



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

Guys, send me your memories of your time in Vietnam (funny or serious)—it keeps the “Barb” interesting and is a great way to pass on to your family an important part of your life .

Matt (ceilmatt@frontier.com)

Reunion Wrap-Up

Matt Matthews

The August 4 – 8, 2010 reunion at the Crown Point Airport Hotel in St. Louis, MO was a good time. We had 21 guys there and 14 were accompanied by their significant other. This was our first reunion in conjunction with other companies from the 10th CAB (the 281st was the host company). While it was more expensive than our reunions of the past, the extra bucks paid for two banquet meals, a spouse’s brunch, and allowed us to have our own hospitality suite. For those of us that served with other companies in the 10th, we had the opportunity to share remembrances with them as well. I would have to rate the hotel as first rate and the staff treated us like royalty.

Beer and booze was plentiful though the beer was limited to Budweiser. It seems surreal to say that we still have booze left over that was purchased for the 2008 San Antonio reunion (if someone would have foretold that while we were at BMT we would have collectively declared him “beau coup dinky dau” – i.e., much crazy to you ladies).

We had our business meeting Saturday morning – the following items were discussed and approved:

1. Next Reunion date, location, frequency

A discussion was held on whether to continue to piggy-back with another unit or meet independently which led into discussion of annual/biannual frequency. Annual was selected with one year in conjunction with the 281st in St. Louis and the off year independently somewhere else. Our independent reunion will be moved back to November (Veterans day). 2011 we’ll be back in St. Louis (in August). The independent locations considered were Atlanta and DC – Atlanta was chosen and Bob Goolsby agreed to be point man for the 2012 reunion.

2. Newsletter

Matt Matthews will continue to compile and distribute the newsletter. An urgent plea was made to have every-

one put their stories on paper and send them to Matt.

3. Webpage

We’re trying to regain control of the webpage. Elizabeth Coward, wife of Wayne Coward, has agreed to take over maintaining/updating the website once control is reestablished.

4. Officers selected:

President:	Bob Gardner
Vice-President:	Chuck Markham
Treasurer:	Jeff Schrader
Database:	Matt Matthews
Sergeant-At-Arms:	Wayne Coward
Historian:	Les Davison

Saturday afternoon a special remembrance ceremony was held to recognize those Killed In Action from the companies present. After the 281st had recognized their fallen I was privileged to read the names of the 63 members of the 155th that gave their all. We also recognized our association members that had passed away since the 2008 reunion that we are aware of. They are:

Michael Hannon	67-68
Vernon C. Dehart	67-68
Richard R. Jackson	68-69
Stephen J. Smith	68-69

Mary Baldwin - wife of Earl Baldwin, webmaster, and beloved friend of all association members

Rest in peace friends.

For the Fallen

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young.
Straight of limb, true of eyes, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.
They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

God's Gift to Me

John Worsham

The trees are green, the sky so blue;
These are the things God gave to you.

He placed upon this earth for me;
All the things that I can see.

But most of all, my family of love;
My Christian family from God above.

When I am weak and cannot stand;
They hold me tight with a Christian hand.

I love my family and pray each night;
God will bless them and treat them right.

For Jesus watches and knows their heart;
His Christian love will never part.

It matters not if I'm right or wrong;
My Christian family will keep me strong.

God sends them to me, so I will see;
They're the gift, He's given me.

Through my Christian family, God's light will shine;
He lets me know that they are mine.

I open my heart and will always see;
The Holy gift God gave to me.

April 25, 2010

The preceding poem was shared with us by John Worsham (served with the 155th); John is presently incarcerated in Maryland. If you would like to drop John a note I'm sure he would appreciate it; his address is:

John Worsham #129550
30420 Revells Neck Rd
Westover, MD 21890-3368

155 Prayer List

Matt Matthews

I have considered publishing a Prayer List of 155 members that have health issues. I will only include members who have asked to be included.

If you would like your name included on the Prayer List in the next **Barb**, send the request to me (ceilmatt@frontier.com) and I will include it. If I receive no requests I will not continue the Prayer List.

Initiation Night at Ban Me Thuot

Keith Lane

I remember the initiation night for us "newbies" several days after we arrived. I think I remember five of us that night, lined up by the shallow end of the pool (it was still in pretty good condition in May of '67). There's more than I remember, I'm sure, but what sticks out in my mind are the Flaming Mimi's we had to drink, and the march toward the deep end of the pool while fully dressed.

I'm not a drinker, and was very skeptical of taking something burning and pouring it down my throat, but the leaders of that little soiree were very patient with me and explained how the burning part really didn't go down, but still cautioned me to down it quickly just in case.

