

BMT

BARB

Sortie

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MEET ME IN LAS VEGAS

The 155th Assault Company bi-annual reunion will be held at the Tuscany Suites Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas NV. The 7th and 8th of November, 2014. Check out the facility at www.tuscanylv.com/. Please make every effort to contact personnel who served at Camp Coryell with other units and invite them. They are, and always have been, members. Some will arrive on the 6th and leave Sunday the 9th, others may elect to arrive earlier and depart later. The room rates are guaranteed through Tuesday. The Veterans Day parade will be held on Tuesday.

Mary and I flew out in April to make the arrangements and were very impressed with the Tuscany. It is located just off the strip behind Bali's. There is a hop on hop off bus stop right out front and the mono rail stops at Bali's.

We will have a hospitality suite that opens out on the area right next to the pool and the banquet will be held in a banquet room that has a balcony and glass windows overlooking the pool. There will be a cash bar at the banquet, We will supply beer, limited liquor and mixers in the hospitality suite. The grounds are landscaped with lush tropical plants and the interior is a beautiful Mediterranean décor.

The room rates are \$92 Sunday through Thursday and \$122 Friday and Saturday. The reservation deadline is the end of October so go ahead and get them in. There will be a registration fee that will help pay for the beer etc in the hospitality suite and the banquet. The last reunion in Atlanta was well attended and hopefully this one will be even better attended..

Zip and Zap

I was one of the first of new Warrant Officer aviators assigned to the 155TH shortly after its arrival in BMT. We processed in the REPLDEPOT in Saigon and group from my class 65-6W were assigned to the 155TH. A slick picked us up and brought us to BMT in early July 1965. We were introduced and given a short briefing by the CO MAJ Joe Parlas, We were then assigned to our GP medium Tents with Mahogany side walls and floors, WOW no A/C. We soon got into the swing of things flying missions. I started out as a co-pilot in slicks for about a month. I didn't relish formation landings especially in the Middle "V", and I didn't like being shot at with no way to return fire. So I jumped at the chance to join the Gun Platoon. Our Platoon leader was CPT Jack Gordon, Infantry and Green Beret one hell of a Gung-Ho leader, he took a weeks vacation in Country and went on a Jungle Patrol with some of his Special Forces Buddies. It was CPT Gordon along with input from the Platoon that came up with the designation "FALCONS" and collectively the Falcon Logo Design. First set of hats and hand painted door signs made and produced in South Viet Nam.

Classmates that initially joined the 155th were myself, WO Raymond Ford, WO Jim Wilson, WO Earl Fields and a few others, (having a senior moment can't remember their names). After we were in country awhile and settled in, WO Ray Ford purchased a couple of small Monkeys from one of the Locals, he cut up old Fatigues and made shirts for the both of them, with the MACV Patch, army patch, aviator wings and WO Bars, They were named after very familiar combat sounds to all of us, that of enemy

fire passing by the helo's: ZIP, a miss and ZAP when they hit. So appropriately the Monkeys were named Zip were named Zip and Zap. Quite a pair, we had lots of fun with those two. They even liked beer.

Sep or October WO Ford now an AC was on a single ship mission to an ARVN compound South of BMT. He landed what he thought was a secure area inside a barbed wire fenced area. He shut down the UH-1D and the crew exited the aircraft and unknown to him he had landed in a mine field, and before he was alerted it was too late he stepped on a land mine and it blew off his legs, and killed him. We were all in shock that night, back at the Stagecoach Inn. I believe he was one of the first casualties of the 155th. Well in his memory we kept good care of Zip and Zap and even promoted them to CW-2's. WO Raymond Ford's name is on the Wall in Washington, DC.

Dave Talbot, *Falcon 3*, is still in uniform today at 72 a Captain in the Oregon State Defense Force, CO of the 162BN.

How the Purple Gang got started

Frank Uhring

As I remember things; the discussion of the a unique way to make the 1st platoon stand out started during a penny ante poker game. We wanted to 'look' more 'adventurous' when we flew on combat missions. So the suggestion of scarves that we could wear on these missions was agreed on. Just like the Lafayette Escadrille in WW1 wore scarves while flying.

What color the scarves should be came up and we all vetoed the color white because it would make us too easy of a target during a combat insertion. We also vetoed the colors green and brown because they were too much like 'Army' colors. We wanted something that would be different and would stand out as being unique to the 1st platoon. I don't know who suggested purple for the color but we all liked it and agreed to try and get some purple scarves ASAP. After the color purple was agreed on, I made the suggestion that we call ourselves the Purple Gang when we wore the scarves. I got the idea of the Purple Gang because John Ruhly and I are from the Detroit area

and during the 1920's (Prohibition) there was a Gangster Gang around the Detroit area that was named the Purple Gang and wore a purple item of clothing to note that they were in the Purple Gang. Thus from then on the 1st platoon was unofficially called The Purple Gang. Now all of this was completely unofficial and we had no permission to do this and we had no plans to ask permission so we all agreed that we could not wear the purple scarves anywhere in the company area. We would only put on the scarves when we were flying. I hope that someone will write up how the patch for the Purple Gang was designed because I left Nam before the patch was designed and made.

