

# BAN ME THUOT BARB

Remembering the 155 Assault Helicopter Company & all the Ban Me Thuot Guys  
Sortie 32 - July '05

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## A CHOCOLATE MILK STORY

I was reading one of MAJ Atkinson's articles and it confirmed one of the stories I was going to send you, but my recollection is slightly different. My version did not include a slick or being dispatched to the scene, but I suppose that could have happened. Who am I to argue with a major? My apologies to him if I am incorrect in any of the information, and my apologies to those with me on the mission for not recalling names.

MAJ Atkinson wrote, *"During or just prior to the ceremony a report came in from an L-19 or OV-1 pilot that a person was spotted in a field near the Cambodian border. A UH-1D with a pair of gun ships were dispatched. The Huey crew retrieved an NVA soldier who had contracted malaria and was unable to keep up with his unit. He had been abandoned to fend for himself. He was delivered to the ARVN Headquarters."* Here's what I remember from flying that mission.

I was flying dusk patrol out toward Cambodia with someone and we spotted a North Vietnam soldier standing in some trees waving a white cloth like he wanted to give up. We flew over him several times and tried to figure out what to do. We called the base and reported the incident and were told to check it out but be careful. Finally, whoever was flying with me (another Falcon), decided to go in low and hover so they could motion the guy to a clearing not far away. As they led him there, I flew cover. He made it to the clearing and they picked him up. When he got to the base, John the interpreter found out he had gotten sick and the unit he was with was on the way to the south so they told him to stay there and hook up with the next unit down. Several weeks had gone by and he was starving so he decided to surrender but he was scared to eat as he had been told we would poison him if captured and he ate our food. A couple of guys standing by happened to grab some cans of chocolate milk and drank them. He saw that and his eyes lit up so they offered him a can. I guess he thought the unopened cans from which our people were drinking were safe as I recall that he drank enough chocolate milk to fill a couple of Huey fuel tanks that night.

*Jim Askren, Falcon*

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Got this from Cary Arney.

Cary says  
it's '68 Falcons, I  
recognize Dennis Lajoie.  
Is that the Earl next to  
Dennis? (Looks too  
heavy, but he's certainly  
surly enuff to be the El-  
Tee.) Might be (????)  
Greg Bundros on the far  
right? Cary couldn't  
remember.  
Les.



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**SNIFFER MISSION ON THE BORDER**

I was trail behind Les Davison on a Sniffer

mission out of Pleiku in January, '70. We flew up the road to Kontum, turned west to Ben Het, and then southwest to the area we would search. As the Sniffer ship flew along just above the trees, he called "mark" a few times after we crossed the fence. Then he called "mark"-----"mark"-----"mark"-----"mark"--- "mark-mark-mark-mark" and then someone called "taking fire!!!". I assumed it was Lead, and I began firing rockets as the Sniffer headed for the sun. At the same time I saw NVA troops scurrying around and trucks parked under the tree lines. As Les broke right, I kicked the tail back and forth to help spread the rockets. All I had was rockets and the crew chief and door gunner had their M-60's. The poor CP was just along for the ride. Can you imagine just sitting there with nothing to do? His pucker factor probably created a new Black Hole that they haven't discovered yet. I wish I could remember who my crew was that day. Anyway, we completed a 180 and I was out of rockets. The crew chief and door gunner stopped firing there 60's and I remember telling them if they had ammo left to keep firing. There were a lot of heads down there to keep down. About that time I got a low rotor RPM warning. (Lower the collective, autorotation, go into the trees with zero air speed, tail slide through the canopy, un-ass and blow the ship, Hanoi Hilton here we come.) That is what flashed through my mind before I had the collective down. It never crossed my mind that someone might be hurt in the crash. As I lowered the collective, the RPM stabilized just below the red line. Oh happy days!!! I couldn't believe my eyes. I was pulling 50% torque and doing 50 knots. I gave Lead my situation and informed him that he had a lot of smoke coming from the hell hole. The Sniffer bird was high above and informed us that they would be ready to pick us up if need be - and possible. We limped back to that little dirt strip that I can't recall the name of and counted the hits. Les had 30 something and I had ONE that almost took my engine out. And I believe Les was the only one they drew blood from. Both our ships got Hooked back to Pleiku. What a day!

