

BAN ME THUOT BARB

Dedicated to those who served and sacrificed at Camp Coryell Republic of Vietnam

2ND QUARTER 2013 SORTIE

Emergency Deployment of a Medical Detachment

By Dr. Leon (Doc) Curry
Edited slightly by chuck markham

My wife Helen and I were Stationed at Fort Bragg. I was assigned to the Womack Army Hospital as a flight surgeon I received hurry-up orders to an undisclosed destination, unaccompanied tour. The destination turned out to be Vietnam. It would be months before Vietnam became a household name. We literally had no idea where we were going.



The Army gave us a week to clear quarters, resettle the family, store furniture, get a physical, and report to Fort Riley KS.

Not knowing the destination, I decided to prepare myself as best I

could, and built a crate, filled it with medical supplies and shipped it with my hold baggage to Fort Riley.

After saying goodbye to the family I caught a flight to Fort Riley, signed in and assumed command of the 8th Medical detachment. (8th Med) I was asked to sign for the units equipment. I asked to inventory it but was told it was gone. It was en route to our unknown destination. With considerable reservation I signed for the equipment hoping I would not be held accountable later.

Two days after arriving at Fort Riley we were awakened at midnight to board an airliner. Daylight the next day saw us aboard the aircraft carrier Iwo Jima steaming out of San Diego Harbor along with three airmobile companies. We still didn't know where we were going.

Three days out we were told our destination was Vietnam. Nobody on board knew for sure where that was, but there were three flight surgeons that knew the 800 troops on board were not medically ready for duty in that part of the world. I knew that a friend and former boss who was the Commander of the Tripler Hospital in Honolulu could provide the supplies. A coded message was sent to the General, The reply indicated the supplies would be made available and further ordered me to report to the General upon arrival.

The General wined and dined the flight surgeons and advised us that the situation in Vietnam could blow over or blow up but that we should be prepared to stay.

We arrived off the coast of Vietnam on May Day 1965. The flight crews flew off the Iwo Jima and the ground personnel debarked ia nets to landing craft. The Company assembled at Vung Tau and we flew to Ban Me Thuot in C-123 cargo planes.

The camp was four inches deep in red dirt. Tents had been hastily erected. There were no latrines, no showers, no clinic, no facilities, no medicines and no medical instruments. The 8th Med equipment

had not yet arrived nor had my hold baggage. All my medical supplies consisted of the twenty five cent box of Bayer Aspirin in my pocket.

Four hours later the monsoons started and we found ourselves wading around in four inches of orange muddy clay and water. It would not be for another ninety one days that the med supplies would arrive.

During the following year our camp was slowly transformed. Concrete buildings were slowly constructed. The troops built Officers and enlisted clubs complete with well stocked bars. Floors were built in the tents. Showers, outhouse latrines, electric lights, and sandbag walls around the tents made the camp more inhabitable.

When the X-ray and other 8th med equipment arrived we were able to handle most out patient needs. We also treated the camp employees and participated in the care of the Montagnards.

Editors note: The Doc, his crew and those that followed them, were undeniably one of the stalwart of the Camp Coryell units. We always knew that whatever wound, or illness we suffered the 8th med would stabilize us for transport at the very least.

SF Guy Needs Our Help

I am Richard Smith, 5th Special Forces Group (RVN). I flew Sniffer missions with your crews during the summer of 1969 through March 1970, mostly to support the camps at Duc lap (A239) and Bu Prang (A236). Special Forces did not issue or maintain a flight record book for my missions. I have been trying to have my records corrected to reflect my qualifying for crew wings as a non-crewmember performing my Sniffer missions. I flew daily at least two missions a day, I estimate that I flew at least 200 missions. I also flew as a kicker on the night mission to resupply FB Kate on 31 Oct - 1 Nov 1969. If you recall flying the SF sniffer missions, I was the only SF Sniffer operator working the area, please contact me at richard.smith@sfchap55.net. Thank you for your help.

KEEP EM FLYING

I hope I'm not too late for a brief story about my experience with the 155th AHC. I was a proud member of the 155 POL team during operation Paul Revere. I just arrived at Ban Me Thout a week before when somebody woke me up on a Sunday morning and told me to pack up to go out to the field with the 155.

I hope we didn't disappoint any crews that came in for rearming and fuel. I hope we satisfied every chopper that landed at our POL points. I still feel very good about the duty I had back there and the satisfaction I got from those long days in the field with the great 155th AHC.

Jack Drewiega

editors note—As the XO of the 155 at that time and responsible for the FARP POL and Ammo did one hell of a job

A 155 STORY

Hi everyone.