The Purple Gang's BS Freq

Frank Uhring

I'm not sure how the idea of an unofficial/unauthorized' radio frequency to be used by the Purple Gang came about but I was responsible for coming up with a new frequency each month at the same time that we received all the new official call signs and radio frequencies each month. For The Purple Gang's unofficial/unauthorized frequency we used the VHF/Victor radio since it was not used much in Nam. What I had to do each month was come up with five random frequencies on the VHF radio; these frequencies were labeled Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, and Echo. I would write on a bunch of small slips of paper the random frequencies that I had come up with for the month and give them to all the Purple Gang pilots. We would all begin by using the Alpha freq but if for what ever reason that freq was being used by someone else we all know that we would automatically stop using Alpha freq and go to Bravo freq. We had five freqs to go to so we quickly with in a day or so hit on an unused freq to use as the Purple Gang's BS freq for the month. As I remember, we rarely got to Charlie freq since the VHF radio was so seldom used in Nam. One of the times we had to abandon a freq the unit that was authorized to use the freq got really pissed at us for using the freq and demanded that we identify ourselves so that he could report us to his CO. Since we did not use any call signs just our numbers (we could recognize each others voice and know everyone's numbers since they didn't change month to month) no one who listened could

figure out who we were. So that first day we would call out in the blind to all the rest of The Purple Gang that Alpha freq was dead and switch to Bravo freq, well this guy really got mad at us and began ordering us to tell him who we were and what was Bravo freq. No one would answer him and after the first day none of us were ever on the abandoned Alpha freq again. We set up the five different BS freq for just that reason, we really did not want to use some one else's.

James Kohler's 155 journey

I had arrived in Saigon in November of 1965 and after volunteering for the Door Gunner position I was posted to the 155th in BMT. I also have to say I've been very grateful for both those events ever since. After joining the 155th I had become well acclimated with my position and in late December the entire company was called to Saigon. We were to participate in one of the first big pushes into WZ "D" or the Iron Triangle, I don't remember which. On the morning of our first "lift" the Company was lined up alongside a runway, rotors turning, doors open, and ready to go. The CO came down the line leading the company out single file. As he came past the ship I was on, all of a sudden over my earphones came, "Stagecoach (???) tell your door gunner to roll down his sleeves" . . . and I froze. The Pilot turned around to make sure I had complied and I could tell from the look in his eyes I just got crossed off his Christmas Card list.

Now the problem was that in the early days we were still wearing stateside fatigues that were cotton, bulky, and hot. Much of the time around the base and on our local missions rolled up sleeves were common. So one day I had the bright idea to cut the sleeves off at the elbows, give them two turns and I'd be cool and look Kool...oops.

So now I sat cradling my M60 in my lap while trying to pull my shoulders up to my ears and thinking there goes my nice new four month old third stripe. Well, we got under way and at altitude the cooler air cleared my head and my "60" and I went to work

normally. Fortunately somewhere around the second or third lift I managed to scrounge up a "reg" shirt and I think that there were enough more important things going on so that I was easily forgotten. Wisely I quickly got out of the "alteration" business and soon afterwards our jungle "GI's" arrived.

Now, I'd like to give a "Shout Out" to some former hootch mates who I hope read the Barb. Sgt. Al Herrera, from Guam. Always good natured and a good friend to talk to. Sgt. GT Macon. who I always admired for his demeanor, knowledge, and spirit. Sgt. Thomas Tutt, quietly efficient and to this day I continue to apologize. I've learned a lot along the way.

To close I'd like to Thank Maj. (then) Joseph Parlas and leadership of all departments. It was great duty and great memories serving in the 155th.

TAPS

Herman Hedrick died in Booneville, AR, on June 29, 2014. Herman was a Falcon crew chief during '69 and '70.

Edward Baggett died on July 21, 2014. Ed was a Falcon pilot during '69 and '70.

Mike Gilsdorf died in July of last year. Mike was a Stagecoach and Falcon pilot in '68 and '69.

David A. Ware 155 AHC 67-68 passed in June

Sanford N. Kaplan 155th in 1965 died in June

Fly high, friends.

Terry Kirkpatrick remembers

So there we were, a helicopter full of testosterone driven young Americans, carrying a Vietnamese Cav officer and his American counterpart south east of Bravo Mike Tango (Ban Me Thuot). I was "Peter Pilot." I forget who the AC crew chief and door gunner were. Someone saw a deer and asked the Vietnamese officer if he'd like deer for dinner. So down we went to brush top altitude --about 20ft AGL. (No triple canopy here, just scattered bushes about 6ft high)

I think it was the crew chief that had first pop at the deer. He let go with a long burst from his M-60. The deer, not being dumb ran UNDER the aircraft. Next thing we know the door gunner is banging away with his M-60. The deer changed direction and the Aircraft Commander brought the ship around to give both the crew-chief and door gunner equal time. My big worry was that

one or both would lean so far out of the aircraft they'd fall out. Second big worry was that they'd swing the free guns around and shoot US down... Be hard to explain.

