

May 2010



The Ban Me Thuot Barb

**Newsletter of the 155th Assault Helicopter
Company and All Units Serving at Camp
Coryell; Central Highlands, II Corps, South Vietnam
1965—1971**

LAST MINUTE REUNION CHANGE: The deadline for signing up for the River Boat Cruise has been extended to July 1.

2010 Reunion Update

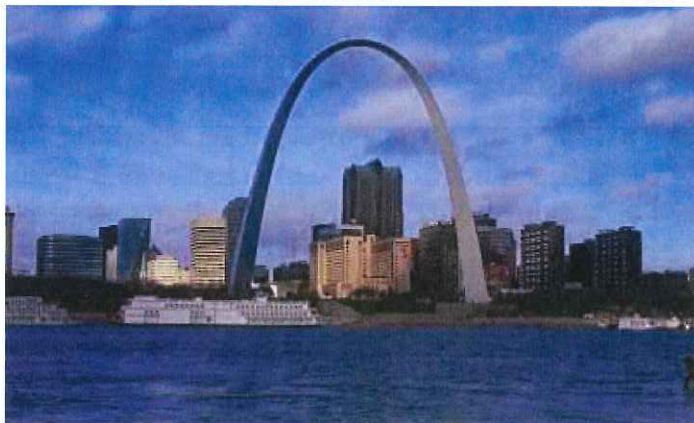
Larry "Matt" Matthews

If you have been living under a rock and have not read the previous "Barbs" or other correspondence we have distributed on the subject, the 155th will be participating in a joint reunion with other member companies of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion—the last battalion we were assigned to. The reunion will be August 4 - 8 at the Crown Royal Airport Hotel in St. Louis, MO. The 281st AHC will be the host company this year (as they were last year).

To date (May 10), we have twenty guys signed up to attend the reunion (fourteen of them indicated they will be bringing their wives/girlfriends). I feel confident that more of our guys will be attending that we are not aware of since registration is being handled by the 281st guys and because we've had a much greater turnout at our own past reunions. For reference, we had 56 in Savannah and 38 in San Antonio.

I'm not going to publish the names of those that have indicated they were coming but I will tell you that they represent the entire time the 155th AHC (and its predecessor Co A/1/1) existed as a unit in Vietnam. I think that is pretty good considering it's been almost 40 years (give or take a little) since the last guy left the compound.

We will not repeat all the reunion information again—the complete information package, including registration forms, was included with the February "Barb" mailing and it is cost prohibitive to repeat that mailing. Besides the event dates, the important items that may warrant your attention are: reunion registration costs are \$130 per person attending (which includes two banquet dinners) and hotel costs of \$60/night. If you have lost the information and need it resent to you to register, call me () or eMail me () and I'll do my best to get the information resent to you. Registrations must be mailed to the 281st no later than June 1.



*Meet me in St. Louis,
Louie and Bob and
Earl and Jim and
Dave and ...*

Recent Web Site "Guest Book" entries looking for help

Date: 5/9/2010, 3:13 pm, EDT
Name: John Brennan
Email: johnmailman@yahoo.com
Number: 175

This is John Brennan, active member of the VHCMA and the 114th Avn Co Assn. I'm collecting "names" (e.g. FLYING COFFIN, IRON BUTTERFLY) that in-country Army copter crews painted on their aircraft during their Vietnam tours, 1961-73. Future book by aviation publisher is in the making.

Have cataloged 2,730 names to date. I expect that number to exceed 3,000 when complete. Would very much like to include as many PERSONALIZED copter names as possible. Photos of "names" are fine but not necessary to be included in the database section of the book. "Names" alone will do.

The second part of this book project is the photo collection of helicopter "nose art" that includes "name", artwork, graffiti, everything and anything that was painted officially and unofficially on in-country Army copters, 1961-73.

Send "name" info and/or scanned "nose art" pics to johnmailman@yahoo.com

Regards, John Brennan, former SP5, Flight Operations Coordinator, 114 AHC, Vinh Long AAF, Mekong Delta 1970-71

PS: In-country YEARBOOKS are often a great source for copter "names". Take a peek and give me a shout if something interesting is found.

