

# BAN ME THUOT BARB

Remembering the 155 Assault Helicopter Company - Sortie 28 - Jul 04

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## BRAVE MEN WHOM I AM PROUD TO HAVE KNOWN

I read Dick Sperling's account of the 16 March 67 combat assault where he received the DSC. You asked for more information. I'll try to tell you to the best of my memory a little more. I was Second Platoon Leader and Mission Commander for the 155 AHC. We had six slicks up there working re-supply. This was a 4th Infantry Division emergency assault west of Pleiku. They (4th Avn. Bn.) led with the first two V's of three. On receiving fire as they approached the LZ, both flights aborted landing. I was lead helicopter in the third V (155th had the third and 4th V's). The C&C directed me to land as I inquired because of the situation. As we approached the LZ, we descended to tree top level and flared to land as we crossed the treeline. Ben Davies was my pilot, and SP5 James Patterson was my crew chief. We took machine gun fire that entered the helicopter at the right side, passing through the hydraulic lines and hitting Spec. Patterson under his flack vest in the back as he was bent over to clear the tail rotor passing the treeline. He said, "I'm hit." Then he died. We landed with no hydraulics, discharged our troops, and took off. We landed at the Medevac Field Hospital pad, with no hydraulics, they took SP5 Patterson in the tent, but he was gone. We took off and landed back at the PZ, where I commandeered another helicopter and rejoined the assault.

I believe Jerry (Johns) and Dick (Sperling) were Chalks Two and Three. Needless to say, I missed their action, as I had my own hands full. SP5 James Patterson was a fine young man, and wonderful Crew Chief, and my friend. I received the DFC for that day, I think because I lived through it, mostly. WHAT A DAY!

These were all brave young men who I am very proud to have known. I talked to Dick not long ago, got a Christmas card from Jack Flynn, and also talked to Bud Henry recently. I hope this information helps.

*Barney Hancock, Stagecoach*

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## THANK YOU TO THE 155 AHC

*Ed: The last issue of the Barb told about the recent ceremony at Fort Rucker's Pratt Hall, to honor the memory of 155 pilot Fred Pratt, who was killed in action at Duc Lap in 1968. After that story, we were able to contact Fred's widow, Ms. Barbara Pratt. We sent her the Fort Rucker Army Flier with the story of the ceremony, and included a copy of the Barb. Her reply is shown below.*

On behalf of our family, we thank you for your kind consideration in contacting us and letting us know about the changes to Pratt Hall. If we had known, we surely would have been there. And thank you for sending us the *Ban Me Thuot Barb*. We have always wanted to contact others who were there with Fred, now we have a way to make contact. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you again.

*The Pratt Family*

*Ms. Pratt has indicated that the family would very much like to hear from guys who knew Fred in Vietnam. Contact her at:*

*Ms. Barbara Pratt  
6023 Crystal Dr, #134  
Columbus, GA 31907*

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## MAIL CALL: Sharing Commo

**Gilbert Terry** - I leave Thursday for a motorcycle trip to ride the twisty backroads of western North Carolina for three days. Take care.

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**Les Davison** - Spending the summer in Michigan, that's why I haven't answered my e-mails. Hope to see lots of you at the reunion in Fort Worth this fall.

**Emmett (Pappy) Boyles**

Comments: In 2nd Plt from Apr to Sep 68 then went to guns until DEROS. Hondo Rameriz was crew chief in slicks; Rob Moore crew chief in Falcons.

**Ronnie Wiles**                      Location: Gridley, Ca

Comments: I was assigned to the 155th from 69-70. I was crewchief on Stagecoach 332 for about 4 months. I then moved to the Falcons and flew ship no. 504. I am looking to get ahold of Al Natale. He was the gunner on 332. He has posted pictures on this site of me. I would love to hear from any one that was there when I was.

**Bob Donaldson**

Comments: Falcon 6 1967-68. Just joined the 21st Century and on line now. Great web site. Am going to try to make Ft. Worth this fall.

**C B Daigle**

Comments: To all those men and women who have given the greatest sacrifice we remember and honor you. To those who have served and are currently serving our country, we thank and salute you. You are not forgotten.

