



# BAN ME THUOT BARB



Remembering the 155<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company Sortie # 22, July 2002

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## **OPERATION DISNEY IS COMING UP QUICKLY!!!**

For those of you who have definitely decided to come to the reunion in Orlando, please RSVP to Fran Tiner at FTiner@Prodigy.net or (941)953-3640.

Here's what happenin'!

There is of course a Hospitality Suite that will be open for the duration.

The official gathering will be a Dance Party on Friday evening at the hotel.

On Sunday Morning there's a Disney Character Brunch, also at the hotel.

The rest is up to YOU!!!

See you there!

*Fran and Laurie Tiner*

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**For the many new members you can find details about the reunion on the reunion link at <http://155photos.homestead.com/reunion.html>.**

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## **Thanks to the 155**

*From the editor.....*

It has been a pleasure to serve as the Barb editor over the past two years. My health and situation will no longer allow me to continue.

Judy and I wish everyone a great reunion, we will not be able to attend this year. We hope to make it to the next one!

We have passed all the material for the Barb on to Mary Baldwin who will get it to the reunion and find another willing soul to keep up the tradition.

We wish all a great reunion and keep up the spirit. God Bless America!

*Jerry and Judy Burton*

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*Provided by Mr. Keith Proctor*

## **First Mission**

*As part of his coverage of the siege of Plei Me, correspondent Cook also flew over the beleaguered camp with an Air Force support mission. His report:*

Like some huge bug, the C-123 transport flying beneath our O-1E observation plane lumbered low over Plei Me to air-drop ammunition. But, on it's first pass there was a mechanical snafu. The ammo boxes missed the target, and three loads, suspended from blue and yellow parachutes, landed in trees 3 miles south of the camp--right where the Viet Cong could retrieve them.

"If you think Charlie (the Viet Cong) will get the ammo, go ahead and hit it," came a message over the radio, and soon two propeller-driven Skyraiders were to arrive to do the job. Our pilot, Lt. Col. John A. Martin, of Hampton, Va., rolled into a steep dive and fired a smoke rocket into the parachutes to mark the target. Then, the two Skyraiders went into their dive-bombing run,

and their first strike was squarely in the center of the chutes. "You hit it right on,"

Martin called approvingly over the radio.

But as one of the Skyraiders began to climb away from the target, it's pilot radioed, "I've got a rough engine."

"Roger," Martin replied, "you're trailing smoke. If you have to punch out (bail out), go north of the camp."

"I want an area to jettison my bombs," the pilot shouted back.

"Right where you are," Martin ordered. Two 500-pound bombs dropped off and exploded beneath us, rocking our plane with the blasts."

"Pull up!" Martin yelled.

"I can't!" the pilot answered. "I'm losing altitude steadily."

**No Parachute:** The Skyraider, now trailing a cloud of blue-black smoke, sank rapidly. Then like a toy, it smacked the red earth 100 yards south of Plei Me camp. A wing flew off like a match stick as the plane flipped over on its back. Seconds later, deep red flames shot out and black, oily smoke rose from the wreckage. No parachute had opened.

"No one got out of that," Martin said sadly on the intercom.

Yet, incredibly, when I returned to Pleiku three hours later, there was the ill-fated Sky raider's pilot--still wearing his gray flight suit and sipping a Scotch and water. He had a raw patch on one cheek, one of his eyes was rapidly blackening, a scrape on his neck had been daubed

with Merthiolate and some stitches had been taken in a wound on his left leg. But, he was very much alive. A slim, shy, 31-year-old, he was Capt. Myron Whitney Burr, of South Windsor, Conn., who had arrived in Vietnam on Oct. 14 and had been flying his first combat mission when he was hit. Burr told me his hair-raising story.

"I didn't have time to bail out, I was sinking so fast," he said. But as he dived earthward, he managed to slide his canopy back, and when he crashed, he simply rolled out of the cockpit, ran from his burning plane and hid in some bushes. "I felt nothing, I was numb. But I could see, and I was alive and that was the greatest thing." Burr said.

Small-arms fire crackled somewhere in the distance. Burr took out his signal mirror, experimented with it a moment and put it away. Then he took his emergency radio from his vest--only to discover he had forgotten his own call sign. For 10 minutes he racked his brain, then suddenly remembered the sign-Toll 92. Flipping the radio on, Burr immediately made contact with a nearby observation plane which got a bearing on his radio signal and directed in an armed helicopter. "The helicopter came within 15 yards of where I was hiding," said Captain Burr. "I ran out and dove right onto the floor of the chopper under a stretcher, and he took off. I was a mighty happy fellow."

Burr spoke of his wife and four children back home in Connecticut. "I promised them I'd be back." he sighed. Thanks to his first combat mission, Burr would keep that promise sooner than he had thought possible. In Saigon last week, doctors found he had cracked

several vertebrae in the crash and ordered him transferred to the U.S. for full recovery.