Date: 4/15/2010, 9:23 am, EDT
Name: Don Pearsall
Email: [redacted]@yahoo.com
Number: 173

Greetings Brothers:

I was in the bunker on 13 March, 1968 at 2220 hours at the 155th AHC. A hostile force employing 82mm mortars attacked the compound.

An estimated 81 rounds were fired in 4 separate barrages. There were 20 WIA on the compound and one of the unit's NCOs Robert Gene Pinkston was killed as a result of this action.

I was wounded in that attack but the military has no record of my injury. I received the Purple Heart in a ceremony presented by Major Urbach. I think the company clerk was a fellow named Hunter or Royce or something. I need an affidavit of this event to have my records corrected.

This was during the chaotic Tet offensive so records were screwed up pretty good and no records exist of the 20 soldiers wounded that night. The Dept of the Army says they will accept affidavits to correct my records. Please help...

FROM ANOTHER UNIT CONTACT...

sent to us by Milo Taylor

Looks like this one happened just about, 44 years ago. We arrived in VN on May 1, 1966 and missed this one, but had some "Hurry Up" a few days later.

Date: Thu, 6 May 2010 06:51:59 -0700

From: genelass@yahoo.com

Subject: [Vhfcn-l] May 6, 1966 Engagement & Loss

CC: vhfcn-l@vhfcn.org

To: n

Gang, I have been waiting a long time to share this story. Before I lose all of my mind I want to see if anyone else on the net was in the AO that day.

May 6, 1966, the 1/9th was working near the coast (I can't remember where).

Our new squadron commander had ordered the blues to be put in by squad in three different places. I was flying guns and had the new troop commander in the left seat. I remember talking with Pappy Engman, one of the blue pilots at breakfast. He had taken one of the new WOs, Mr. Lahon (sp.), to train after I had given him his in-country ride for a couple of days.

Pappy was all of 40ish, but older than most of us and we looked up to him and John Valear as old hands. We were scouting around looking for VC we had heard were working the area. About mid-morning we got a call that one of the blue ships was down. When we arrived we found a scout ship directing fire on a village and the delta model on the ground, rolled over on its side about ten or twenty yards from the village.

About 1,000 yards away was a line of ARVN APCs firing on the village with their 50s. For the rest of the day we made pass after pass at the village, firing everything we had, refueling and rearming, and firing again. I watched my fellow gun ship drivers fly right into heavy automatic weapons fire time after time. One

had his windshield blown out and had it not been for the visor he remembered to lower he would have been blinded. One of the lift ship drivers, an infantry Captain, landed behind the APCs and tried to get them to move on the village. They would not. The story we were told is that he threw the crew of one of the APCs out and drove the thing up to the edge of the village to get the guys from the ship. We fired so close to him we were afraid that we would hit him. But he called us to keep it up.

He brought out the bodies of all the blues and Pappy and Mr. Lahon. The only survivor was the crewchief who was pinned under the ship. The Captain used his knife to cut him out and dragged him to the APC. The Captain was wounded in the butt and spent time at the local MASH unit before returning to us.

Now the part I have been saving for years. We kept fire on the village until the heavy infantry arrived that night, after dark. I had flown the ship all day, not having enough sense to let the new troop commander fly for a while. Somewhere south of the village around 8 or 9 o'clock PM, I became disoriented and began to climb without realizing it. Suddenly we were surrounded by red and green lights and the radio lit up with yells. I had climbed through a flight of Hueys bringing troops to the village. The new troop commander yelled, "I've got it." and flew us to the POL. Then he jumped out and left me there with the gunner and crewchief to put the ship back in the revetment. Some how I did it. The next morning the Doc gave me a little black pill and told me to go back to bed. Twenty-four hours later I awakened and went back to the war.

Anybody there that day?

Gene Lassiter

Bravo Guns, 1/9, '66

C & HQ, 228th, '68-'69?

The LRRPS

Another story shared with us by Milo Taylor

Note: The Les Taylor in the following is of no relation but served in the 155th, 1967-68

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing. - Albert Einstein

Alright, you asked for a story so here goes . . .

Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRPs) were squad-sized groups dropped behind enemy lines to gather tactical information. The length and circumstances of their missions varied depending on circumstances but they usually didn't stay out much longer than a week. They often ran into trouble that required emergency extraction. During Tet of '68 many such extractions took place.