*Bob Maddox, Falcon 1*

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**MAIL CALL: Sharing Commo**

*Every time someone signs the guestbook they receive an email from me thanking them for doing so. The following is a dialog started on the guestbook:*

**Name:** Donald Blankin

**Location:** Blacksburg, South Carolina

**Comments:** I was a Forward Observer with 2/35th Infantry. Hitched a lot of rides with you fellows during August-October of 1968 around the Duc-Lap area. Thanks for keeping us in beans and bullets and a special thanks for getting our wounded buddies taken care of. Many times you were all we had!!!

**Donald---**Thanks for all the great compliments, and thanks too for stopping by and signing our guestbook. It's always great to hear from the guys we tried to support, and know that they understood we were doing all we could for the guys with the tough job.

chuck Stagecoach 5 /1970

**This back from Donald.**

Chuck, I'll never be able to thank you guys enough for your support. Below is the link to the 35th Infantry website. There's a ton of info. here including some after action reports that includes the callsigns for our supporting people. Do you happen to know who had the callsign Dustoff 107? If you look at the after action report for 30 Sept. 1968 you'll see where he flew late into the night evacuating our wounded under some difficult conditions. Whoever he was, and wherever he is, we owe him a great debt. Thanks for your reply and God Bless!!

Donald Blankin

[WWW.Cacti35th.org](http://WWW.Cacti35th.org).

P.S. Please sign our guestbook

**Name:** Ron "Jesse" James

**E-Mail:** [st](mailto:st)

**Comments:** Stopped by to say hello, Got E-Mail from Raul Delgato. Trying to get ahold of De La Torre. Also

got a E-Mail from McCann. Vaya Con Dios, Least We Forget, Ron James

**Name:** C. Daigle

**Comments:** "A Huey helicopter just flew by over the Gulf of Mexico. It has been thirty years since I listened for that sound in Vietnam, thirty years since it meant the imminent arrival of food and water and, often, safety. The sound and the memory of what it once meant still makes me salivate, literally." Ted Koppel in his book 'Off Camera'

You are remembered by many people in so many ways. We bless the memories of those who gave their lives and we honor those who served beside them and came home.  
May God bless you on this Memorial Day.

**Name:** Brandy Hudgins

**E-Mail:** [global.net](mailto:brandy@global.net)

**Location:** wichita, ks

**Comments:** I am looking for information on my grandfather who was killed in a crash. his name is Jacob Kinser. he was a 1LT with the 155th AHC. He flew out of Ban Me Thout in 3/1970 and never made it home. I would like to know anything anyone knows about my grandfather. His call sign was STAGE COACH. his flight class was 69-18, any information I can get would be a great gain thank you.

**Name:** Michael Horst

**E-Mail:** [daol.com](mailto:mhorst@daol.com)

**Comments:** Thanks for the web site. I have been looking for this one for 2 years now.

Been using 1st Aviation Brigade, courtesy of rojoeagle@yahoo.com.

I served with the 1st Aviation BDE, 185th Recon Airplane Company, Pterodactyls (223rd CAB, 17th Group- II Corp, Central Highlands, Ban Me Thuot). I served with them from 4/1969-10/1970. This Unit provided Aerial Recon and Forward Air Controllers to support 5th Special Forces, MACV, and other friendly forces, 155th AHC, in the Central Highlands II Corp, with approximately 30 O1-G Bird Dogs (L-19s) and 1 each U6A De Havillin Beaver, one Platoon was located in Da Lat south of Ban Me Thuot.

This Unit (185th RAC) also supported in the Cambodian Invasion in 1970 for the 173rd and 4th Inf Div. (Americal) and other friendly forces.