**Larry Matthews**                      Location: Durham, NC

Comments: Congratulations to Alex Baldwin (the daughter of our Webmasters (Mary & Earl). Alex is graduating from High School this year. Alex is preparing for college in Boston and will be participating in sports on the collegiate level. (Surely you guys remember the cute little girl who grew up in front of our eyes at all the 155th AHC reunions.) Best of luck Alex in all your future.

Matt (The Database Guy)

**Stanley Parrotte**                      Location: Whitney TX 76692

Comments: Was SFC Platoon Sergeant in Maintenance

**Ron " Jesse " James**                      Location: Goodyear, Arizona

Comments: I was at Camp Coryell from April 66 until September 67. Started with the 155, shanghaied to 165 Maintenance when they discovered my background in maintenance. Camp Coryell was a true band of brothers. SP/6 Super Tech James. I left part of my soul in Ban-Me-Thout In Memory of James Gordon Patterson, My brother in Arms and one of my best friends. Pat, you gave all.

**Larry Wyllie**                      Location: Mesa, Arizona

Comments: Mark Cowles are you out there? We went to flight school together and then to Nam. Always hoped to hear from you and know you are OK.

**Rick Metcalf**                      Location: Georgetown, IN

Comments: served 6-68 to 6-69 2nd flight plt, crew 389 or maybe it was 398 don't really remember, anyway does anyone remember a mail clerks name, he was called "Ski" also, the guy who shot his buddy w/ 45 while joking around. email if you remember. Thanks

**Ken Lombardi**                      Location: NH

Comments: Hi, everybody. Seeking glider-tow position anywhere in lower 48 or Hawaii. 4200TT/1400 T-Wheel. Looking for year-round, but seasonal OK too. Want to tow from here until flying-days come to end. (One-Five-Five Guy)

**Samuel J Belshaw**

Machine Shop 165th

Comments: Looking for those of us that arrived on May 1 1965

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**Jeff Schrader**

Location: Canton, OH

Comments: Mary, I was looking thru some of Chido's pictures. The guy he says is "hogging" his chair is me. Bruce was very "short" at this time, and therefore, got assigned a lot of convoy cover missions. Everywhere we sat down, out popped his lounge chair so he could get his tropical tan before going home. He thinks we were trying to hog his chair, but c'mon, we didn't want him to get sunburned. :) The guy in the background by the aircraft is John Kress.

**Stark Mike**

Location: Phoenix, Arizona

Comments: Great job Mary and LT. Starting to plan my travel schedule for the Stockyards get together. If any of you Stagecoach guys need help with directions, reading your gas gauge, talking to strange women, let me know and I'll organize some Falcon recovery teams and we'll get you there. It was nice to see Dave Churilla check in. As an FNG I was his right seat tourist on my first live fire mission; Volcano resupply, Duc Lap '69. My job was to monitor the torque gauge and I blew it. (not the gauge; the job).

**Chuck Larson**

Location: DC area

Comments: Hello all,

Wanted to extend warm greetings to Dan McGettigan and Vance Randles. Two guys who knew my buddy Alexander (he had CALIFORNIA on the front of his helmet) and were kind enough to write to me about him. I hope you guys are doing ok and I would very much like to hear from you again.

**David N. Churilla**

Comments: Just viewed the Died after tour page. Sad, so many brave friends who died too young. They will be remembered!

**Gerald F. Bourquin**

Location: Murrieta, CA

Comments: Just received my email BMT Barb, this is great. Just wanted to say Happy Easter to all my fellow BMT brothers. I was Stagecoach 12 and then Falcon 3 during my first tour from Nov 66 through Nov 67. The 155th AHC was one of the best units I ever served with during my 22 years in the ARMY. (The other one was the United States Army Parachute Team).