I don't have to tell most of you that when you're

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twenty, twenty-one or so, you aren't particularly mindful of your mortality. At that age you see certain predicaments more as "fun challenges" than threats to your life. I grew up an Army brat so I should have known better but I used to volunteer for just about any challenging mission that came my way. It wasn't bravery. A brave man is scared yet does his duty anyway. No, my friends it was stupidity.

Be that as it may, during Tet most of the unit was up in Kontum. We had been dropping live troops off at LZs blasted out of the jungle on mountain sides and picking up the bodies and assorted parts in plastic lined ammo boxes for about a week. At the time I was the most senior aviator in the first platoon call sign: Stagecoach 11. I was often asked to "do things". I got a call that there was a LRRP patrol that needed extraction from one of the mountains up near Dak To. There was no LZ. There was just a spot that had been blasted away near the peak of the mountain with a large bomb. You had to be careful in those situations because it was easy to run into a broken trunk that was hard to see because it had been stripped of its foliage.

On the way in I contacted the guys and could hear them taking small arms fire. One had been wounded pretty badly in the leg. We had loaded a rope ladder into the aircraft and the plan was to have the bulk of the guys come up one at a time and then to carry the wounded guy out like a sling load. He said he was in good enough shape that he could hook his good leg through, and hold on long enough for us to get him to the closest installation that had the proper medical support.

I always liked a flying challenge and actually enjoyed going into those LZs that required the pater pilot, door gunner and crewchief to give you feedback as you hovered in and out. I figured this was just another of those fun flying challenges. On the way in you kind of develop a mental image of what you think the situation is going to be like but when you got there they rarely were as you'd imagined. Well this one was a doozie. The slope on the mountainside was at least 45 degrees. I would be hovering out of ground effect while the guys climbed up. There was small arms fire and we had no support from any gunships. The bomb had blown the leaves off the trunks but most of the trunks and branches were still in tact. We were at about six thousand feet on a high density altitude day.

Yeah, this was going to be "fun" alright. I hovered in and we dropped the ladder down the right side of the aircraft. Just then we started to receive even more

small arms fire. Instead of climbing up one at a time like we had asked them to do, all of the patrol guys started to come up at once and of course they weren't listening to their radio anymore so there was no way to tell them to stop.

A number of things happened at once at this point. Rotor RPM started to decay and I ran out of left cyclic. OK. It was time to be rational and calm. What could I do to remedy the situation? The aircraft was out of balance. How could we get that fixed? I thought what the hell, if we went down there we'd all be dead anyway so might as well have everybody, including the pater pilot un-strap and hang out the opposite side of the aircraft to try to gain some semblance of balance. Meanwhile we were headed into the trees toward the right of the aircraft. I gave the order and the guys responded beautifully. I forget the name of my pater pilot but he didn't question, he just reacted and just in time too. They were all hanging out of the aircraft hanging on for dear life. The aircraft was bouncing all over the place as the LRRP guys clambered up so I was worried that my guys would be tossed out but I guess fear is a great motivator and they managed to cling on as required. I milked the collective and got a little RPM back just as the first guy climbed through the right hand door.

We were past the worst part and things eased up after that as far as the cyclic was concerned. We still had the challenge of getting everyone on board before the rotor RPM went to hell and then carrying the wounded guy out like a sling load. His weight wasn't yet added to the total either. He was sitting on the ground waiting.

My pater pilot climbed back into his seat and we got everyone into their places just fine. RPM was about as low as it could get and still stay flying. You could still hear the pop, pop of small arms but they weren't hitting us. I milked the collective again - with the pucker factor increasing by the second and eased the aircraft up. There hadn't been much ladder on the ground so it took only about ten seconds to clear the trees and then we were home free.

I worried about the guy hanging on down below, so I had the door gunner keep an eye on him all the way back to the drop off point. I kept it slow, set him down as gently as possible and then hovered off to the side to let the others off. It was quite a feeling.

There was not a word of thanks from those guys. Not a "kiss my ass" or boo. Still I knew what we had done and that was enough.

Humor Is the Best Medicine

Herman Hedrick sent this to me a couple of days ago and I was reminded of some of the logbook entries from long ago that I know the Tech Inspectors must have had a good laugh with. Though I had seen it before, I thought you might enjoy this as much as I did.