Some time between 1969-1970 the 185th Unit name changed to 185th Aviation Company. Later approximately in August 1970 it was deactivated as part of the troop draw down, and all previous 185th soldiers were transferred to 219th Aviation Company, Head Hunters, possibly the 4th Platoon, and remained in Ban Me Thuot, though the Headquarters were in Plieku, Camp Holloway.

Any one have info, history, pictures let me know.

Michael Horst

Army Aviation

Fixed Wing Crew Chief O1-G U6-A

Engine Mechanic

**Name:** Woody Nesbitt

**E-Mail:** [net](mailto:woody@net)

**Location:** Sumter, SC

**Comments:** Early 1968 I flew for the 50th Med Det and we kept a A/C on field stand-by at the your base. Callsign was Dustoff. Good to see your site.

**Name:** Joe Kinder

**E-Mail:**

**Location:** Perrysburg N.Y.

**Comments:** THE SNOW IS GONE.....Looking forward to Fall....Hoping ALL are well and doing good....GREAT SITE huh?...Good thing Mary has Earl...Later..Joe.

Name: John Goins

E-Mail: |

Location: Lexington, KY

Comments: Well, I see from the latest Barb that Daniel Morton has check in finally. Haven't heard from old "Shep" in a while. Glad to see so many of the old guys are computer literate.

Thanks to the webmasters for keeping the old gang in touch.

John Goins, CSM(R) Falcon 67-68

Name: Melvin "Candy Man" Canady

E-Mail: | [m](#)

Homepage URL: <http://canady.freesevers.com>

Comments: Hoping to hear from someone that remember when my dog Hercules was killed, 13 May 66.

Name: Brian Bozarth

E-Mail: | [bm](#)

Location: Spokane, WA

Comments: My uncle, Mike Bozarth, was in the 155. We just celebrated his 60th birthday.

Name: Tom Mullen

E-Mail: | [tm](#)

Location: Cumberland, Maryland

Comments: Hi to all!!!!...Just got home this morning about 1:30am from a fantastic 7 day vacation in New Orleans with my wonderful partner Caffie who never ceases to amaze me with her support!! We were able to meet with Gene Breslin (Stage Coach '70-'71) and his wife Lilly and we had a great day together showing albums and swapping stories which was capped off with dinner at a Vietnamese Restaurant and a trip to The Garden District for sightseeing on the Charles Street Street Car...Honestly...New Orleans needs to be seriously considered for a reunion site in the future...Easy in from the airport, easy out to the airport and a TON of things to do...It was nice seeing you again Gene and it was great to meet your wife...BTW...Gene was the last PERSON out of Ban Me Thuot when the 155th was deactivated and has a great story to tell about that so lets get after him to write it up and put it in the newsletter.

Once again, thanks to Earl & Mary for the best Viet Nam Helicopter Company Web Site on the net. Keep up the good work!!

Tom & Caffie

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**Treasurer's Report:**

Our ending balance in the fund at December 31, 2004 was \$3,912.08. Revenues for 2005 have been received from dues, sales of hats, patches, and t-shirts. Expenses have been for postage for shipping items sold, postage for newsletters, and a Joe Kline print for Dr. Leon Curry, winner of the drawing at the reunion. Net amount added to the 2004 balance is \$252.79 for a fund balance as of June 30, 2005 of \$4,164.87. Anyone requiring detail to this report, please contact Jeff Schrader.

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**The 2006 reunion**

Is once again approaching. The suggested dates from the site sponsors are September /October. Following are a couple Statements from the sponsors for information purposes so you can make some informed choices. The vote can be conducted on the homepage (see Mary's update below), US postal Service to:155 AHC Assoc. 11028 CR. 209 Hico, TX. 76457 or email any officer in the association and they will forward them to be counted.