**Scott W Larson**

Location: Arlington, WA

Comments: It's been far too long since I have dropped by the site! Looks great as it always has. Glad to see another reunion in the works, got to attend the Vegas one and am seriously considering attending this one. Thank you all so much for the web site it means a lot not only to myself but also to my children who can see a little of what their Grandpa was a part of. Keep it up! Gratefully, Scott Larson (Son of Paul Noble Larson, Stagecoach Nov.67 Apr. 19, 1968)

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## "GO DOWN TO THE COMMAND POST"

I was a United States Army soldier in the 155<sup>th</sup> AHC at Camp Coryell in Ban Me Thuot, Viet Nam from June-September 1969 when this event occurred: The company commanders were Major Owens and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Larson. While I was assigned to the unit, my job title was Avionic Supervisor and Commo Chief.

On the evening of August 11, 1969, I had gotten undressed and laid down for hopefully a few hours of sleep. Around 11:30 PM, it was like a voice spoke to me saying "Get up out of bed now and get fully dressed, steel pot, weapon and everything." The voice went on to say..."Then go down to the Command Post" where I was in charge of Radio Communications. I quickly go up, got dressed, and headed down toward the Command Post where I received some really strange looks. The Supply Sergeant and other personnel were just inside the supply room talking when they saw me passing by. The sergeant asked

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me, "Brackett where in the world are you going this time of night in your combat gear?" I answered, "I am going down to the Command Post. He said "But why?" I kind of laughed thinking to myself, these guys will think I'm nuts. But what could I say? I answered as before, "A voice just spoke to me telling me to get fully dressed and get down to the Command Post." They just gave me a puzzled stare.

When I arrived at Command Post, the guys, the radio operators who had worked for me since I came to the unit asked me the same question. "Sergeant Brackett, what are you doing down here this time of night?" I knew what they must have been thinking as well. I said, "It's like this voice spoke to me instructing me to get fully dressed and get down to the Command Post." (Incidentally, this Command Post was a four room cement bunker which was fully protected with sand bags around it and upon the top of it.) Then shortly after midnight, the quiet night was broken by incoming rounds of enemy attack. I've never heard such a loud noise, starting at first just outside the bunker area. AK 47s opened up, and it's like we were surrounded by fire of mortar rounds and sounds of rockets falling all around us.

After a while, things got quiet again and I stepped around the specially designed bunker entrance and outside. Just as I did, another mortar round hit the Mess Hall/Supply Building and sprayed the side of the bunker. One small piece of shrapnel bounced off the cement bunker onto my arm, burning only a little tiny place on my wrist. I didn't feel in my own heart that such a small injury should qualify me for the "The Purple Heart" for the wounded.

After the attack was over we made a check of the damage: Our Operations Building had been hit by the rounds and our radios had been completely destroyed. A mortar round had exploded at the outside corner of my room, spraying all the inside where I would have been there asleep had I not been "warned." Some had been wounded in the building that was next to mine. Two were wounded inside the Operations Building. A total of 11 personnel were wounded, 9 of which were evacuated to a bigger hospital and never returned back to duty. The ¾ ton truck that had been assigned to me had been hit on the hood, ironically right in the center of the big "star." By the time we received headquarter's clearance for launch of our four Falcon gunships and a flare ship (helicopters), the enemy had cleared out. We never saw the enemy or any of their casualties. They had hit us and run. They had the cover of a coffee and of a rubber plantation. (See page 1, paragraph 2 of our "Unit History" web page of 155<sup>th</sup> AHC for documentation and the time line of Aug 12<sup>th</sup> attack on Camp Coryell, Duc Lap area, Ban Me Thuot, Vietnam.)

After that, when the Supply Sergeant would see me walking through the compound, he would always ask me seriously, "Are we going be hit tonight?" No more rounds would hit Camp Coryell, and no injuries during the remainder of my time of duty there. I was sent home on Sept 17, 1969, for a family emergency. My little infant daughter Cindy had been called home to heaven. *A. C. Brackett*

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## GOLD BOOK REPORT - STAGECOACH 259

Information on U.S. Army helicopter UH-1H tail number 67-17259.

The Army purchased this helicopter 0268. Total flight hours at this point: 02813.