Remember it takes a college degree to fly a plane, but only a high school diploma to fix one; a reassurance to those who fly routinely in their jobs. After every flight, UPS pilots fill out a form, called a 'gripe sheet,' which tells mechanics about problems with the aircraft. The mechanics correct the problems, document their repairs on the form, and then pilots review the gripe sheets before the next flight.

Never let it be said that ground crews lack a sense of humor. Here are some actual complaints submitted by UPS pilots (marked with a P) and the solutions recorded (marked with an S) by maintenance engineers. By the way, UPS is the only major airline that has never, ever, had an accident.

P: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.

S: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

P: Test flight OK, except auto-land very rough.

S: Auto-land not installed on this aircraft.

P: Something loose in cockpit.

S: Something tightened in cockpit.

P: Dead bugs on windshield.

S: Live bugs on back-order.

P: Autopilot in altitude-hold mode produces a 200-feet-per-minute descent.

S: Cannot reproduce problem on ground.

P: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.

S: Evidence removed.

P: DME volume unbelievably loud.

S: DME volume set to more believable level.

P: Friction locks cause throttle levers to stick.

S: That's what friction locks are for.

P: IFF inoperative in OFF mode.

S: IFF is always inoperative in OFF mode.

P: Suspected crack in windshield.

S: Suspect you're right.

P: Number 3 engine missing.

S: Engine found on right wing after brief search.

P: Aircraft handles funny. (I love this one!)

S: Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right and be serious.

P: Target radar hums.

S: Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.

P: Mouse in cockpit.

S: Cat installed.

and the best for last.

P: Noise coming from under instrument panel. Sounds like a midget pounding on something with a hammer.

S: Took hammer away from the midget.

Earl Leverett's Memories of the 155th

I arrived in 'Nam sometime in September, 1969; I don't remember the exact date. When processing into Brigade I got my first 'Nam experience when I went to take a shower and the Vietnamese women came in the shower with me to wash clothes. I was at Brigade a day or two and then I went to Battalion at Dong Ba Thin. I was asking about the companies in the Battalion and I was told that they were all pretty good and safe except one. And guess which one that was? "The 155th". It was then that I knew where I would be going.

My first or second night at Dong Ba Thin, I was in the enlisted men's club when a rocket and mortar attack began. I had been in country only 2 or 3 days and didn't have a clue what to do or where to go. Someone

grabbed me and said to follow him. Next thing I know he is handing me an M-79, which I had never seen one before and we are running across this wide open field with rounds coming in headed for the fence line. So we ended up spending the night on a bunker. I have to admit it was pretty exciting. The next day I headed for the 155th. I arrived and got settled in.

I was assigned to the PE (Periodic Inspection) Crew. Things were really calm for the first 4 or 5 weeks. Sometime the night of October 25, 1969, I was awakened by the sound of the siren. I sat up and listened for the next round to hit. It sounded like it hit on the flight line, so I jumped up and ran for the bunker, but I didn't get very far. The next round hit the roof right above my head. Thank God the angle that the

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round hit caused most of the shrapnel to go away from me but it knocked me to my knees and some of the roof fell in on me. Next thing I knew the medics were grabbing me under the arms and dragging me out and taking me underground to a bunker hospital. They shot me full of drugs and put me in a helicopter and flew me to a hospital. I'm not sure how to spell it but I was flown to Pleiku. I think I was there for 2 weeks. They released me with a pair of crutches and I made my way to the flight line and found a ride back to the 155th. I healed quickly and was soon back to normal duties.

At some time I was transferred from the PE Crew to the engine shop. The engine specialists had to go up on test flights to take readings from the engine. I will never forget my first test flight. The pilot found out it was my first time. (Any pilots that are reading this are laughing about now.) The pilot I believe was a CW4 and I think someone said he was one of our most experienced pilots. Needless to say he gave me the flight of my life. I about had to clean out my pants when we landed. Another thing I remember that happened while I was in the engine shop, we had several aircraft down for engine change out. But we were having trouble getting new engines. We knew we had to have these aircraft flyable, so we decided to rebuild an engine, even though this was way above the level of maintenance that we were authorized to do. Well, we did it, but it didn't stay in the air very long on the test flight. I don't remember what happened exactly.

