

May, 2011



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 (www.frontier.com)

Flashback! (by Jeff Schrader)

I was soloing in an OH-23 one morning over Texas. We were tasked to practice our landing and take-off procedures. The sky was beautiful, as it was a cold and crisp morning in December, 1967. I spotted a white tire area in the distance on a high mesa overlooking the Brazos River. I determined the wind, set up my downwind and proceeded to land in the LZ. Once down, I got out noticing prickly pear cactus (always looking for Rattlers and cow patties) and performed my exercise of stepping off the LZ for take-off. When I went forward of the aircraft, I got to the edge of the mesa and looked down at the river below. The river was about 400' down from the mesa. It was right at a bend in the river with sand built up on both sides. It was one of the most beautiful sights in my memory as the sun was just flowing into the valley and reflecting off of the sand.

After some time of looking at this sight and thanking God for the ability to be there and witness this, I returned to my aircraft, picked up, nudged the cyclic forward and soared off the edge like an eagle.

Remembrances (by Chuck Markham)

I was assigned to the 155 on 19 April 1970 but didn't arrive until late the afternoon of 20 April. I remember Maj. Louisi had sent someone to pick me up at the edge of the runway. They took me to my hooch and then to the orderly room. Things were buzzing about the crash on the 19th. I know, though I was not personally in on the conversation, that there was a prolonged discussion whether to declare the AC and Pilot KIA or MIA. It was decided by Maj. Louisi and LTC. Petralis to carry them on the morning report as MIA and so report them to Brigade HQ. The next day, as the XO, I was required to appoint officers to inventory and pack their personal gear and take it to the supply room for shipment to their next of kin. I was so new to the unit that I didn't know anyone so the First Sergeant recommended the candidates. A memorial was held in the company street. I remember we still flew our missions despite the aftershock of the tragedy.

It seems like it was maybe a couple of weeks later the CO received a letter from the parents of one of the pilots requesting details about the status of her son and the location of a gold ring he had told her he bought. Maj. Louisi passed the letter on to me and told me to answer it. Since we knew the pilot was deceased, I asked the Major if I could tell her so. I remember the Major became very agitated and I was told not to divulge that to her. I answered that the ring was not in his room when his belongings were inventoried and that the classified nature of his mission precluded any expansion of the information she had received from the Department of the Army.

Later the two aviators were declared KIA and I received another letter from the mother requesting more information. I again was forced to answer that details were unavailable due to the classified mission.

AC 328 and 325 must have been shot down on the same mission or the focus on the two pilots being killed made me forget having two ships shot down on the same day.

Being the XO, I was a bit isolated from the operational side of the unit and was pretty focused on the adminis-

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

trative and logistical end. I remember having Roast Beef about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time and trying to get the mess sergeant to do something else with it besides roast it in the oven. To this day I do not care very much for roast beef.

Unfortunately after 40 years or so the things I remember are always either the really pleasant things or the not very pleasant things. The ordinary daily things tend to fade into the background.

I remember all the paper work required when Bruce McInnis ran out of fuel and crashed but have difficulty remembering the celebrations when people were DEROSing. I remember the hard times caused when the less than brilliant Battalion S-4 couldn't make a decision about the FARP on the huge CA we flew into Cambodia with the Fourth Division. I remember the Company party with the BBQ when we re-opened the swimming pool. I remember Stark being the first to use the Charlie model blade we installed for a diving board. I cannot remember where the front gate to the compound was in relation to the company HQ building. I remember how dusty the corral was but I don't remember the revetment locations. I remember Jarvis and I sharing a drink in the officers club. I remember that LBJ poster on the wall. I remember playing Boo Ray in the Falcon Officers Hooch — Les never lost as I recall. It's funny the things you do and don't remember.

Vietnam Legacy Shapes Today's Military Leaders

reprinted from 'American Forces Press Service'

By Donna Miles

WASHINGTON, April 29, 2011 - Tomorrow marks the 36th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War -- a conflict that claimed the lives of more than 58,000 Americans and continues to affect the United States, including its military leaders and current wartime operations.

The fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, marked the dramatic and painful culmination of the Vietnam War. The last of the dominos were laid when then-President Richard M. Nixon announced the end of offensive operations against North Vietnam after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords on Jan. 27, 1973. The accords called for a ceasefire in South Vietnam, but allowed North Vietnamese forces to retain the territory they had captured.

With nearly all U.S. forces gone, and Congress' passage of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 that cut off military aid to South Vietnam, North Vietnam became emboldened. Its forces began a steady march southward toward Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital.

As the North Vietnamese closed in on Saigon, Operation Frequent Wind, the largest helicopter evacuation operation in history, commenced, moving tens of thousands of American military and civilian personnel from the city, along with thousands of South Vietnamese civilians.

On April 29, 1975, the North Vietnamese launched a heavy artillery bombardment that would become their final attack on Saigon. The city fell the following afternoon when a North Vietnamese tank crashed the gates of the presidential palace, accepting South Vietnam's unconditional surrender.

Ho Chi Minh's dream of a unified, communist Vietnam was fulfilled, and the city once known as Saigon today bears his name. Vietnam now celebrates April 30 as Reunification Day.

The Vietnam War cost millions of lives, including 58,267 Americans, with more than 300,000 U.S. servicemembers wounded in action and 1,711 missing in action.

The Vietnam War had a profound impact on today's American military leaders, including Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan. And in many ways, the lessons learned during the Vietnam conflict have shaped the way U.S. forces operate today, particularly in conducting counterinsurgency operations like those under way in Afghanistan.

Mullen, the highest-ranking U.S. military officer, is among the few people still on active duty who experienced Vietnam firsthand. Fresh from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1968, he reported aboard the destroyer USS Collett for duty as an anti-submarine officer and participated in combat operations off the Vietnam coast.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Mullen speaks frequently about how the Vietnam War affected the nation and shaped him both personally and professionally.

"The Vietnam conflict was a life-defining experience for every American who lived during that era, and it continues to impact us all: the pain, the conflict, the healing," he said during last year's Memorial Day observance at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington. "The lessons we learned in Vietnam were bought at a very great price. Acting on them is the best tribute we can pay to honor those who died" -- among them, some of Mullen's own friends and Annapolis classmates.

While he was struck during that first assignment at the intensity of the conflict, Mullen said, he soon began to process just how divisive the war had become.

"What I take away from Vietnam is the detachment of the American people from the U.S. military -- the disconnect and the unpopularity of the war," he told U.S. News and World Report in April 2008.

Mullen frequently tells audiences he addresses that he had concerns during the early days of the war in Afghanistan that it would have the same polarizing effect. To his relief, he said at the Vietnam Memorial, Americans "are so incredibly supportive of our military men and women now."

The chairman said he attributes the changed attitudes to the lessons learned from Vietnam about supporting troops unconditionally.

"During that time, as a country, we were unable to separate the politics from the people," he said. "We must never allow America to become disconnected from her military. Never."

Like most other current military leaders, Petraeus, commander of the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan, entered a military still healing from the Vietnam experience. Petraeus graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1974, a year before the fall of Saigon.

But Petraeus has studied the Vietnam experience thoroughly, even writing his doctoral dissertation at Princeton University on "The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam."

That dissertation, published in 1987, recognized the lasting impact the Vietnam experience would have.

"The legacy of Vietnam is unlikely to soon recede as an important influence on America's senior military," Petraeus wrote. "The frustrations of Vietnam are too deeply etched in the minds of those who now lead the services and the combatant commanders.

"Vietnam cost the military dearly," he continued. "It left America's military leaders confounded, dismayed and discouraged. Even worse, it devastated the armed forces, robbing them of dignity, money and qualified people for a decade."