Date: 06/03/70; Accident case number: 700603211; Total loss or fatality, Accident

Unit: 155th Avn Co; Ban Me Thuot Province, South Vietnam

Number killed in accident: 0 Injured: 0 Passengers: 0

Loss to Inventory, costing: \$244,345

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Crew Members: P W1 GILLELAND RA  
CP W1 ZANIS JP  
CE E5 COOK JD  
G E3 MS HATFIELD

## Accident Summary:

Army aircraft 67-17259 was on a troop extraction mission when the accident occurred. The aircraft was the second aircraft of a flight of four (4) which was supported by two (2) Air Force gunships. The aircraft departed Duc Co AAF, RVN at 1405 hours with 1000 lbs of fuel to perform the extraction of a reconnaissance team located about 35 miles NW of Duc Co AAF and within Cambodia. Upon arriving in the pickup area, there was about a 30-45 minute delay while a landing zone could be found. During this time the aircraft orbited the troops. The troops were finally extracted with ropes from a jungle area. At the time of departure from the troop pick-up zone, the aircraft fuel status was approximately 400 lbs. During the return flight the troops, three (3) in number, remained on the extraction ropes outside of the aircraft. This curtailed the airspeed to approximately 20-30 IAS (40-50 knots actual airspeed). About five minutes into the return flight, the 20 minute fuel warning light illuminated. The fuel status was 375 lbs. At this time the destination was changed to New Plei Djereng, RVN. The pilot decided to set the aircraft down and put the troops inside so that a reasonable airspeed could be maintained. This decision was made after about ten minutes had elapsed on the 20 minute fuel warning light illuminated. An abandoned American FSB was utilized for the landing. The fuel status upon departing the FSB was 200 LBS and approximately 15-17 minutes on the 20 minute fuel warning light. After departure the airspeed was increased to approximately 80-90 knots IAS (100-110 knots actual) and the RPM was reduced to 6300. It was in this flight condition that the engine flamed-out from fuel exhaustion. Flame-out occurred about three minutes after take-off from the fire support base. The pilot, WO1 Gilleland, executed a 180 autorotation into the wind and attempted to land in a sparsely over-grown area but was unable to extend the autorotation sufficiently. The aircraft landed in a heavily over-grown wooded area and came to rest on its right side.

*FYI, the 155 Home Page shows the official Army "Gold Book" records of most of the Hueys that served with the unit. Check it out to see if your ship is there. If you have information that isn't in the record, or if you can add more info to an incident that's already in there, PLEASE contact 155 Historian Bob Alberts.*

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## **LZ-FTW2 WE'RE COMIN' TO COWTOWN!**

WHEN: Thursday 11 Nov 2004 thru Sunday 14 Nov 2004

WHERE: Fort Worth Plaza E (Same hotel as last time, just a fancier name)  
1701 Commerce Street, FTW, TX 76102

Reservations: 817-882-8888 (Mention 155 AHC for discount rate)

Room Rate: \$69 if you reserve by 29 Oct 04

There will be hospitality suite available from 1100 Thursday – Noon Sunday. There will be kegs to float.

Thursday, sign in after noon. \$15.00 registration fee to help defray costs. Friday, visit and catch up. No organized activities planned. Ideas welcome. Saturday, BBQ at the Gardner's. Menu will include dead cow, but other grub will be available. The pool will be open, weather permitting. Country music and a keg will be supplied. Bring your own hard stuff. You may bring alternative music, but DO NOT expect

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much of it to be played. Sunday, 1400 check out. Questions or suggestions to: "[markham@erath.net](mailto:markham@erath.net)" or "[ragrly@aol.com](mailto:ragrly@aol.com)"

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## 155 HATS, PATCHES, AND T-SHIRTS

As you go about your daily routines in your Hometowns, USA, keep an eye out for Stagecoach and Falcon patches, Stagecoach ball caps, and 155 AHC t-shirts - because one of your neighbors might be the first guy (or gal) on your block to be wearing Ban Me Thuot stuff. We've had a good response to our offering of 155 merchandise and want to take this opportunity to thank those that have ordered. The following people are proudly sporting 155<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company stuff on their person---