After the "Flaming Mimi" we were instructed to line up side by side about ten feet from the edge of the pool. The command "Forward, March!" started us toward the shallow end, and when we got to the edge we just kept going, into the water, and on toward the other end where a Charlie model rotor blade served as the diving board (it really had some good spring in it). I was doubtful about hearing the command to halt if the water got deep enough to cover my ears, but as it turned out I didn't get that far before the command was given. When we climbed out of the pool, we were given our Stagecoach patches and became official members of the 155th; my call sign was Stagecoach 20.

Fortunately, during my time in BMT the pool never took a direct hit from the mortars, but a couple of weeks after Tet '68 a unit of the 173rd Airborne Brigade came in to camp after several weeks in the jungle and decided the pool was the perfect place to bathe - fully clothed, weapons, combat boots, and all. They tore the crap out of the rubber liner and the pool became unusable for the rest of my time there.



THE LADY...THE HUEY

From her birth in the '50s to her demise at the beginning of the millennium, the humble Huey has performed her mission heroically for over five decades.

From the plains of Khe Sanh to the streets of Kuwait city, she asked for nothing more than a soft touch and a good daily. She saved countless lives... and delivered death and destruction.

All military services have used her... but the Army loved her.

Whether taxi cab or airborne truck, ambulance or killer, the Huey was loved by all... feared by many... and respected by most.



THE MYTH

With her bulletproof skin she could take direct hits from a .50 Cal and bring her crew back alive.

You could hold her together with hundred mile an hour tape and safety wire... and if necessary, use cardboard for body panels.

She could pull 70 pounds of torque and run like hell at 140 knots.

She even helped invent a new language like... "Slick", "This ain't no bullshit", "And there I was..."

THE LEGACY

Very soon the Huey will join the list of Army "has beens"... the .45, the Jeep, Khakis, and the Steel Pot.

As Army aviation moves forward, let us all remember the legacy of a trusted and loyal friend.

And to all present here... let us salute a fellow comrade, the UH-1 Iroquois.

The Military Wife

by Elizabeth Soutter Schwarzer

I never wore the uniform, no medals on my chest.
The band, it doesn't play for me, I am not among the best.
I do not march in cadence; I do not rate salute,
I stand among the silent ranks, our devotion absolute.

If you've not worn my shoes, you do not know my story.
I live a life of sacrifice, my reward a private glory.
I've wept many silent nights away, and I've kept the home
fires burning.

I've worried and I've waited, as world events were churning.
I've moved more times than you could fathom, left more
people than you've known.

I've planted gardens around the world, very few that I've
seen grown.

I've grieved with new-made widows, and had my share of
scares when a ship or plane or man was down, and all I had
were prayers.

I'm not asking for your sympathy, (although appreciation
can be nice).

I did it quite on purpose, I chose to sacrifice.

I'll tell you a secret now, one you'd never guess.

About the one glory that is mine, it's just enough - no more,
no less.



When you and I stand together as our national anthem
plays,

I'll fill with reminiscences of how I spent those days.

I'll know the pain and joys again, I'll know that freedom isn't
free, I'll know I've helped to pay the price and that the an-
them plays for me.

We often remember to thank the military men and women
in uniform, but how often do we remember to thank their
spouses for their sacrifices and dedication?

Ft. Wolters

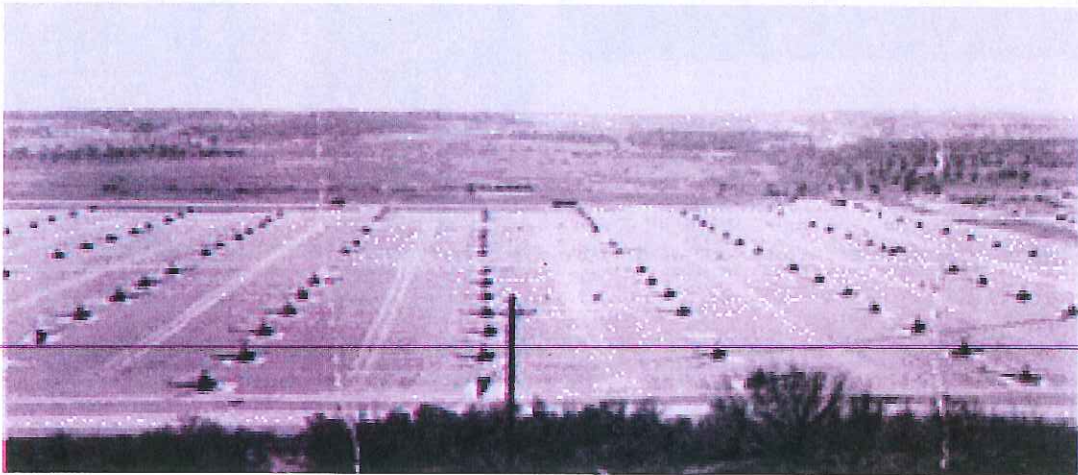
Bob Gardner — Falcon 5 — 68-69

I can still remember that January day in 1968 when I first saw the main gate at Fort Wolters. I was never so glad for a trip to end in my entire life. When I left Indianapolis enroute to Fort Wolters the weather was cold, clear, and windy. I was happy to be going to the "South" where I could get out of the cold winters!