This experience, Petraeus wrote, left many military leaders overly cautious. Specifically, he said, many felt "they should advise against involvement in counterinsurgencies unless specific, perhaps unlikely circumstances" ensure domestic public support, the promise of a quick campaign and the freedom to use whatever force is needed to achieve rapid victory.

Later in his career, as he oversaw the revision of the military's counterinsurgency field manual, Petraeus applied some of the lessons learned through the Vietnam experience.

That manual has become the guide for counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. It emphasizes that military power alone can't succeed against an insurgency, and the importance of public diplomacy as part of a "comprehensive strategy employing all instruments of national power."

Informed by the Vietnam experience, the strategy also recognizes that clearing and keeping the enemy from an area alone does not spell success. A critical third tenet, it notes, is the establishment of a legitimate government supported by the people and infrastructure development that empowers them.

After applying those principles -- first while commanding U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq and now as the top

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

commander in Afghanistan -- Petraeus said he is seeing this strategy bear fruit.

Petraeus told the Senate Armed Services Committee last month the coalition in Afghanistan continues to face tough days against insurgents, but is making steady progress in improving security and helping the Afghan government improve governance, economic development and the provision of basic services.

"These are essential elements of the effort to shift delivery of basic services from provincial reconstruction teams and international organizations to Afghan government elements," he told the panel.

As the transition approaches for Afghan forces to begin taking security responsibility for their country, Petraeus emphasized that actions being taken now in Afghanistan will have consequences for years to come -- just as those in Vietnam more than three decades ago.

"We'll get one shot at transition, and we need to get it right," he said.

Editor's (Matt's) Note: I included this article because it says the right things in the right way - even if it took 30 years to prove our time, sacrifice, and pain was not forgotten or wasted. I am proud of our country in the way our military has been reborn and how we now embrace returning service men and women—a far cry from the way we were treated—not perfect but better.

Barb Production and Distribution (by Matt Matthews)

Guys, production of this **Barb** was a real challenge. Think about it as you read this release and you'll find limited historical or human interest content. Why? — because I had very few stories submitted to me and I was struggling to come up with what I deemed was interesting content. Regardless of your rank or what you did at Ban Me Thuot you have memories, funny or serious or even painful, that you could share with the rest of us. Take a few moments to write your remembrances down and send them in to me via eMail or US Mail and we'll all share them in an upcoming release of the **Barb**.

Each **Barb** we mail out to a contact in the US costs the association approximately \$1.15 (costs for copying and postage). For the distribution in February of this year we mailed out 210 **Barbs**. If you are reading your **Barb** you received as an eMail attachment from me, thanks a bunch. If you are reading your **Barb** as a printed document received through the postal system and you have an eMail address, take a few minutes and send your eMail address to me at mt@ahc.org. Please check the eMail address account we have for you and delete some of your old eMails you no longer want; sometimes the **Barb** distribution is rejected because a user's eMail account is full. When I get that notification I retry the distribution a couple of days later; if it is rejected again I treat that eMail address as a bad address and remove the eMail reference for that member. The costs for mailing **Barbs** is covered by association dues and any donations made to the association. Please help us keep these costs to a minimum by A) keeping me informed of any changes to your eMail address and, B) manage your eMail account to ensure your account is not at maximum capacity (i.e., get rid of old unwanted eMails).

155 AHC Association Officers (until the 2012 Reunion)

Office	Name	eMail
President	Bob Gardner	
Vice-President	Chuck Markham	
Treasurer	Jeff Schrader	
Sergeant-at-Arms	Wayne Coward	
Historian	Les Davison	
Database Guy/Barb Editor	Matt Matthews	

155 AHC Association Treasurer's Report
(as of 5/15/2011)



Balance in Checking Account	\$ 3,500.28
Checks to Deposit	<u>72.00</u>
Current Funds Available	\$ 3,572.28

2011 REUNION CANCELLED — Prepare for 2012 (by Matt Matthews)

At our reunion in St. Louis last year we decided to have reunions every year — on odd years in conjunction with the 281st AHC (the host company for last year's reunion) in St. Louis, MO with them. We have received word from the 281st that they would not be hosting a combined reunion; they want to focus on getting more of their guys to participate (we certainly can't fault them for that).

