



# BAN ME THUOT BARB



Remembering the 155<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company Sortie # 21, April 2002

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from the 155 website.....

\* **INFORMATION REQUESTED** \*

SSG Robert G. Pinkston, KIA, BMT, 3/13/68 was my dad. The input from the men who served there means a lot to me. I have learned much about the conflict since I was 10, and sincerely thank each of you for what you did there. Some do understand. I understand from the second and third person perspective. You will never know just how much I mean what I say, when I say THANK YOU! If you knew my dad, I would sincerely appreciate knowing things about him, or better yet, obtaining pictures of him serving his country. He was my dad, I will never forget him, his purpose, nor you guys who served his country. God Bless you all.

Tony Pinkston  
Pinkjazz@sprintmail.com

I was a member of a team of USAF Forward Air Control Technicians from the Philippines who installed and maintained the radar site at BMT (Det 9, Pyramid Control) during numerous TDYs in 1967-68 timeframe. I am particularly interested in talking to anyone who was at BMT in Sept-Nov 67 and can fill in the blanks for me regarding a large scale attack that took out most of the gunships. That was my first night in-country and I'm sure one of the Army NCOs who pulled me into the mortar pit and showed me how to set and load probably saved my life. If there is someone out there who is willing to help me piece together this and other BMT events please e-mail me. Thanks in advance.

Frank Scarpati  
uscdoc@webtv.net

Was a 117<sup>th</sup> pilot in late spring '67 when assigned to BMT to help the 155<sup>th</sup> look for 2 missing American missionaries thought to have been captured by the VC or NVA and taken into Cambodia. Through an interesting series of events, I met their son who is now a missionary doctor in Africa. Any one remember the event? If so, an e-mail to me would be great to pass on to him. Thanks.

Ray E Johnson, Jr.  
[rayj@breeze.net](mailto:rayj@breeze.net)



*Initiation Day*

**LINK FOR 2002 REUNION DETAILS ON 155 HOME PAGE**

A reunion link has been set up on the 155 home page with details about the 2002 Reunion, or go to <http://155photos.homestead.com/reunion.html>. For a few details, refer to the last page.



*BMT compound looking west*

#### **29Apr67-4 Avn Cos Set Records**

**PLEIKU, (1<sup>ST</sup> AVN-IO)** - Flying more than 15,000 hours in 52 consecutive accident-free days, four helicopters of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion shattered all safety records of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade.

The units are the 119<sup>th</sup>, 155<sup>th</sup>, and 170<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Companies, and the 179<sup>th</sup> CH-47 Assault Support Helicopter Company.

Flying combat and support missions from their central highland bases during January, February, and March, air and ground crews fought enemy ground fire, bad weather, hazardous night flying conditions. During the 52-day period the four companies had an average of 95 Hueys and 12 CH-47 Chinook helicopters flying daily.

**BAN ME THUOT, (1<sup>ST</sup> AVN-IO)** - as elements of the Vietnamese 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division swung into operations east of Ban Me Thuot in conjunction with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, pilots of the 155<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, who began supporting them in early April, found they had some training to conduct.

It seemed the Viet Cong the aviators encountered here were not the veterans they were accustomed to

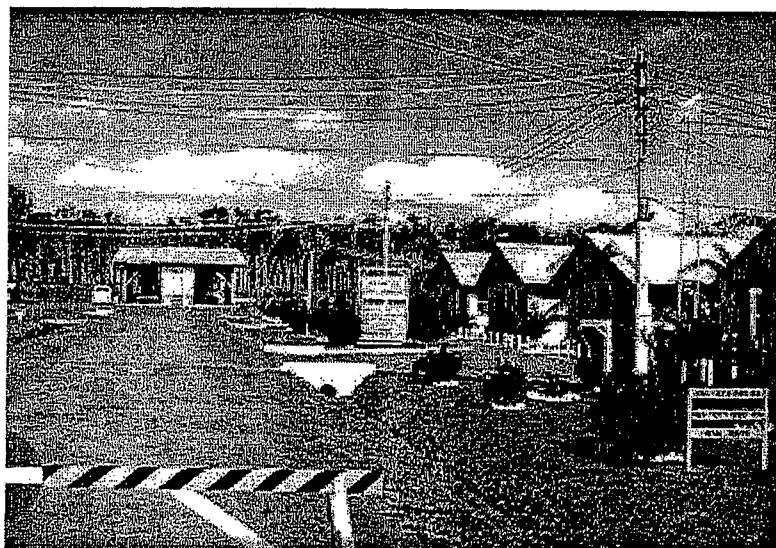
during their support of Operations Paul Revere and "Sam Houston" in the Pleiku area. The VC were green to the power of Army aviation.