I'm Roger Elliott. I served in the 155th AHC from November of 68 through August of 70.

I don't know if anyone would remember me. I started out in the engine shop and through the months I ended up being the Motor Sergeant. I've always enjoyed the stories about the 155th and just never sit down to write down any of my own. Not as exciting as most of yours.

Being on the ground team means that I don't have the exciting stories that the fly guys have but I do have a few that the younger troops seem to like to hear.

I'll just tell one for now.

I was working in the Motor Pool as a vehicle repairman/wrecker operator. We got a call that a recovery mission was needed to retrieve a downed Huey out of jungle, so a Chinook could pick it up.

I think it was MSG Newman that organized the mission. We loaded on three M60s, a couple of M79s and about six personal with their M16s, on my 5 ton wrecker. Talk about looking like a John Wayne movie.

It was one of our ships that had taken off from a Special Forces Camp I think it was northeast of Ban Me Thout. For some reason it flipped and ended up, upside down in the jungle. If I remember correctly the crew walked away, shaken but not hurt.

Anyway, we got there and plowed our way into the jungle and got hooked up to it and started bouncing our way out into a clearing. We forgot to do the first thing that you are supposed to do, when moving a ship. We didn't disconnect the battery. Well, with all the bouncing around, sparks flew and a fire started. Not a good thing to see on the end of your hook! A very quick thinking PFC disconnected the battery and someone grabbed a fire extinguisher and put the fire out. I was very glad!

We got the ship to the clearing, so the Chinook could hook up to it. The crew chief stood on top of

the Huey, with a ring to hook to the Chinook. We all were amazed when he hung it and was thrown clear off the top of the Huey. Something about the pilot had forgotten to hit the anti-static switch. He did hook it though and then he came over to us and said he was going to kill the pilot.

Our mission was complete but it was too late to drive back to Camp. The Special Forces guys invited us to stay and party with them that night. I think they liked to see Americans once and awhile. We called it in and asked permission but it was denied. Some of us had guard duty that night. I was one that had to be back for guard. They sent a Huey to pick us up.

I did so want to party with the Green Berets. Anyway we got back to Camp and I went out to my guard post thinking how much fun I could be having. About 0100 hours I got a call from the Commo Shack telling me that I needed to come up and listen to something that was coming over the radio. It was my friends at the Special Forces camp. They were being over run. They were shooting them off the fence. I think they all made it O.K. There have been many times that I feel I have had a Guardian Angel.

Your Brother

MSG Roger Elliott

I want pass on a short story relating to the 155th

Back about 1995 I was flying Citations for a company in Iowa when I overheard a conversation at the Oskaloosa IA airport. One of the people said their Congressman, Leonard Boswell had flown in that day in his airplane. I got into the conversation and said I know a Leonard Boswell from my assignment with the A/1/155 tour. He and I had both been Captains and deployed with the unit from Fort Riley in April of 1965. Anyway, I learned that the Leonard Boswell they were talking about was a retired Army O-5 and I gave him a call at his home town and determined that it was the same guy I had known 30 years earlier. He was indeed a member of Congress and still is to this day. I was able to drop in on him a couple of times when flights took me to Washington before 9/11 all but shut down National/Reagan airport. Leonard had been our first Flight Operations Officer in Ban Me Thout. He was the best Operations Officer I have known in my three tours in Vietnam. Iowa is lucky to have him looking out for them.

Bob Spencer

TIGERSHARK WAR STORY

JIM GODFREY

In November, '69, the 192nd had been sending people up to Bu Prang for a while. Always taking lots of fire and some hits. We had just refueled and rearmed after one flight up to the camp and expended. When we arrived back on station, we were told to go out 040 degrees, 4 clicks, as counter-mortar radar had a suspected site. We went and flew right over a .51. We took about 10-12 hits; my seat support was shot away (I was Peter Pilot in the left seat), seat belt shot in half, hit in the wrist and leg; round went through my M16; wounded the guys in the back; shot away the engine oil cooler; round through the rocket sight and out the bubble; cut the commo cords of the guys in back; and put numerous other holes in the ship. They then hit our wingman, but not as bad. Behind us was another gun team (might have been Falcons) so they rolled in. I was the only one with commo, got the FAC on HF and he put two sets of F-100's on the gun. I believe that they paid for their sins. Our wounds were slight, but all of the gauges were in the red. I was OK until our wingman told us we were smoking really bad – but we made it to the runway at the camp.