**Newsweek, November 8, 1965**



*Burr (left) Thanks rescuers in Viet Nam*

*Army Pilots 1st Lt. Ed Pledger (R),  
W-O J.D. Kottler*

## **To Viet Nam-- Down and Back-- In Three Weeks**

*By Ben Davis  
Executive Managing Editor  
The Advertiser and Journal*

How far is it to Viet Nam, where people are killing one another?

In miles, it's a mighty long way--half way around the world.

But in time it's practically next door. Just ask Myke Burr.

Burr, an Air Force A1E Skyraider pilot, made the trip from Montgomery to a crash landing in his bullet-riddled plane behind Communist lines at Plei Me and back to Maxwell AFB Hospital in three weeks flat.

The 31-year-old captain's several cracked vertebrae are what GIs call a million dollar injury--painless, yet it gets you back home.

But "back home" isn't what Burr

wanted. He volunteered for Viet Nam duty in the first place, and said from his Maxwell Hospital bed: "I'd go back in a minute if they ask me to."

Burr can forget flying for at least three months while he is recuperating. During this time he probably will be able to spend more time with his family here than in a long while.

Burr, his petite wife, Nina, and their four small children came to Montgomery in December, 1961, when he was assigned to Maxwell's Squadron Officers' School as section commander. He stayed there until last May when he began intensive combat training for duty in Viet Nam. His family remained in Montgomery.

The pilot, officially Capt. Myron Whitney Burr of South Windsor, Conn., left here for Viet Nam on Oct. 9 after telling a small group at a going-away party that he was anxious to get into combat. "I feel somewhat like an overtrained fighter," he said, referring to his five months of intensive training in the propeller-driven Skyraider.

Burr arrived at Bien Hoa, a U.S. air base near Saigon, one week later, on Oct. 16. He flew two indoctrination missions before the week-long battle erupted at Plei Me, about 200 miles northeast of Saigon.

A third indoctrination mission, on Oct. 22, was diverted to Plei Me because of the critical situation there. It turned out to be his only combat flight.

Burr told of the fight from his hospital bed at Maxwell:

"(Capt.) Jim Hayes and I--Jim was the fellow who was going to lead the indoctrination mission--we sat down and briefed the mission and decided how we would do it. About 30

minutes before we were to leave they came in and said, "Well, we need you pretty badly up at Plei Me and we are going to divert you up there," which I was pretty excited about because they were going at it hammer and tong up there and I really wanted to get into that operation. So we re-briefed for that mission and this was going to take us several hundred miles up north to the Pleiku area....

"The flight up there was pretty uneventful. When we got into the target area the FAC (forward air control, an officer in an observation plane who directs the air activity in the area) asked us to hang high because he was working another flight in the area. So we held for about 10 minutes at about 7,000 feet.

"Then he called us down and asked us if we'd provide some suppression fire for a re-supply drop that the Army was making at the fort. They wanted us to strafe in front of the Caribou (transport plane), which was coming in to drop the supplies. Our strafing would keep the ground fire down. So this sounded like a pretty good operation and Jim went in and made the first pass and I followed him in and did the same thing. We pulled up off the target then and the Caribou proceeded across the fort and made a nice drop right in the center of the fort and they got their supplies. We (the Skyraiders) were working as a flight of two.

"As soon as we came off of that target he (FAC) briefed us on our other target which was to destroy some supplies which had missed the fort....

"So our job then was to destroy these supplies before they fell into the hands of the VC... Jim had two

bombs and I had six bombs. The rest of Jim's load was made up of rockets. So we made two passes, dive bomb passes....

"I was going to use the rest of my bombs on it. So I started down for my third pass and this was when I first had trouble with the engine. It was running pretty roughly...The only thing I can assume was that it was hit by ground fire. It had been running perfectly up to that time...

"So, on the third pass the engine started giving me a lot of trouble and I tried to manipulate the throttle into an area where it would run well enough to give me a little bit of power. All I needed was a little bit of power and I could have gotten up to Pleiku (25 miles north) and landed up there. But as I worked the throttle it just got progressively worse and finally quit. This probably took between 20 and 30 seconds for it to quit completely.

"About that time the FAC called and said that there was a lot of black smoke streaming out of the engine. So I asked him if he would direct me back to my target and I would jettison the rest of my bombs. And he said, 'Go ahead and drop them right where you are.' So I did.

"At that time he said, 'It looks pretty bad and you ought to bail out.' So I reached over and opened the canopy and checked the altimeter and realized that I was too low to make a safe bail-out, and descending too rapidly. So I decided the only alternative I had was to ride it in, which isn't normally too dangerous. You can usually survive a crash landing. However, I was over a heavily forested area and landing in dense forest is pretty risky in any aircraft.