**Fort Rucker, AL.** *The following sent by Tom Hunt:* I think it should be over the Veterans Day holiday. I can work something into the observance at Ft. Rucker for us. Tom

## Savannah, GA

*The following sent by Gilbert Terry:* I am sure that there are a lot of factors that are considered when picking the best month for the Reunion. I think the best time for Savannah would be September, or October. The average temp would still be between 70, and 90. The room rates would be lower at the beach, and most every thing would still be open.

Although our war stories are very interesting, I am sure most of the wives have heard them several times, and may choose to spend some time in Savannah. Tour historic homes, visit unique shops, art studios, tea rooms, or just walk across the street, and spend a day on the beach.

The birthplace of and museum for Juliette Gordon Low, the founder of the Girl Scouts. The Mercer House; famous home of Johnny Mercer, composer of "Moon River" and "Jingle Bells," that was also owned by Jim Williams, the famed antiques dealer featured in "Midnight in the Garden of Good & Evil." Visit Wormsloe, the site of an antebellum plantation, and also featuring the famous row of Oak Trees that lined the path to Forest Gump's childhood home. This is the site of the famous scene where Jenny yells "Run, Forest, Run!!" Visit Art Galleries, Silversmiths & Jewelry Design Studios all featuring the work of the students of the Savannah College of Art & Design (SCAD), a world-renowned Art School. You can purchase treasured pieces from these up-and-coming artisans before their rates catch up to their impeccable talent!! Enjoy High Victorian Tea at 4pm at the Tea Room, on world famous Broughton Street, which was the original retail district of Historic Savannah long before the first Mall was ever even a thought. Broughton Street is also the site of numerous scenes from "The Legend of Bagger Vance." Or take in a more Bohemian Tea experience at the Gryphon, a Russian Tea room run by SCAD professors, situated on one of the Historic Districts' beautiful squares designed by General Oglethorpe himself as part of America's first planned city. Walk along the shores of Tybee Island separated from Hilton Head Island by only a Ship's Channel... the same Ship's Channel that put Savannah on the World Map by enabling the Great Cotton Trade in the days of the Cotton Gins' debut. Walk along The Bluff on Isle of Hope, along the intracoastal waterway... home to many of the descendants of Savannah's original charter families and the breath-taking plantation homes they inhabit.

The men might like to visit the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, it's very well done. We could test our skill as a waist gunner, or fly a bombing mission with a B-17 crew. Lunch at the Chatham Arms Pub, or maybe the Casbah, a Moroccan restaurant, where the food is good, and so are the belly dancers.

Gilbert

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## MEMO FROM MARY: 155 HOME PAGE NEWS

The 155 AHCA Home Page is at [www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Quarters/1517/](http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Quarters/1517/).

**We now have a link on the homepage to vote for your choice for the next reunion. There are two choices and the link is set up to monitor votes. Each voter can only vote once but there are options for you to change your mind later. The link to the voting page on line is:**

<http://www.geocities.com/pentagon/quarters/1517/vote.html>

Please include your name and e-mail address in the fields provided to help with an accurate vote count.

Thanks to recent 155 Photo Page contributors: Herb **Bundage**, Joe **Kinder**, Al **Fitzgerald** and Les **Davison**.

Thanks to Rick **Erickson** for the Stars and Stripes article on the main 155 page.

*Mary Baldwin, 155 Volunteer Webmaster*

## MARVIN'S MONKEY

As I tell this story, I am sure that some of the gun pilots from 1969 will remember the events even better than I do, and I would invite them to share their own recollections. Charlie Marvin and I had been roommates for a while in the 2<sup>nd</sup> lift platoon, before Charlie moved over to the gun platoon, but we remained close friends. One day for some reason we were in downtown BMT, when Charlie saw this local with a monkey and got it into his head that he had to have the monkey. I literally begged him not to buy the monkey, but being the hard-headed guy that Charlie was and still is today, he bought the monkey and took it back to reside with him at the Falcon hooch.