Warrant Officer Jack L Finn initiated the training program while flying a command and control ship for Colonel Anh of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Division. Earlier in the morning the helicopter company had lifted two platoons of Civilian Irregular Defense group (CIDG) forces into a position along a heavily mined road southeast of Ban Me Thuot. Anh wanted to check on the progress of the action, so Finn flew him to the landing zone about 55 yards from the zone he spotted five VC in the open.

His crew chief began to fire at them, but they did not run. "They just walked down the road, casually taking pot shots at us," Finn said.

Finn took the enemy's assault as a personal affront to his aircraft's capabilities. But not wanting to endanger his passengers, he took evasive action. Then he turned to his most powerful weapon-his radio. Calling in an artillery spotter who was in the vicinity, he directed the pilot to the target. Within five minutes the nearby Vietnamese artillery had registered and destroyed the unwary enemy.

"Sure, I've been fired at before, and taken hits," Finn reported. "But, these Cong didn't show the least respect. They've got a lot to learn about our innocent looking Huey."



*Camp at BMT looking east to the movie theater*

## SPEED? WHAT SPEED?

Just to make an initial introduction, my name is CW-3 Ret. Gerald (Jerry) Bourquin. I arrived in Viet Nam as a WO1 in Nov. 1966 after attending flight school class 66-15 along with Ken Acker and Gary Coke who also were assigned to the 155th Ban Me Thuot.

Upon receiving my local area orientation I was assigned to the 1st platoon slicks at that time Capt. Pease was platoon leader (later to become major). Shortly thereafter, I was designated Stagecoach 12 when I became an A/C, then became the company check pilot at about a month 3 (Jan., I think). About Feb. 1 was assigned to the gun platoon, after passing a check ride with Capt. Grimsly (I think that was his name), my call sign became Falcon 3. WO Steve Burchall and WO Bob Johnson were already assigned to the gun platoon. I continued to perform as the company check pilot until I left for home in Nov 67.

When I joined the Falcons we had B's and C's and some were frogs (2) with the 40mm turret out on the nose, only 2 of us liked them as you had to be very smooth on the controls during take off or you'd roll the 40mm turret under the nose if it hung up on the PSP and ruin your day. Most ships still had M-60's with 157 and 158 seven tube pods, in fact we still had a few vertical banks (I think they were called M-3's). The two Charlie models with 540 rotor systems (with teflon bearings in the blade grips) were a real pain as the teflon would roll up and bind the grip/collective. Not only was the nitrogen charge for the accumulator (collective) not available, we didn't even have the bottles to put it in, so if we lost both hydraulic systems we could not have moved the collective.

With the C's we had to watch out for a rotor overspeed in tight turns or while pulling out of a steep dive due to the pitch cone coupling.

As we always flew at Max. Gross plus (and if you had a slight quartering tail wind) the CE and gunner had to stand back and watch (laugh) as the pilot had to "hop" out of the revetment as each time the pilot would lift off, the rotor RPM would droop (decay) and you'd land and start all over, usually 3 to 6 hops (attempts) would at least get you out of the revetment and turned around, then hop over the ditch onto the road then hop over the second ditch to the taxiway, then ground taxi to the runway with the CE and gunner walking/running along side the ship, if they jumped on too soon we would stop

due to excessive weight and skid friction, we used the same technique for take-off, collective, walk pedals, start moving, CE and gunner jump in, grind to a STOP, start all over, some time it took 2 or 3 attempts (and fuel burn off) but in the end we made it into the air, low and slow.