Had to leave the ship and flew out with Terry Kirkpatrick to BMT. That night your guns (Falcons) were scrambled back to Bu Prang as they were being overrun or had gooks in the wire. We figured our ship would be history, but it was 'Hooked out a week later. That ship only had 6 hours on it and had to be sent back to Corpus. We were sorry to lose a new (rebuilt) ship. That was one scary day.

Terry and I graduated in Class 69-10 in May of 69. I remember his banjo there at BMT.

TERRY KIRKPATRICK STAGECOACH 16B

Almost any time we flew west from BMT, we flew to Duc Lap. Bu Prang, on the other hand, was at the end of a the line. Duc Lap was only a few miles from Cambodia but Bu Prang was about 25 miles to the south and just meters from the border. The Duc Lap - Bu Prang offensive was about a three week NVA offensive.

Mutually supporting fire bases were being built around Bu Prang. The last to be put in place was Fire Base Kate, and Kate was the first to get hit. The 155 had primary responsibility for support of Kate, but were

shot out of the LZ when we tried to re-supply it. At the same time, a Special Forces LRRP patrol from B-50 (the guys who went across the border in calmer times) was put into the area south of Duc Lap and promptly was attacked and had to be extracted. People everywhere were reporting contacts. Both Bu Prang and Duc Lap were surrounded and desperately needed to be relieved. (I got my purple heart at Duc Lap.)

For a time the Army brass were not sure if they'd need to evacuate Duc Lap and Bu Prang, so they threw everything we had into the area and the Special Forces teams held on. (The teams were from B-23.) That's when the 192nd became involved.

We'd approach Bu Prang from the southeast. We'd drop down low level into an east-west valley that was about a mile south of Bu Prang, turn north up a valley that ran to the south end of the active, pop up over the fence and honk the nose up in the air and push the collective to the floor. When the air speed bled off to zero, we'd drop down and the folks on board would jump out and run for the trenches. Anyone waiting to get out would run like hell to get on board and we'd pull pitch, reverse direction and leave the way we got there. Usually by the time we'd picked up off the runway, the NVA would have incoming headed our way. It was real war!!

The day we picked you (Godfrey & crew) up. We were in the area when we got the call from our Operations. I was flying "Peter Pilot. We got a call that a Tigershark was down at Bu Prang and we were assigned the task of crew recovery.

We dropped down into the valley and headed west, flying up the valley. When we hopped over the perimeter fence, your aircraft was shut down in the middle of the active, so we had to fly to the right of it. We couldn't stop before we flew past you. The AC turned the aircraft around so we were facing your aircraft. You guys were clustered around your aircraft taking pictures! I remember one guy had one of those Super-8 cameras and was busy filming!

We sat there in disbelief. I remember thinking, "Don't they know there's a war going on?" Our Door gunner and Crew Chief were both busy covering our aircraft. I was the only one who wasn't doing something. (Oh the life of a Peter Pilot!) So the AC told me to go get the Tigershark crew. I unbuckled my seat belt, unplugged my helmet, opened the door, and ran over to the Charlie model.

I was surprised to see it was you. I remember we exchanged happy hellos. It seems like we shook hands. I don't remember if we went as far as slapping each other on the back or not. Your crew was still busy taking pictures and I suddenly realized we'd been on the open active for a long, long time. Why the NVA hadn't started shelling us I'm not sure. Maybe they were busy watching the ARVN rangers on the other hill.

"We better get out of here," I yelled. You nodded in agreement and rounded up your crew and we hustled back to my aircraft. We left your aircraft sitting there on the active. I was surprised that it wasn't hit by mortars or recoilless rifle fire. The flight back was uneventful. I can't even remember if I bought you a drink before you went back to your unit.

The offensive eventually petered out and the NVA trickled back across the border. A few weeks later we began to see donut shaped holes, covered by dead foliage. They were obviously anti-aircraft pits, for .51 caliber machine guns. We were only able to spot them because of the dead foliage. There were quite a few of them. I'm sure you were hit by one of them. Bu Prang rebuilt, but all the facilities were in bunkers. The team house was gone, as were all the other buildings. They'd be ready the next time.

HELP THE HISTORIAN

According to the '68 155 History, Stagecoach Wrecker was credited with 15 KBA during Tet. Tell me more!

SHARE THE COMMO

From emails and 155 guestbook

My cousin is Dominic Fino, He wrote a book "The making of a Falcon". I was not born when you performed your service to this country; But I will forever be in your debt because your service allows me to have the Freedom I so cherish today. THANK YOU. I also have a close friend who flew with the 116th and I am sure you all crossed paths along the way. David Thomas-----Howling Moose

Bo Dolph says:

May 23, 2013 Today is 44 years since I was wounded in RVN. My thanks to all the 155th AHC. A special thanks to Ken Donovan & Rick Menzel, w/o their valor I would not be here to express my thanks.