"I started trying to find an open area that I would be able to reach

with the little glide that I had left available. During this time the FAC was telling me to try to get to the north side of the forest if I could because that was a much safer area. The south side was where the enemy was concentrated.

"Well, that wasn't possible. I just didn't have that much altitude left to glide that far. So I started looking around on the south edge of the forest area to see if there was a spot I could get to without hitting the trees.

I did manage to just get over the edge of the trees and into an open area. But, in the process I had lost a lot of air speed and when I hit, I hit pretty hard. But, this was better than hitting the trees.

"The last thing I can remember before hitting, or, that is, before getting out of the airplane, was watching the trees go by the cockpit. From there on, the next thing I can remember was hearing the crackling of a fire. This snapped me to....

"I can remember unstrapping and scrambling out of the airplane. I don't know what attitude (position) it was in or anything else. All I remember was getting out. I left my rifle in there and everything else, but I was primarily interested in just getting away.

(A Newsweek correspondent, flying in the FAC plane, saw Burr's plane crash. He wrote: "The Skyraider, now trailing a cloud of blue-black smoke sank rapidly. Then, like a toy it smacked the red earth 100 yards south of Plei Me camp. A wing flew off like a match stick as the plane flipped over on its back. Seconds later, deep red flames shot out and black oily smoke rose from the wreckage. No parachute had opened.

"'No one got out of that,' the FAC said sadly on the intercom.")

"I remember taking my hard hat off, my helmet off, because that was white and we had been briefed that these stand out pretty well if someone was trying to find you.

"So I got rid of that and looked around the area, and it was obvious that there had been a lot of activity there. The grass had been well mashed down and there was a well-worn path through there. So I was looking for a place that wasn't quite so popular, and lit out for some brush, elephant grass and some small trees which took me about 100 yards away from the airplane. I got hunkered down on the grass and started thinking about how I could get in contact with the forward air controller, who was in the area; also the other A1E (Hayes).

"We are issued a little two-way radio expressly for this reason. Hayes was up there to provide any cover that I needed in case I happened to be overrun by VC.

"Well, when I started rummaging around trying to figure how I was going to contact the airplane, the first thing I pulled out was a signal mirror which wasn't working very well because the sun was behind me and the plane was over here (in front). So I discarded that.

"In fact, I obviously wasn't thinking very well because I had this two-way radio which was the best possible way to making contact. I wasted a few minutes with that mirror and I wasted a few minutes with a strobe light which didn't do much good for me. But I finally got down to the point where I was getting this radio out and as soon as I turned that on it cracked right into business with static and I was able to contact the FAC right away.

"As soon as I made contact I told him I was all right and I needed a

chopper (helicopter) for a pickup. They said they had a chopper on its way. I'm not positive where it came from (likely from Pleiku) but it was an Army chopper that came in. As a matter of fact, I saw about four of them arrive approximately the same time.

"I heard one of the boys say that he had some rockets on that he would go over and get rid of his rockets and come back and pick me up. That sounded real good to me. Just a very short time later he came back in and by this time the FAC had located me pretty well on the ground through my directing him.

"My plane was burning during this time. Although I couldn't see the plane. I was far enough away from it so I couldn't see it and I couldn't see the fort either, although one report said I was only 100 yards away from it.....

"But the FAC had gotten me pretty well located on the ground and he helped direct the chopper in. As soon as I got in contact with the chopper I helped direct him in to my location. He was able to come within about 20 yards of where I was. He hovered about two feet off the ground and I broke from my cover and hit the deck of the chopper. And away we went.

"I never saw any VC. I could hear ground fire but I never did see any. I had the old, 38 out and I was ready for the first guy I saw, but he never showed up. I was quite surprised at this because knowing that I had landed in the area where the enemy was supposed to be concentrated I expected to run into them.

"I spent only one hour and 15 minutes on the ground, which wasn't too bad. It would have been shorter had there been choppers in the area, but at that particular time

they just didn't have any in the area and they had to bring them in from some place--I presume it was Pleiku.

"At the same time there was another boy on the ground not too far from me. I was on the southeast corner of the fort and Mel Elliott (Capt. Marvin C. Elliott of Glendale, Ariz.) was on the southwest corner of the fort.

"He had gone down the night before. He had bailed out of his A1E and they picked him up the next day. He was on the ground 36 hours. So he's really got a story. After they picked him up he came to the hospital to visit me.

(Elliott, who had bailed out of his disabled Skyraider before dawn that day, experienced a hair-raising 36 hours. The Viet Cong, searching for him with lights, often came very close to him. He frequently buried himself in the jungle earth to escape them. He came out of the ordeal with only a strep throat.)