The best things we had going for us was the CE and Gunner, they made the crew principal work. The only thing we had to watch out for was to tell them you were going to make a hard turn or they would keep firing their M-60 at the target and hit the main rotor blades. We also made sure they knew we were going to fire a pair of rockets or two so they didn't hit a rocket (which happened to me one day, but that's another story).

Esso Station: Charlie used to move in behind it at night and lob mortars in on us, we couldn't get clearance to fire back as civilian houses were behind the station, and in the morning Charlie was gone, of course. Oh yes, I remember it well, that was in 66 and 67.

A word or two about Jerry Johns. As class mates and fellow pilots we came to the 155 together and left together. In fact, the day we were to fly out of BAN Me Thuot, we were given a pilot and helicopter to take us to Cam Ranh Bay. We said that the assigned pilot could go with us, but WE were flying. Jerry asked if he could make the take off and fly-by, I said fine (almost a mistake). We lifted off heading west and made a nice 180 to the right and headed right toward the COC and its antennas we were near VNE and kinda breezed by low level to say goodbye to the troops. I relieved Jerry of the controls (I felt safer that way), the rest of the flight was uneventful until we landed and Jerry and I climbed out of the helicopter, collected our gear and began to walk away, I heard a voice from the cockpit calling me. "Mr. Bourquin, which way do I go to get back to BMT?" I looked at him thinking he was kidding but he wasn't, I pointed in the direction of BMT and wished him good luck.

Keith Lane: Easy on the OLD GUY stuff, I was there 7 month before you - ha, ha. Did you bring a WO Miester (not sure of that spelling) from the 199th with you during an infusion?

My second tour in VN in '71-72 (call sign Snake 15) as a member of the Outcasts.

Gerald "Jerry" Bourquin  
CW3 Ret. (Butcher Bourquin)

Stagecoach 12/Falcon 3

Nov. 66 thru Nov. 67

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***From the Historian....Bob Alberts***

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**Anyone know who picked up 1LT Thurn after a safe ejection?**

F-100C 54-1922 136 TFS, 31 TFW, USAF, Tuy Hoa  
1LT J.J. Thurn

A 136<sup>th</sup> TFS aircraft was lost during a close air support mission over South Vietnam. A flight of F-100s had been called to attack enemy troops near Duc Lap, close to the border with Cambodia and 30 miles southwest of Ban Me Thuot. 1LT Thurn was making his second pass dropping napalm when his Super Sabre was shot down by automatic weapons fire. He ejected safely and was rescued by an Army Helicopter.....So fess up, who picked him up???????????????? Lets hear the story.

**Former 155 member has brother in the Pentagon**

Brig. General John W. Rosa, who some of you have seen during Pentagon Briefings on the News, is the younger brother of Anthony J. (Tony) Rosa Jr., who flew as a CW2 with the 155<sup>th</sup> AHC in 1966/67. Sadly, Tony died in an Aviation Accident in 1978. General Rosa has been in contact with members of the 155<sup>th</sup> Association and is very proud of his brother's service with our unit and of his brother.

**INFORMATION ON AGENT ORANGE**

The "Agent Orange Review" is prepared by VA's Environmental Agents Service (EAS) with substantial assistance from the VA's Compensation and Pension Service. The "Review" is published to provide information on Agent Orange and related matters to Vietnam veterans, their families, and others with concerns about herbicides used in Vietnam.

It is also available on-line at <http://www.va.gov/agentorange/default.htm>. Back issues are also available at that site. The first issue was released in November 1982. The most recent edition (prior to the release of this issue) is dated

July 2001. The October 2001 release is the thirty-sixth issue. It was written in mid-October 2001 and does not include developments that occurred since that time.

The national toll-free telephone number for information regarding VA benefits is **1-800-827-1000**. The recently established toll-free help line for Agent Orange concerns is **1-800-749-8387**.

**2002 REUNION TO BE HELD IN FLORIDA AUGUST 1-AUGUST 4**

The reunion will be held at the Hilton Hotel at the Walt Disney World Resort. The room rate is \$100.00 per night (plus tax). The reservation number is 1-800-782-4414. The address is 1751 Hotel Plaza Blvd, Lake Buena Vista Florida.