We will not have a reunion in 2011 but we plan on having a bang up time at our reunion in Atlanta, GA in 2012. Bob Goolsby is our point man in Atlanta and is already making plans — be there (we're not getting any younger).

www.155thahc.com - Website Guestbook Entries Since March, 2011

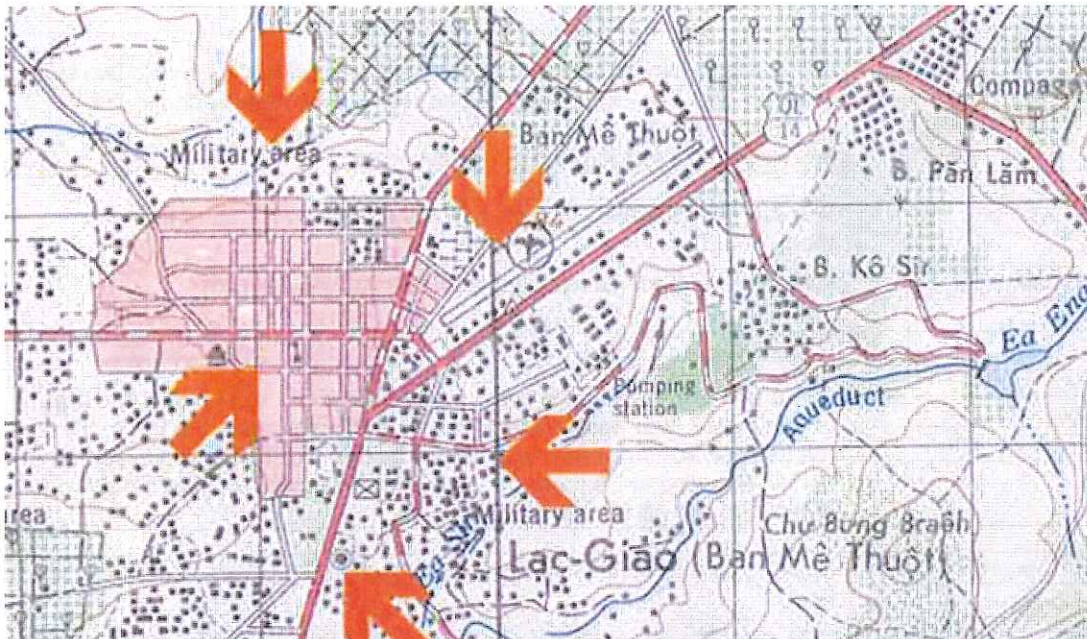
Date:	5/3/2011, 6:45 pm, EDT	I should have said Blackhawks instead of Chinooks! The 160th is a pretty unique bunch. They have been doing fun stuff for a long time. They were flying OH-58Ds in the Gulf in the mid 80s with Marine snipers setting on benches.
Name:	Bob Gardner (Falcon 5)	
eMail:	@yahoo.com	
Number:	219	
Date:	5/2/2011, 8:34 pm, EDT	OSAMA is dead! Thank God for Seal Team 6 and the 160th Aviation's Chinooks!
Name:	Bob Gardner (Falcon 5)	
eMail:	@yahoo.com	
Number:	218	
Date:	5/1/2011, 8:39 am, EDT	 It seems hard to believe that 46 years ago those of us on the Iwo landed in VN on May Day - what a trip. Looks like we may have Spring at last in R.I. All for now Sam B P/S we were all just Kids off on an adventure.
Name:	Sam Belshaw	
eMail:	@yahoo.com	
Number:	217	
Date:	3/11/2011, 12:59 pm, EDT	Ron sent me this link; I thought I should pass it on. For all of us that were there www.engineersvietnam.com/network/parasite/warning.htm
Name:	Sam Belshaw	
eMail:	@yahoo.com	
Number:	216	
Date:	3/11/2011, 12:15 pm, EDT	 It is with great sadness and a heavy heart that I must report the death of Ron Moore. Ron was a member of the 165th that made the trip to VN on the Iwo only to come home with a parasite that would cost him his liver and his life. Ron died at his home in Georgia with his wife Carol and his children at his side. We will all miss you Ron. Sam
Name:	Sam Belshaw	
eMail:	@yahoo.com	
Number:	215	
Date:	3/4/2011, 11:56 am, EDT	Proud to be a Member of 155th AHC. Worked Maintenance 1970-1971. Life is Good. DLM
Name:	Danny L. McBride	
eMail:	@yahoo.com	
Number:	214	
Date:	3/3/2011, 9:33 pm, EDT	I served at Camp Coryell & I wrote my story called "Incident At Camp Coryell" that was actually printed in Ban Me Thuot Barb a few years ago.
Name:	AC Brackett	
eMail:	vildblue.net	
Number:	213	
Date:	3/2/2011, 5:08 pm, EDT	I am updating the fallen profiles on togetherweserved.com. I like to do the ones for crew members and add as much information that I can find. I flew as a crew chief in both the 174th AVN CO 67-68 and C/227th 69-70. I updated WO1 Terry L. Crawford profile; it states he was killed by small arms fire on the ground. What does that mean? Shouldn't he have received a purple heart? Putnam
Name:	William Putnam	
eMail:	@yahoo.com	
Number:	212	
Date:	3/1/2011, 3:46 pm, EDT	Hello, Looking for a picture of UH-1H 66-16437 I got that bird when it came to the 45th Air Amb Dust Off. It was with the 155 from 7/67 till 2/68. Came to the 45th Dust Off in 9/68. Just a thought Regards Brothers Dennis Bodofsky
Name:	Dennis Bodofsky	
eMail:	iturytel.net	
Number:	211	