At some time, most of the PE Crew left to go home and we went from like a 23 man crew to a 4 man crew. At this point they put me in charge of the PE Crew because I was the only one with any experience. I was a Spec4 at the time and for some reason I could not get along with the Sergeant over maintenance at all. I seems to me that the Vietnamese on the base had control of our hot water and that they would turn it off like at 10 pm. The PE Crew would work past 10, so one night I knocked everyone off early so they could get a shower and the Sergeant got really upset when he found out what I had done. At the time and for quite some time I had a real problem with authority.

I thought I would list some situations that I remember and maybe someone else might remember and add to or comment on these same situations.

"THINGS I REMEMBER"

1. The four bars across the street.
2. The movie theater with no walls.
3. The swimming pool.

4. The guard dogs and handlers. I remember talking with them while on guard duty.
5. Hanging new guys on the stinger.
6. First time I tracked a main rotor and the flag about took my leg off.
7. Cooling beers with a CO2 fire extinguisher.
8. Mad minute at 12 midnight New Years Eve.
9. Many late night card games.
10. Mess hall menu: chicken or roast beef.
11. The night the enemy was spotted inside the fence line and all hell broke loose.
12. Softball games in the maintenance area.
13. The time the Special Forces Station down town caught fire and burnt to the ground.
14. Many late nights repairing aircraft that had been damaged from rocket and mortar fire.
15. I remember taking a couple days off and going to Dong Ba Thin for a break and the night I got there we were hit by rockets and mortars.
16. I remember many nights and days on guard duty.
17. I remember huge rats and insects.
18. I remember the rigid maintenance Technical Inspectors. We would do a PE inspection and they would make list after list. We would finish one list of write ups and then they would make another, and then another. But I knew that was good. It made for a safe aircraft.
19. I remember services for those that died and there was just boots and flight helmets.
20. I remember new guys getting thrown in the sewer ditch.
21. I remember being inside a tailboom and someone on the flight line accidentally set off a rocket on an aircraft and I thought it was incoming and about tore the tailboom off trying to get out.
22. I remember being crazy enough to sneak off base late at night and go downtown.
23. I remember having new guys torque all the bolts on the floor panels in the aircraft.
24. Having new guys align the main rotor with the make shift scraper we used to clean the hanger floor with.



Photo by Michael Horst

(I "borrowed" the following from our website. Enjoy! — Matt)

As I Remember.....

Al Owen - "Stagecoach 20"

As I read the Unit History for the period I had the honor to fly for the 155th, several events that were mentioned seem to jump out at me and bring forward memories that I haven't dealt with in a long time. I'll try to keep it brief.

8 Sept. 1968: A UH-1H (67-17149) assigned to the 1st lift platoon crashed just north of Duc Lap taking with it two of our pilots. Warrant Officers Koppel and Harwood. My crew, WO1 Jerry Green and I, were called to fly to the crash site and airlift the bodies out. It was very dense jungle cover and the hole that their aircraft had made was the only way we were able to nose into the mountain to get them loaded aboard. I wish I could remember the crewchief and gunner's names, just to be able to thank them again. Their direction was the only thing that enabled us to back out of that hole successfully.

23 Sept. 1968: During a combat assault in the Duc Lap area, my platoon leader was shot down in the LZ. This has quite a bit of untold circumstances that resulted in this happening. 2nd platoon was sent south to insert troops in the vicinity of Duc Lap. I was the AC of the 2nd aircraft in the flight of 3 on our lift. My platoon leader, a Captain and if I remember this too, was a former Mohawk driver, and whose name just won't come back to me was the lead, and naturally I can't remember who was flying the 3rd aircraft. We landed at a firebase or camp PZ, met up with a Major who was involved in the operation, and a fairly new in country 1Lt. who was flying the Major around in a LOH (OH-6). After a short briefing, we boarded our aircraft, loaded the troops and then followed the LOH to the Area. Not being familiar with the area and the LZ, lead agreed to follow the LOH into the LZ. Up until now, the LZ had not been considered "hot". Much to our surprise and the ignorance of things you just don't do, the 1Lt LOH driver flew us directly over the LZ, without telling us it was the LZ, made a wide circle to the left and lined up on final. After we called the LZ in sight, he bailed and got out of our way