Bo(Barney)Dolph

Denny Fenlon Falcon 4 says:

So my wife and I are sitting at a cafe in Ban Me Thout having a Heinekin after 43+ years. On a two week visit to VN. BMT is a very large city with 370,000 people. Everyone has been super nice. Really no connection to 1969, progress moves things on. I am posting some pics. Denny Fenlon

Scott Larson said: remembering my father WO Paul Noble Larson and those lost on 4/19/68. It's been a while since I've been to the site but it looks great! Still enjoy getting the Barb also. It's nice to here the history from so many! Thanks and god bless to all of the 155th and their families.....Scott

Jim Haga says:

Neill McDonald and I have created a Facebook and Yahoo Group presence for the 155th. Feel free to post your photos on the Facebook page. I think you can then provide a link here in the guest book. Anyone can post photos, comments, videos on the Facebook page. The Yahoo Group is moderated, and posters must be pre-approved by a moderator.

<http://www.facebook.com/155thahe>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/155thAHC/>

Jim Haga

Stagecoach 17/Falcon 10

01 Dec 69, 2115 hours – SGT Bradley, Vagabond Forward, reported that the 155 th AHC sent 1 slick and 2 gunships in support of Med-Evac for crash of Air Force jet; Bu Prang to BMT.
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The End of the Battle for Bu Prang

From The Virtual Wall

Captain Frederick W. Siebert was the Mission Commander for a flight of two F-4C fighter aircraft (559th Tac Ftr Sq, 12th Tac Ftr Wing) scrambled from the alert pad at Cam Ranh Bay Air Base early in the evening of 1 December 1969. His destination was a confirmed enemy location 125 miles north-northeast of Saigon in the Quang Duc Province near the Bu Prang Special Forces Camp. A Forward Air Controller was in the area to direct his flight in locating the target, however, because there were no flares available to mark the target for the fighters, Captain Siebert's wingman made the first pass, deploying napalm to illuminate the target for the first bombing run. As his wingman pulled out of the target area, Captain Siebert made a radio transmission stating he was rolling in on his first bombing run .

Shortly thereafter, his wingman observed the aircraft burst into a ball of flames as Captain Siebert was turning on approach approximately 2000 meters short of the target between 1000 to 2000 feet AGL. Heavy ground fire was directed at the flight as they rolled in on the target. There were no chutes observed and no contact was made with the crew. Aircraft searched the area throughout the night with no signs of Captain Siebert or his crewmember, Captain Patrick J. Hayes. At first light, search aircraft spotted aircraft wreckage at YU526588, but search teams were unable to reach the site due to hostile forces in the area and the rugged jungle terrain.

On 3 December, a search party located the wreckage and remains of the crew. On 4 December 1969 at 0843Z hours, Captains Siebert and Hayes were listed as Killed in Action. Captain Siebert was laid to rest with full military honors in his hometown of New Orleans, Louisiana on 13 December 1969.

Personal Recollection:

On 2 Dec 69, I led a flight of two Falcon gunships that departed BMT City Field well before dawn. We were accompanied by one Stagecoach slick. Our mission was to arrive in the vicinity of Bu Prang at first light,

to conduct a Search and Rescue operation. We were told that a USAF jet had gone down the previous evening, and we were to look for survivors. There may have been a FAC aircraft in the vicinity when we arrived, to guide our search. Not long after arriving, we saw where the jet had gone into the trees. The slick hovered around at treetop level for some time, looking for any sign of the pilots. I seem to remember that he reported seeing a partially-deployed parachute and one body, but it's been too long to be sure on that point.

And that's about all I can remember. I know we didn't put any people on the ground to search wreckage or recover bodies. I do however, very distinctly remember how quiet it was. There was no shooting, nor any enemy activity of any kind. The area had been so hot for so long – and suddenly all was quiet. Very eerie. We didn't know it then, but the NVA had moved back to their Cambodian sanctuaries, and the battle was over.

Les Davison, Falcon 2

From the Pres.

I am once again honored that you saw fit to elect me as the president of the association. We had a great reunion in Atlanta, thanks to the hard work of many people but primarily the efforts of Bob Goolsby. I want to once again put out a special thanks to Elizabeth for her untiring labor in establishing, and maintaining the Association Web Site. I am available to the membership if they have ideas to improve the association. My email is on the web site and I read and answer every one I receive. Let me know what you think.