Ban Me Thuot - Then and Now (by Matt Matthews)

In one of the previous *Barbs* Les regaled us of his and Mike Stark's trip back to Vietnam and his visit to the Ban Me Thuot area. He mentioned then that they thought they might have found one of the corner posts from the old compound but that was all. It's hard to imagine that something that was such a part of our lives could change that much. I looked up Ban Me Thuot on one of the old war maps on the web and then checked it out on Google maps — WOW!

Ban Me Thuot will always exist in my mind as a dusty, dirty little town with an open air market and the sound of aircraft always in the air. It always stunk - could the shit burning have had something to do with that?

Should you wonder, Ban Me Thuot East airfield still exists (but not shown on the map) - it is the modern active paved runway for commercial traffic. Look hard at the two maps - it looks to me like one of today's city streets could have been the old company street running through the middle of the compound (separating maintenance and the company area).



Ban Me Thuot from one of the old military maps of our time there. Note the airstrip at our compound just above Highway 14 (top rightmost arrow) just east of what one would call the city center.



Ban Me Thuot (or as it is known today Buon Me Thuot) - aerial view by Google Maps. Not only can you not find your hootch or the maintenance area, they filled in the swimming pool!!

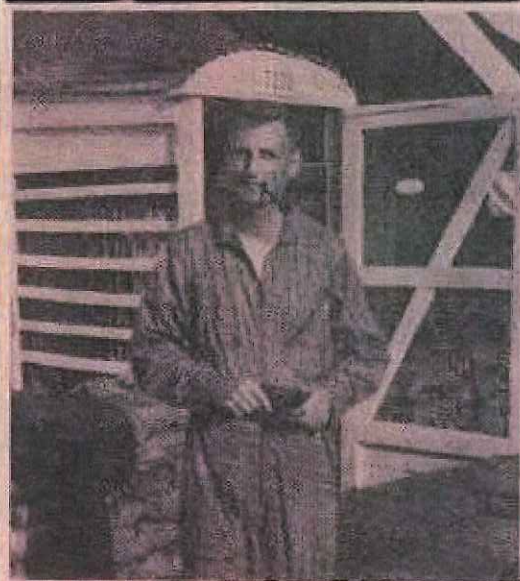
From My Hometown Newspaper (by Charles Thibodeau)

This is a local home town news clip in 1967 after the tour with the 165th & 155th that I found within some of my old files.