\*Important reservation info: please specify the 155<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company group rate in order to get the special room rate of \$100.00 per night-single or double.

Reservation **must** be mad by July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 02, in order to receive the special room rate.

Cancellations **must** be made 5 days prior to your arrival or you will forfeit the deposit on the room.

Check in time is 3:00 p.m. and check out time is 11:00 a.m.

155 Hospitality Suite for 3 nights beginning on Thursday, August 1, through Saturday, August 3, will be available to all AHC reunion attendees.

Special 155<sup>th</sup> functions to be announced when detail become available.

**FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY!**

Gentlemen, it was a true honor to take over the Barb when Les Davison moved on.

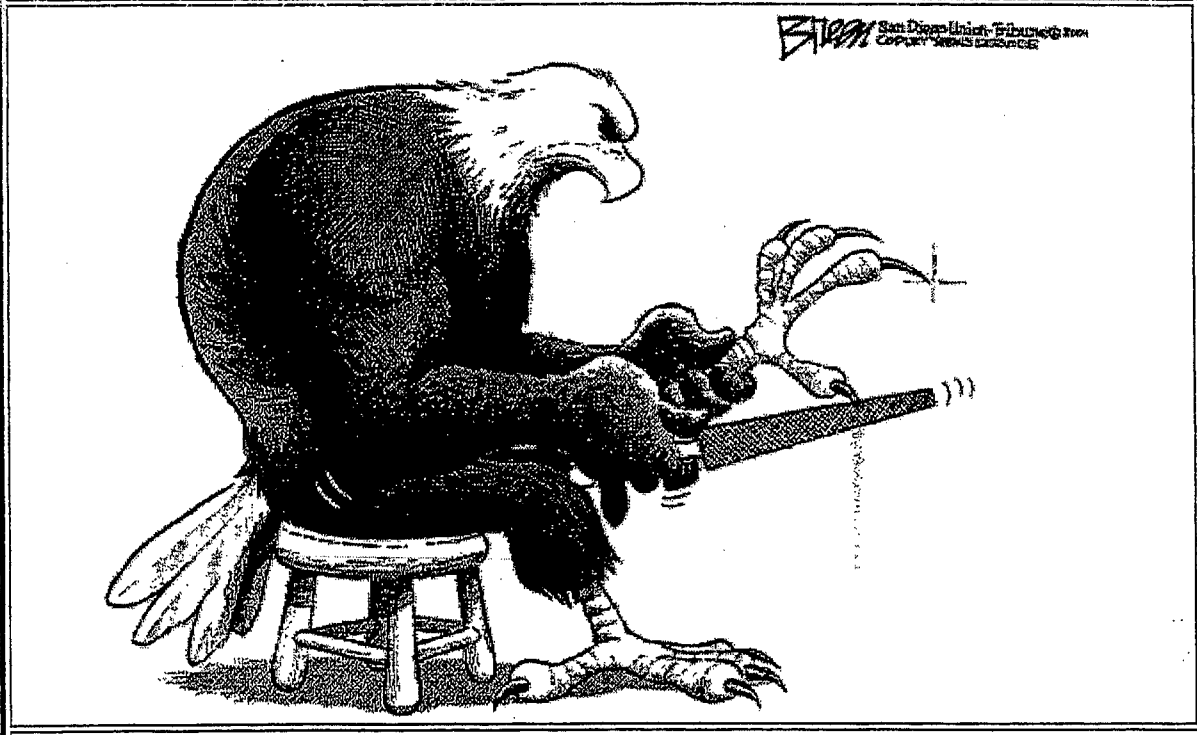
It's now time for Judy and I to allow a new member to **volunteer** to take the reins for the newsletter.

We will compose the July sortie and then turn it over to another enthusiastic member at the reunion in August.

Jerry Burton



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Barn San Diego Union-Tribune's Top Copy Artist 2000-2001

155AHCA officers are:

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Earl Baldwin, Net Guy

Tom Mullen, Founder

Jerry Burton, Newsletter

Les Davison, Advisor



155<sup>th</sup> AHC Assn.

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ARLINGTON VA 22203