As I remember, Charlie's and the Falcons' relationship with the monkey lasted only for a few days. One day when the gun platoon was out flying missions, the monkey escaped, and then went through the entire gun

platoon and destroyed everything in the whole hooch. When the guys got back, I am not sure who they wanted to lynch first - Marvin or the monkey. Taking personal responsibility for Marvin's Monkey, the last that was seen of the monkey was Marvin blazing away with his .45 as the monkey evaded over the wire.

I had a chance to talk to Charlie about this story the other day, and we both got a good laugh out of it.

*Ken Donovan, Stagecoach 28*

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### THREE SIGNALMEN BECOME MORTARMEN AT NIGHT

25Jan67; Ban Me Thuot (1<sup>st</sup> AVN-IO) Three men of the 208<sup>th</sup> Signal Detachment assigned to the 155<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company have a unique assignment each night following their regular day's tour of duty. They man an 81mm mortar as part of the compound's night defense plan. Specialist Fives Peter L. Cloutier and Harry G. Vogler and PFC Lawrence A. Esparaza man their mortar pit near the combat operations center switchboard as one of the several mortar crews in the 155<sup>th</sup>'s defense network. The team received its first firing opportunity in mid-December during a II corps-wide alert. They sent mortar flares into the sky to illuminate the surrounding countryside, so the infantry could locate nearby Viet Cong.

Cloutier, Vogler, and Esparaza attended the Southeastern Signal School at Ft. Gordon, GA, before coming to Vietnam. Cloutier has worn the crossed rifles of an infantryman and fired the mortars before. Vogler has also been trained in the techniques of mortar firing. But Esparaza went to signal school straight from basic and is now getting his first taste of mortar gunnery. "They may have received quite diversified training," says CPT Raymond L. Kervahn, 208<sup>th</sup> Signal Detachment commander, "but they certainly worked well as a mortar team the other night."

(Ed.: We believe this article appeared in the Pacific Stars and Stripes.)

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### FLIGHT SUIT FINDS A HOME

I need to slow down and read the *Barb* more often. It is great to remember the many good things about Vietnam. I am a JROTC instructor in Joplin MO. As part of my program I have a Living History Unit that has US Military Uniforms from all branches of the service, and some reproductions from Revolutionary War to the current time, including Iraq now. I do have my Nomex Flight suit from RVN in it but I do not have a gray cotton flight suit. I have over 50 uniforms of all sizes and genders, we put them on my kids and present all 50 state flags, as well as the five service flags and war flags from WW2 to Desert Storm. It is great for my students to touch our military history this way. The kids love it and so does the public. I was in Ban Me Thuot in '70 as a Platoon Leader and also was the Tech Supply Officer. I helped with the deactivation and took the ground convoy back to the coast. When the 155 closed down I flew Hooks with the 243<sup>rd</sup> "Freight Trains" and then went north to Chu Lai and flew Hooks with the 178<sup>th</sup>. I did my 20 years in the Army, retired as a MAJ, and have been teaching Army JROTC for 17 Years. It is a great fun job, and the kids keep me young (at 60 that is important). I visited Vietnam during Christmas of '04 and it was great. As you have heard from others, the airfield and all signs of the compound at BMT are gone. I will try to do a better job of keeping in contact.

*Jim Osborn*

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### President's Message

First let me start by thanking all of you for supporting my nomination back in November. The nomination took me by surprise ( thanks Earl ) and the quick support I received made me extremely proud to be part of such a great organization. I would like to thank Chuck Markham our outgoing president for his leadership and guidance. The association officers for their continued service to our organization always keeping our membership growing and our organization moving forward.

Since becoming president and having my e-mail now on the website I've received numerous interesting requests which has made my position very rewarding. I've been able to help members with questions, direction and answers in regard to VA issues such as claims, documentation, records and treatment. I've encouraged members who haven't yet attended a reunion to do so. We have many members who are hesitant and afraid who need our support and encouragement. After all these years we still have 155th personnel who are just now discovering the 155th web site we are still growing.

I've received e-mails from high school students and non-veteran adults asking questions about our unit and always praise our website...thanks Mary and Earl.

