying, "I looked up and saw you." I thought to myself, "Oh yeah, the day we went in hot." I looked at the guy and said, "Yeah, I'll take that drink." When the drinks arrived I raised my glass and said, "Here's to you."

Lee "The Griff" McGriff

REUNION REFLECTIONS

We had gone off as kids to serve our country in Southeast Asia – just like our dads had served before us in WWII. But they had come home to ticker-tape parades and flags waving and girls kissing them in the streets; we came home and slunk off the plane, hoping not to get called names (or worse). And when we were first back in the world, all we could think of was our buddies back in the 'Nam – because we felt guilty for leaving them. For 20+ years, after we came home, most of us went out of our way to avoid talking or even thinking about our time in Vietnam, because we had served in an "unpopular" war. But recent years have changed that for some of us; the third reunion of Ban Me Thuot guys was held last month in Las Vegas.

It wasn't about war stories, and it wasn't about who was the best crew chief/door gunner/pilot/sheet metal guy/etc, and it wasn't bitterness about the politicians who sent us there, and it wasn't frustration about fighting in an unpopular war. "It" was the reunion, and what it was about was good friends, getting together again. More than good friends, in fact. In Vietnam, we had trusted each other with our lives - you just can't get closer than that. These were some of the guys who laid it on the line with you 30 years ago. Many of us have never since had friends so close. We didn't stay in college forever to evade the draft, we didn't go to Canada – we served, we did the best we could, and we're proud of it. And I can't begin to tell you how great it was to share that pride with other 155 guys and their families. Whatever the past - it sure felt good to sit down with guys I knew back then, and share a coke and some memories. And special thanks to the family members who came; wives and friends and children, you're special, too. I wish more of you had been able to attend. EVERYBODY that I've talked with said they had a great time, and to plan on them for the next reunion.

Since I'm the Editor, I'm going to take a few lines to share my personal highlights from a truly wonderful weekend. (Unfortunately, none of these highlights involve large - or even small - slot machine jackpots.) First, Dean Owen had fought the bureaucracy and won; he was finally able gain official recognition for Johnny Gann's Purple Heart. At the banquet, as Dean read the citation, Vince McDonough and Johnny Gann (the crew of Falcon 049 the day Johnny got hit) stood ramrod straight. It was stone cold silent as Bo Atkinson pinned the award on Johnny's jacket. I'm not ashamed to say that more than a few of us shed a tear.

And second, I can't even describe how wonderful it was to have Scott and Chris Larson (sons of Paul Larson, Stagecoach pilot lost in the '68 mid-air collision) and their cousin in attendance. They were able to talk to several 155 guys who knew and flew with their Dad – and they found out that they aren't the only ones who remember him and think of him, even today. I'd like to think that they went home knowing their father was part of a very special group of people. I feel extremely fortunate to have served with such a fine group of men.

Les Davison

ASH & TRASH

155 AHCA BUSINESS STUFF FROM VEGAS

Amongst the revelry and good times, your leaders did a little work. For starters, the group lavished effusive - and well-deserved - praise on Dave Pollock and Fred Williams for organizing a FANTASTIC reunion in Vegas. Great job, guys! Then we "elected" a new slate of officers. Al Arredondo agreed to move up to become President (muchos thanks to outgoing Prez Dean Owen for a job well done). Dave Pollock was "rewarded" for his fine efforts in organizing the reunion; he's the new VP. History Bob, Treasurer Jeff, and webmasters Earl and Mary agreed to stay on for another term, to the delight of all. Dave Skoog (Maintenance Guy, '68) will be the new Sergeant-at-Arms, and Doug Kahler (Falcon CE, '70) got the nod as the new Member-at-Large. We're looking for ideas as to where and when in 2002 to hold the next 155 reunion; members are asked to contact any officer with their thoughts.

The treasury has a positive balance, but only about 20% of our guys send in the voluntary dues. We decided to lower the 2001 dues to \$15 per year, in the hopes that more people would contribute. Dues are still not mandatory; send checks made out to "155 AHCA" to Jeff at the address below. A suggestion was made that the 155 AHCA consider some higher amount for anyone wanting a life membership. We'd like to hear your thoughts on that.

Returning home from Las Vegas, 155 Treasurer Jeff Schrader was victimized by a pickpocket. Jeff says he is going to make up any cash lost to the 155, because he's the one who lost it. But he wants everyone to know that all the checks he received from 155 guys in Vegas are gone, too. If you wrote a check to the 155 in Vegas, it probably hasn't been cashed because it's most likely in a landfill somewhere. Jeff asks your forgiveness, and promises to carry his wallet in a front pocket from now on. And, if it's not too much trouble, replacement checks would be appreciated.

BEST CALL SIGN IN VIETNAM? The Air Force Psy/Ops squadron deserves serious consideration. When they flew leaflet-dropping missions, they used the call sign "Litterbug."

"WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/PENTAGON/QUARTERS/1517" Log on to the 155 Home Page for ALL the reunion info: who did what to whom, and why . . . and how many times. And there's pictures there, too! It was generally agreed at Las Vegas that the 155 Home Page is ABSOLUTELY FANTABULOUS - so click yourself on over and take a look.

SWEAT AND SANDBAGS: FROM THE EDITOR'S BUNKER

There's so many people to thank this time, I have to make a list. Special thanks go out to: 1) Phil Watson for sharing his Ban Me Thuot movies with others. Great video, Phil. 2) Royce Campbell, for sending copies of personal notes and recollections from his time at BMT. 3) Frank Uhring for bringing his Vietnam maps (from BMT, '69) to Vegas - and then donating them to the 155 AHCA, to be brought to all future reunions. 4) Leon Curry for taking the time to share his wonderful story about Kim Din. It's nice to know we did something worthwhile over there.

OK, that's it. After 16 newsletter sorties (that's four years, folks), it's time for a change. Jerry Burton has volunteered to take over as editor of the *Barb*, so stick a fork in me - I'm done. Sincere thanks to each and every one of you who have contributed to the *Ban Me Thuot Barb*. Please continue to send your memories and stories to Jerry, so he can carry on and make this an even better newsletter in the future. Thanks again, take care.

"Falcon 2 is down in the Corral, mission complete. I'll be in the club."

COVER PHOTO: EARLY MISSION: A dawn preflight of a Falcon UH-1B, "The Hunter," somewhere in South Vietnam; 1966. Photo by Jack Kottler.

155 AHCA officers are:

Al Arredondo, Pres.

Dave Pollock, VP

Jeff Schrader, Treasurer

Bob Alberts, Historian

Dave Skoog, Sgt-at-Arms

Doug Kahler, Mbr-at-Large

Earl Baldwin, Net Guy

Tom Mullen, Founder

Jerry Burton, Newsletter

Les Davison, Newsletter

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