Well, as luck would have it I hit snow around the Indiana/Illinois border and by the time I got to St Louis the roads were completely covered with packed snow. The next time I saw asphalt or concrete was three days after I arrived in Mineral Wells and it finally melted! I can still remember coming across Oklahoma on the Indian Nation Turnpike following a snow-plow, maybe a little too closely, when he stuck the blade into the berm and did a 360 in front of me! Luckily I managed to steer into the snow piled on the shoulder and got stopped prior to driving into the blade on that dump truck. That normal 13 hour trip took 27 hours and I was exhausted when I reached Mineral Wells.

Prior to starting classes I drove down by the Main Heliport and gawked at all the helicopters.



In case some of you really old guys don't remember, here is what you started out trying to hover!

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)



The TH-55
(Mattel Messerschmidt)



The OH-23
(Hiller Killer)



The OH-13
(Raven)

Classes and flight training progressed normally at a stage-field much like Pinto.



My next highpoint was actually soloing in early February. I

mention the date because anyone that was there knows what happens on the day you solo.



I'm here to tell you boys that water was really cold, but I didn't mind one bit!

Does anyone remember spending a few happy (?) months in one of these?



(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Hopefully you didn't spend any time here although one of the best days of my life happened when my daughter was born in the Beech Army Hospital on 13 Dec 1971!



It's really quite sad to drive through the old base these days. The main gate announces an industrial park, the gas station is fenced off and falling down, my old duplex in Wolter's village was destroyed during a fire training exercise by the Flower Mound Fire Department. The Nike missile site has long since been dismantled, the main heliport tower is almost gone, and the telephone poles utilized during recovery and launch of the Main Heliport fleet have almost all disappeared!

I, like a lot of you, have many fond memories of Fort Wolters. In fact I liked the area and people so well I have called this area home since that day in 1968 when I first saw the place!

My First Mini

Chuck Markham

I had not been very interested in re-acquainting myself with my military past - as a matter of fact I had been actively avoiding any such re-acquaintance. Then, in 1980, either Mike Stark, my best friend in the 155, or Les Davison, who was my hero while I was in the 155, informed me of an upcoming mini-reunion in Canton, Ohio hosted by Jeff Schrader. My wife, Mary, hadn't retired yet and I was touring a lot on the Goldwing, so I thought I might ride up from Texas and have a look. It was only about 1300 miles and would take me a couple of days each way. Mary said she thought it was a good idea so I packed my stuff and loaded the bike. I got an early start and rode pretty steadily on the I40 heading steadily northeast. I was venturing into "Yankee Land" without back up. I was on my own. The ride was uneventful though beautiful. I spent the first night in a little town just east of Memphis. I don't remember the name but the lady in the motel directed me to a local catfish place. Gooooood stuff. I went to bed tired but with a full stomach.

The hills of west Tennessee greeted me the next morning as I mounted up. I rode all morning through the beautiful hills

and mountains. Even on the interstate it is an enjoyable ride. I stopped in Louisville and had lunch at a restaurant I remembered from my tanker days at Fort Knox, The Kingfisher (they serve some great southern fried water dwellers). About the time I hit Cincinnati, or maybe a bit before, the scenery began to become less interesting, or maybe I was just tired, but for the rest of the ride I just wanted to get out of that saddle. I rode into Canton late, found the motel and hit the sack. Jeff wanted me to come on over, but I was beat so I just hit the sack.

The next morning I headed for Schrader's house. That was a challenge. It seems that there are two Middlebranch Avenues in Canton, OH and they aren't even close to each other. Pat greeted me at the door and though it was early and I was a perfect stranger she acted like I belonged there. Her welcoming smile and warm "come on in" were just what a slightly anxious first timer needed. The few who were there at that time were busy with preparations. I think Les was the only one there that early I had served with, but I remember Earl & Mary, and Jeff's Brother and Jeff himself treated me like a welcome brother. They kept working and I kept offering to help. Finally Jeff let me help him peel potatoes for the potato salad. Years later he said he wasn't sure about asking a former commander and reserve LTC to peel potatoes. We laugh about it now as he calls me a "Hard Ass ole Fart" and I called him something equally derisive. As people showed up and things got rowdier and coffee turned to other libations I knew I had finally found a place where people knew what I experienced and understood the vast array of emotions that were in play while we were all there.

We need to get together and raise a little hell once in awhile. Visit, catch up on each other's lives and yes, even tell a war story or two.