The 2014 reunion site is currently being voted on at the 155 web page. We need to get the voting done so the people responsible for the organization of the event can start work. Currently less than 20 have voted and that's not even enough to give anybody a heads up.

chuck markham
Stagecoach 5

Elizabeth's reminder

The URL for the website is www.155-th-ahc.org The 155thahc.org no longer belongs to the association. Our website is our best communication tool. Click on the webmaster link and an email form to pop up. You can vote via that email or use the phone number if you are not on line.

We need for you to get your vote in for reunion site. Let us know your preference. Do not let a few people decide for you.

The nominated locations are:

SITE	NOMINATED BY
Las Vegas	chuck markham
Fort Rucker	Tom Hunt
Anchorage, AL	Dean Owen
Washington DC	Les Davison (Columbus day-Veterans day too crowded)
Charlotte. NC	????

155th Facebook community site

There is a new facebook community group called 155th Assault Helicopter. The url is: <http://www.facebook.com/155thahc> It is growing and there are some pix on there I hadn't seen.

MORE FROM THE 8TH MED COMMANDER

Dr. Leon Curry

Our class of O-2 First Lieutenant interns was promoted to Captain in Spring 1963 by an act of Congress In July, 1963, instead of 3 months at Fort Sam Houston learning how to become Army officers, we were shuttled over to Schofield Barracks for a 3-week abbreviated course where we saw movies, fired 0.45 pistols, m-14 rifles, rappelled off a cliff simulating helicopter rappelling, and visited the artillery range where we watched 155mm cannons fire. Mostly we slept thru the movies, and

contemplated our next assignment. Many classmates opted to do a residency in the military, and signed on for Battalion surgeon training and a possible Army career.

I opted to become a flight surgeon. I applied for the Navy course which led to wings as a Naval aviator. A political appointee got the last slot available. General Graham did not know my plans, but I suspect he helped me get a slot in the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine class 63-C, a 3-month course at Brooks AFB in San Antonio. A great course that was well taught by experts in Space Medicine. We learned how to do a parachute landing fall from a twelve foot tower, desert and jungle survival, and flew in T-33 jets experiencing G-forces in various head and body positions. On weekends, I saw bull fights in Nuevo Laredo Mexico, and learned what Tequila could do to me.

After completing the AF school, I was sent to Ft. Rucker for the one-month Army Aviation Medicine program which had just been initiated. The very first welcoming lecture had a Chief Warrant Officer talking about helicopter blades going round and round causing “updock”. He mentioned “updock” several times without defining it, and impatiently I raised my hand and asked what in the world is “updock”? The class exploded in laughter! He was baiting one of us doctors to say, “What’s up doc”? I learned then never trust a warrant officer! Then we reviewed aviation physiology, including acceleration/deceleration, altitude, helicopter operation, and flew in old and new helicopters.

Major Herzog was also a flight surgeon and private pilot. We had flown in the Special Forces U-10 STOL airplane, bird dog, and beaver, as well as the Mohawk twin turbo plane, practiced hovering the Bell Bubble over a rock, and other helicopters. We really thought we could talk our way from being civilian private pilots to Army Aviators by simply transitioning into the STOL U-10 or a bird dog, then transitioning to other Army aircraft. We had high hopes when we flew to Washington to the Pentagon which then was still in wooden buildings in Washington on the Potomac. They listened politely, put our paperwork in a basket, and said good bye. They did not approve our request, but they must have noticed us: Two weeks or so later we both got orders to an “undisclosed destination, unaccompanied tour” which turned out to be Viet Nam.

SOME OBSERVATIONS AND THOUGHTS.

PROBABLY NOT WORTH MUCH BUT I’M DOING THIS SO I GET A BIT OF FREEDOM.

At the reunions I have attended I have witnessed something that never ceases to amaze me. I am always surprised how much this bunch of guys, who have very little in common except serving in a far away land with exotic surroundings and getting shot at with direct and indirect fire, always reconnect instantly. They seem to pick up where they left off, almost down to the heartbeat. The guys who missed the last one, or perhaps are attending for the first time are instantly folded into the proceedings as if they were family who had been away for awhile. There is always laughter and smiles. The hugs and hand shakes are sincere without exception. Disagreements certainly flair up but they are gone and forgotten quicker than they arrived. Everyone is treated with respect and former rank has nothing to do with anything.

The wives and children who attend are accepted as members of the group and if they can stand the banter are encouraged to join in. The occasional guests who didn’t serve with us but have some connection to our small outpost in the highlands also seem to meld right into the fabric of the group.

This being the off year we will not have the privilege of gathering on Veterans Day but we can think of each other and get ready to pick up that heartbeat.