As we crossed the tree line on final, all HELL broke loose. The flight lead called heavy fire and his aircraft caught fire. He was able to get about two-thirds up the LZ before they had to abandon the aircraft and run. I'm sure glad they ran the right way. The bad guys were behind us, and the friendlies were at our right front in the tree line. My aircraft took hits as well, and we continued in and landed just behind the flaming landmark that they left us. When we touched down, our troops bolted from the aircraft and ran to the tree line. I don't think that any of ours were wounded, but Chalk 3 took more hits than we did and made a go-around and headed back to the PZ. We followed Chalk 3, after what was the most rapid application of collective pitch and departure from an LZ that I ever made. When we arrived at the PZ, the LOH was just shutting down, I immediately ran to the aircraft and exploded in a verbal assault on both the occupants, explaining just how stupid they were, and that they were the reason my boss was shot down in the LZ. When I had exhausted all of the expletives I could remember, the crew chief advised that he had inspected the aircraft and determined that it was good to go. We headed back to BMT and hoped to get another aircraft to return and get the boss and his crew out. Major Poole met us as we landed, and approved us to return to the area. He sent 2 slicks and a much appreciated Falcon gun team to cover us this time.

We got back to the area just after sunset, but with just enough light to distinguish the LZ. It didn't take a genius to know not to approach the LZ from the north this time. We elected to approach from the west into the southwest corner where our guys had identified as their position. The area we were directed to was covered by elephant grass, and it became almost impossible to judge where they were. About the time I thought I was almost there and broke to a hover, I called for a hand flare to make certain. The cockpit lit up as the flare came straight up through the rotor blades. We had arrived. We were able to sit down and as I turned around to welcome my boss aboard, they were loading their wounded. We extracted all of their wounded, and the second slick was able to bring out our other crew. We returned to BMT post haste and landed at the Medivac pad. When I turned around this time, I had what was the most satisfying moment to date. Several of the wounded, by their looks, gestures and words, said "THANKS".

HELP!!! We need your stories to keep your Barb fresh and interesting for all; take a few moments to write down your memories and share them with us. Send them to Matt and he'll make sure whomever is doing the next Barb gets them.

Many long and miserable days and nights were spent here. To all that dedicated their time getting our aircraft patched up, repaired, and through PEs and back on flight status, we thank you.

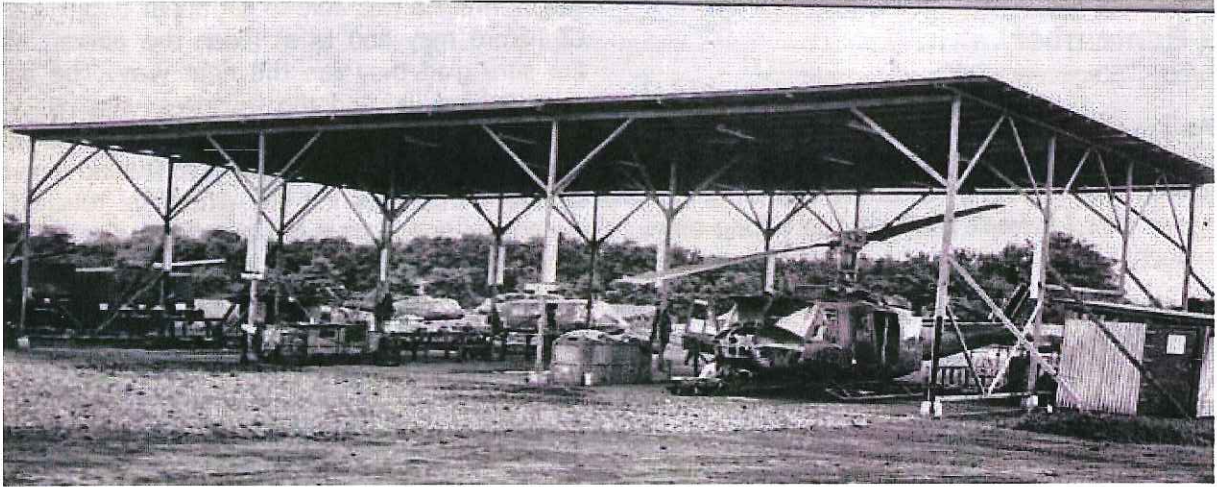


Photo by Herb Bundage 66-67

IMPORTANT!! if you move or your mailing address changes, or you change or get an eMail account please let me know.

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