I've enjoyed every request and the appreciative responses I receive afterwards is most rewarding. Inquiries about our next reunion have been made. Mary the web master is setting up information on our website that will explain each location and date. It was decided at the last reunion that the best way to decide on the next reunion site was for all the members to vote on it.

On a personal note, the traveling replica of Washington's Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall came to my hometown on April 29 - May 1, 2005. The presentation coincided with the 30th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. It was so close to my house that I decided two days before the opening that I would take my evening run by the site. As I entered the Park looking for the wall my eyes came upon a UH-1D slick on a flat bed. The closer I ran to this aircraft the more in awe I became, it looked as if it was mission ready. I stood around alone at first thinking back 38 years and remembering details and missions I had flown. I became nervous, curious and found myself opening up the right side and finding an old M-60 hand held in the door gunners well. Without thinking I instinctively opened it up and started to check out all its parts I sat in the well for several minutes visualizing my great experiences in slicks.

My 38 year old daydream was interrupted when an individual came over and we started a conversation about Vietnam and Huey's. I sat in the well and he introduced himself as Craig La Mountain owner of the slick. Come to find out he lives not far from me here on Long Island and he keeps this aircraft in his backyard as a memorial to his brother who was lost during the war off the coast of Vietnam but outside the boundary to be considered a Vietnam casualty. It was unreal to think that such a great aircraft sits in a backyard not far from my house. The authentic memorabilia inside the Huey was incredible, a result of 10 trips back to Vietnam. In a near by tent he had even more unbelievable stuff on display. He mentioned about the items he doesn't bring for display and the personal stuff like his short timers stick that was stolen last year. He then stated we have no one who flew in Huey's here would I like to help out watching my stuff and answering a question from time to time? The opportunity to be around the slick for a few hours just drew me in. As it turned out I spent 4 days from 9 am to 8 pm answering questions and meeting hundreds of Vietnam Vets who either owed their lives to such an aircraft or had a memory of riding in one in country. Like a vintage car these vets just stood around smiling telling story after story with respect and admiration. The positive feedback I received from children to adults was astounding. I wore our black baseball hat with the stagecoach patch and a few ribbons. Our patch was recognized by several veterans who related the same story of respect for our unit and how the 155th came through when needed. a few examples and I heard many: I met a special forces guy who was saved by the 155th in the siege of Duc Lap in 1968, I had a 4th infantry LRRP tell me that our gunships saved them from being overrun near Ban Don. The one meeting that got me the most was the Special Forces guy who was airlifted by the 155th during the week of Sept 22 - 27 1967 out of the Special Forces camp at Phu Bai. I was one of a small detachment that went north that week to the Special Forces camp. We exchanged stories of events like the ammo dump blowing up, the scary mission west of Khe Sanh, the little Houmg troops, and the bad weather mission in which we spent an hour circling Hue before it was cancelled. The little-remembered details was uncanny and validation to our shared experience. Our two hours of conversation was a special moment for me and the unit's pride. The memories and respect for our unit by all these veterans was special indeed. This esprit de corps is still present today. Here I was, a world away and almost 4 decades later, and the admiration for the 155th kept coming up. Our unit was exceptional and its members are still held in high regard all these years later with such respect. It just kept me going hour after hour day after day. If you haven't attended a reunion yet, please plan to do so. You too will experience the 155th respect and camaraderie.

*Jim Ferris*

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**STALLIONS & SIDEKICKS**                      The 92nd AHC has a reunion scheduled for October 14 - 16, 2005 in Manitou Springs, CO. Information is available on the unit web site at <http://www.92ahc.org> or contact the webmaster at [stallion505@gbronline.com](mailto:stallion505@gbronline.com) or 719-685-4526. (Ed: After 1968, the 155<sup>th</sup> and the 92<sup>nd</sup> were two of the Assault Helicopter Companies in the 10<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion.)

*Jim Koch, Stallion 505 and Stagecoach 13*

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Published quarterly by the 155 AHC Association. Copyright 2005



155<sup>th</sup> AHC Association

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