Major Charles Thibodeau, U.S. Army, home, reunited with his wife, the former Marilyn Russell of town and three small children, Lynne, 9, Mark, 8, and John, 4, and mother Mrs. Rena Thibodeau of Skowhegan after a year in Vietnam emphasized the fact that the family of the serviceman in Vietnam puts up with hardship, wonder, and worry.

"They are in a constant of worry and carry the brunt," said the youthful career officer. Adding "they hear and read about this and that place being hit and are always wondering if you were there."

Thibodeau, a U. of Maine graduate, is in his ninth year of service and at the time of my visit was helping his wife ready for the movers who will be there tomorrow to pack them for their new home in Ft. Stewart, Ga. "This is the 29th move we've made and I've lived here for 14 months which has been our longest permanent home," added his wife.



MAJOR CHARLES THIBODEAU

**Families Carry Brunt, Officer
Just Back From Vietnam Says**

The mission of our assault helicopter company was to fly people and supplies to the front, to drop, pick up or resupply," said Thibodeau. "My specific duty was charge of the maintenance of 32 helicopters at our base in Ban Me Thuot."

Ban Me Thuot is 200 miles northwest of Saigon and 100 miles south of Pleiku. It is an "oasis" on a plateau, 35 miles from the Cambodian border, the elevation is 2,000 feet. It is noted for the fact that Theodore Roosevelt stayed there while elephant hunting and a conclave was built for him.

"The people are poverty stricken, they've been at war so many years they have no will to progress. They're glad we're there to help them fight and now the big push is to have them do more," continued Thibodeau. "The middle of town is centered around a fish market, people bring in their goods to sell, fish, cloth, etc. at the end of the day they pack up, leaving what they haven't sold. The rubbish is washed away in a good rain."

"The Montenyard people are very clean and intelligent but are discriminated against throughout the area. They set up their own villages and each has their own chief, declared the young Major.

"Militarily, we've made much progress, pacification of the people and giving them the will to establish their own government is still being stressed," he added.

The morale is excellent with about 15 to 35 percent extending their time. At Ban Me Thuot the working conditions were good although the work was hard."

"There seems to be a purpose in what you're doing," said Thibodeau. "No one does without the necessities. There is an increase in helicopter supply, without them you cannot move. In fact the front can be supplied on a meal to meal basis if need be."

When asked if the Black Market flourished in this area, he replied, "you could buy things on it but to get it here the sellers had to pay so many taxes to the V.C. to get it through road blocks that the cost was quite high."

"Mail was excellent. It got there in about four or five days."

On R and R leaves, Thibodeau visited in Formosa, Hong Kong, and Bangkok, and had this to say about the R and R program: " It is an excellent program and very well run."

A Flight Surgeon stationed in Ban Me Thuot took up a collection among the military personnel and solicited help to set up a civilian clinic downtown and there are now 3 or 4 civilian nurses there.

There are missionary families still there, living in houses that the French had built for them, there is a big Catholic Church.

Asked whether or not he'd eventually be back in Vietnam Thibodeau said, "If it continues I'll probably be back, many more are needed so I'll probably be back. Some of the Special Forces guys are back for their second and third times. Many sergeants in my company had been there for three years."

Thibodeau, in addition to other medals, received the Air Medal with eight clusters for his Vietnam stint.

Matt's note: The grammatical and spelling mistakes are the newspaper's.



155th AHC Association
c/o L. Matthews
Durham, NC 27712