Les Davidson	Chuck Markham	Bob Alberts	Bo Atkinson
Jeff Schrader	Mary Baldwin	Duane Poulin	Sandy Smith
Harry Volger	Dan Fox	Thomas Erickson	Frank Micelli
Robert Lehy	Dean Owen	George Grubb	Jim Kohler
Dennis Harris	Jim Ferris	John Ruhly	Fred Faria
Lynn Chandler	Richard Latimer	Warren Smith	

If you'd like to get in the act, ordering info is on the Home Page, or call Chuck Markham at 254-796-2346

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## IN MEMORIAM

**Charles Lane Smith** of Siler City, North Carolina passed away in April 2004 of cancer. He was a door gunner in 1967 with the 155th AHC.

**Jim Sewell**, a '65-'66 Falcon pilot, died this past January.

**Robert Wayne Childs** of Iowa passed away January 30, 2004. He was a Stagecoach pilot in 1969-70 and a member of Flight School Class 69-43/70-1.

**Fly high, friends.**

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## A DAY IN THE 'NAM

It was sometime in 1969 and I had spent a few days at Nha Trang with (I think) Dennis LaJoie. You know they had some very nice French restaurants there. We could not get a flight back to BMT, so we caught a flight to Dong Ba Thin. There was not anything going from there either - and I'm sure we were already late getting back.

The 155th had a Supply Liaison Sgt. there who said he had to get some things to BMT and did we want to ride on the truck with him? Knowing what could and often did happen in the Duc Me Pass, we said we did not want to travel in a convoy. That's when we got the big surprise. He did not plan to drive in a convoy - he was going to drive to BMT alone. We thought about it and said what the hell, we'll go.

After talking to some buddies in the local gun platoon (Sidekick guns; 92<sup>nd</sup> AHC), we had an M-60 and about 2000 rounds of ammo. We found some C-rations, water, and probably a few sodas, then off we went. I don't remember much of the trip except "The Pass." As you can imagine, the "pucker factor" was a little high. I don't know if we didn't have any trouble there because no one expected a lone truck or they were so surprised to see 3 dumb-asp Americans traveling by themselves and just didn't shoot at

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us.

We arrived at the compound OK, and that's when the trouble started. The ISG had gotten wind of our trip and was waiting for us. He congratulated us on getting the much-needed aircraft parts there - then chewed our butts for about 20 minutes for being so stupid. It was a fun trip, without trouble, so we didn't see the problem.

Today I realize he was correct, it was stupid - but we still had fun. *Tom Hunt, Falcon Crewchief*

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## 155<sup>th</sup> AHC Association Officers and Support Personnel

*Chuck Markham, Pres.*      *Fran Tiner, VP*                      *Jeff Schrader, Treas*                      *Earl & Mary Baldwin, Web*

*Bob Alberts, Historian*      *Larry Matthews, Database*      *Al Owen, Sgt at Arm*                      *Dan Gwaltney, Mem-at-Large*

*Bob Gardner, Reunion*      *Bo Atkinson, Editor*                      *Les Davison, Editor*                      *Tom Mullen, Founder*

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## ASH & TRASH

**Sister Company on TV** - VHPA reports that the Discovery Channel is putting together a documentary program on Lam Son 719, the 1971 incursion into southern Laos. The program will likely focus on the men of the 48th AHC, Blue Stars and Jokers.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT----

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the support you have shown the association during the last two years. Our plea for dues was answered enthusiastically and cheerfully. The individual efforts put forth by members to locate other ex-BMT guys resulted in numerous new members and more importantly, renewed relationships with those who shared a significant part of our lives.

The response to the hats, patches, and new tee shirts was overwhelming even with all the problems I had getting it all worked out. I always knew the BMT BUNCH was special, but serving as your president for the last two years has only reinforced that belief.

I would be most pleased to meet and thank all of you personally for all the support. I will see Y'all in Cowtown in November!

*Chuck Markham*

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A special note....

Chuck Markham graciously performed the duties of Editor for this release of the "Barb" while Les and Bo had the summer off... thanks Chuck!!

*Larry Matthews*

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155<sup>th</sup> AHC Association  
Larry Matthews