"But we were on the ground together there. Of course we didn't see each other and they had more difficulty getting him out because of the heavy ground fire. They just couldn't get a chopper in there with any chance of survival. Finally they made an all-out effort and went in there with enough aircraft and ground suppression fire to get him out.

"They took me up to Pleiku and as soon as we were on the ground and got out of the chopper, Col. Martin (Lt. Col. John A Martin of Hampton, Va., an old friend of Burr's) was standing there.

"He was the man who had directed the strike (the FAC), although he didn't know who was in the other (Burr's) airplane. But he was there to meet me. He found out later, before I got back, who I was. He

kind of took care of me that night--he and Martha Raye, (Martha Raye was in Pleiku entertaining servicemen. She gave up her quarters that night to Burr and went on an Air Force combat flight to drop flares on a Viet Cong target.)

"This was on a Friday morning. I hit the ground at 10:30a.m. and got picked up at approximately 11:30. I arrived at Pleiku about 12 o'clock.

"I stayed overnight at Pleiku and the next morning caught a C47 that was going down to Bien Hoa. There the squadron commander and a doctor met me and took me over to a hospital and re-examined, X-rayed, me. (It was there that X-rays revealed Burr's back injury).

"I left Beinh Hoa the following Tuesday morning and arrived at Travis AFB (Calif.) Wednesday night, which is pretty good time."

Burr arrived back in Montgomery the following Saturday, one week and one day after he was shot down.

The convalescing pilot was asked about American morale in Viet Nam.

"I would say, generally speaking, the morale is very high. There are some little frustrations over there which you're bound to have. They don't have the facilities, the quarters or anything of that nature to handle all these people. These cause a lot of little frustrations, temporary quarters, tents, that sort of thing. And they are crowded, very crowded, particularly in the Saigon area where people are processing.

"But the morale of the troops toward the mission, toward the job they are doing, is extremely high. I know personally. I felt very good

being there...I think that everybody feels this way, that they have an opportunity to really contribute something that is worthwhile."

Asked about how Americans in Viet Nam felt about the demonstrations against this country's involvement there:

"This will vary as people vary. For the most part, I think that our people there (Viet Nam) realize that this is a very small group of people that are getting a lot of publicity, that it generally is a very small minority, a loud minority that's causing this clamor.

"And on the other hand, the very positive reaction that it is generating is a nice by-product of this thing. The counter reaction is something that is very heartening to people over there--students that go out and have these bleed-ins to send blood to the troops in Viet Nam in contrast to the other group. I think this is a real healthy by-product of the 'nut' group.

"Personally--this is my own personal feeling--I look at these lads that are causing so much

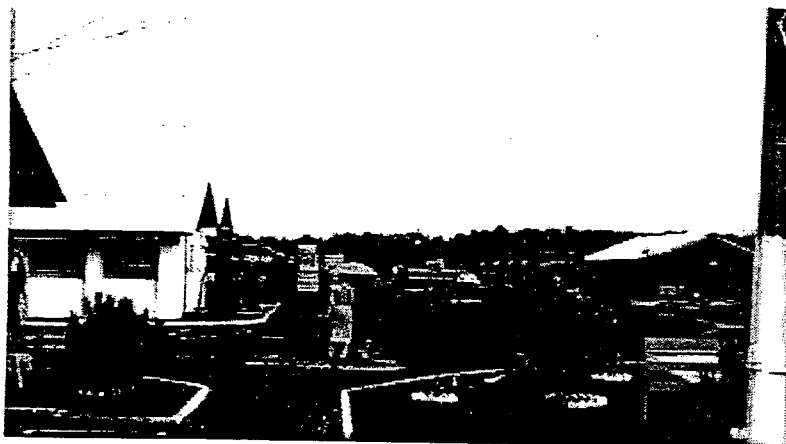
commotion, burning draft cards and so forth, as lads who haven't been able to compete in our society successfully and they need recognition of some type. They've found that this is a way of gaining it, by rebelling against our policies and making a lot of noise about what is generally accepted as a good thing. They are getting a lot of recognition for this."

So Burr lies on his bed and thinks, anxious for the doctor's word that will allow him to be up and about.

He doesn't know what duty is in store for him when he recovers. But, if it's back to Viet Nam, he's ready for it.

***Family requesting Information....***

The family of R. David Hunter would love to know anything about the time he served in Viet Nam between 1966 and 1968 if you served with him. Mrs. Hunters email address is [EturalOptimst@aol.com](mailto:EturalOptimst@aol.com).  
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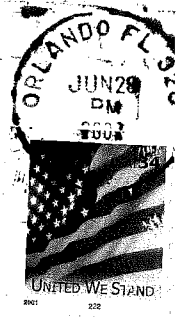
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