Next 155-only reunion in Atlanta in 2012 - let's all get together there.



Be Careful What You Ask For

Thomas H. McPartlin, M.D

I was privileged to be the Flight Surgeon for the 155th for a brief time in late 1970 as a "Newbie" to Vietnam and not far off having finished my internship in sunny southern California.

During the Autumn of that year, I was informed that Major Steele wanted his annual flu shot. I don't recall if it was Capt. Markham relaying the information or not, but that would have been the more likely. I said I would send a medic with the equipment and take care of it. I was then told that, "No, Doc, he wants you to give the shot to him."

Ours not to reason why. So, I loaded my med bag and went down to the orderly room. Trying to be as professional as possible, I drew up the shot, swabbed the good major's arm and injected away, satisfied that the major would be impressed with the care he had received. The satisfaction lasted a microsecond as I was informed by word and pained expression on the major's face, that "That hurt a lot, Doc. Worst shot I ever had."

Well, truth had to be told, of course, he being my commanding officer. "Major," I said, "Nurses always gave the shots in hospitals where I trained and medics always give them in the Army. Sir, this is the first shot I ever gave anyone."

Bob Hope Christmas and Co-Pilot Training

Willis "Jerry" Heydenberk

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Jerry to the VHPA that he thought we might enjoy.

Dear Bill,

I was impressed reading your listing of VHPA Officers. What a classy bunch. I enclose with this letter my personal check for annual dues of \$36.00. My appreciation for your efforts in keeping us all connected.

As I was reading the recent issue of *The VHPA Aviator*, the Bob Hope Christmas tour story caught my attention. I have something to add of my experiences of watching the first show of his Far East Christmas tour December 20, 1966. Yes, I am sure about this date.

Also included with this letter is my experience with a fellow pilot whom I was trying to guide into a night landing at the Pleiku Air Base in the Central Highlands in early 1967. What I was actually targeting for our landing target was, according to the control officer on duty, the manned control tower!

Finally, do you recall the son of a Major James B. Hayes who wrote asking for more information about his father who served in Vietnam? Major Hayes was XO of 155th AHC when he dictated a story to me about his combat helicopter mission with a previous unit. Major Hayes was the one who appointed me company PIO and connected me with the Asian edition of *Stars & Stripes*. Later the XO would allow me time away from combat missions to revise and update the 155th AHC history from the unit's first arrival in country.

Regarding the combat helicopter action article, I wrote at

that time "(Every day Major Hayes supplies me with more new facts for more stories. He wants more color so I am constantly rewriting" (from my mother's collected "Vietnam"; Jerry's letters home, scrapbook 1). After several attempts on my part to rewrite the action, the major decided to drop the idea of publication.

Sincerely,

Then 1Lt. Willis "Jerry" Heydenberk

Following are the Bob Hope remembrances and how I tried to steer my co-pilot into the Pleiku Control Tower as our approach target. Hope you enjoy both.

I had been in Vietnam only a short time when my orders were to fly with another pilot for an administrative run to Pleiku. It would be another helicopter flight to our 52nd Aviation Battalion headquarters. The date was December 20, 1966.

After landing, I had free time and found some GIs who invited me to ride with them as they planned to attend the first show of Bob Hope's Far Eastern Christmas tour. We traveled together in a quarter-ton to 4th Infantry Division Ivy Camp outside Pleiku.

Because we arrived in good time, our group found seating space only about 50 feet from the stage. I recall looking around us at the time to see the estimated 3,000 soldiers at all sides surrounding the large stage,

I remember seeing Bob Hope open the show. His principal guest (as I recall) was Raquel Welch. Also an attraction was Miss World (I believe, from Egypt). The show was great and received many periods of applause for Mr. Hope's fantastic efforts in bringing this type of entertainment to troops in Vietnam. I closed my account of the experience: "Quite a day and I would not have missed it for all the rice in Southeast Asia." (Vietnam, scrapbook1).

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Ending the day after flying extensive combat missions in early 1967, I flew main pilot with a co-pilot from Canada. As such, he had grown a small handlebar moustache that he told me was within the rules. (I don't remember whether he was a warrant officer or a second lieutenant, just that he was young and cocky in a funny way.)

We returned to Pleiku Camp Holloway Airfield and began our straight-in approach to landing. I was twisting and uncomfortable in my seat trying to adjust and direct the co-pilot flying at the controls. It seemed to me that he was flying off course and I kept trying to correct his approach by saying "A little more left," or "More right rudder."

As we were within 1,00 feet of the airstrip, I called the control tower to report our approach to landing, giving our Stagecoach call sign. The control tower officer responded, "Be advised, you are making your approach directly on top of the tower."

Was my face flaming as I tried explaining this to my young co-pilot!



155th AHC Association  
c/o L. Matthews

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