After about five minutes of low level twisting and turning, a deer that wouldn't cooperate and several hundred rounds of ammo, we finally took down the deer.

Now there was another problem. We had a dead deer in the middle of no-mans-land and no place close by to land. We finally hovered the Huey over the deer and the Crew Chief jumped out with some cord he'd found somewhere in the AC. He tied the cord to the deer and then to the cargo hook and, with the help of the gunner, got back up on a skid and into the aircraft. So away we went, back to the ARVN Cav compound, sitting atop a hill. As we started our decent the cord broke or the knot came untied or something and the deer dropped about 500 feet to the ground.

I looked down and saw about three or four M113s, booking it out of the compound, down the hill to get what was left of the deer. It's said it took several thousand rounds of ammo for each enemy killed. I don't know where the accountants stuck the hundreds of rounds we fired at deer...
Your tax dollars at work.

IT REALLY IS A SMALL WORLD

Geoff Jones; Falcon 0, '70-'71

For many of us our time in the military was one of meeting and interacting with people from all over the USA and the world. Rarely did we come across those we knew or had connection with back in the World. This is a short story of two men from the same small town who came to share a common path in RVN, albeit at different times, and later fly a Happy Valley mission together. The town was Herrick, Illinois and it was comprised of maybe 800 souls at the time. I was a fairly new Falcon AC circa early 1970 and was learning the finer points of flying trail ship on our gun teams. Life was busy, dangerous and at the same time pretty darned engaging for a young man with a lot of armament. Like many of us experienced, gut checks and pucker-factor situations were frequent in the gunship world but the life was compelling; we were drawn to it much like the moth-to-a-flame analogy. For me at the time, little serious thought was given to back-home life, not as a conscious act, but rather as a consequence of the intensity of living in the moment as it existed back then. A change to that was coming. Enter Bob Donaldson. Bob was a product of that same small Illinois town. In 1970, he was a second tour Captain, flying Chinooks in the 243rd "Freight Train" Company out of Don Ba Thin. He had missions that brought him to Ban Me Thuot periodically, knew my family and having heard of me being in the 155 via family and the hometown newspaper, decided to look me up one day while in

BMT on "Freight Train" business. I had not known Bob personally because he began his Army career before I got to know his family. I knew his parents and went to school with his brothers and sisters. I knew Bob only by his reputation as a stand-up guy. I really appreciated his effort to connect with another hometown boy.

I happened to be on a stand-by team with Mike Stark that day. Mike was lead and I was trail AC. We were still hanging out in the Falcon hootch when Bob looked me up.

I learned a lot about him that day. Little did I know that he was no stranger to Ban Me Thuot. I learned that in 1968, during his first tour, he was not only a former member of the 155 but that he was a previous Falcon Pilot too. As it turned out, Falcon 6, Mike Stark and Bob hit it off well and bonded as we commiserated, talking 155 and laughing and scratching about the contents of the hometown newspaper while hanging out in the Falcon hootch. The old Montagnard hootch-maid, Bui Thi Roi, recognized Bob from two years prior and acted as if she was seeing a ghost.

Well, as I mentioned, our team was on stand-by. An ARVN (or CIDG?) recon team had been discovered and was in trouble in the Happy Valley area. We were called out to provide support.

Bob and Mike were still talking when the call-out came and Mike asks to Bob... "why don't you go with me in lead ship for one more Falcon mission...?" Needless to say, the draw was too strong to resist and off we went with Mike and Bob piloting lead ship and my team following in trail ship. Bob's Chinook and crew remained in BMT awaiting his return as he once again became a Falcon with a mission.

There have been a lot of flights and time pass since then but the following is what I remember of the rest of that day; I'm sorry I don't remember who all else was with our team, it's just been too long ago.

We were given coordinates and told to look for the ARVN's orange triangle panel. We tree-topped it most of the way but came up long enough to spot the panel marking their location near some fallen trees along the edge of a clearing. Mike/Bob saw the panel but no one in my ship ever did see it, maybe they pulled it in when lead confirmed it...who knows.

We set up our gun runs as the recon team relayed bad-guy locations via an off-site American on FM. It was nothing overly dramatic; I don't recall seeing or hearing taking fire. We worked it with rockets and mini gun for some time but didn't completely expend. On my first run I remember being told trail ship ordinance was getting too close to the recon team; I

adjusted and continued until we were released. I never knew if our release was because the bad guys were no longer a problem or if I was working too close to the team for comfort.

In any event, it was another typical Falcon stand-by mission and we returned to BMT (without much need for an altimeter) to rearm, refuel and wait for the next call-out. Bob went back to his ship and crew then left in a whirlwind only a Chinook can produce.

Life went on in different directions for two guys from the small town of Herrick, Illinois. Bob returned to his Chinook life and subsequent military and government career. I continued on my Falcon, then civilian journey.

Many years later at the 2012 155 reunion in St Louis I walked up to a round table full of 155'ers and asked "...does anyone remember a guy named Bob Donaldson; he was a Falcon in 1968...?" Up shoots a hand and someone says "THATS ME"! On taking second looks we recognized each other (not sure what that says about us) and re-connected one more time about family, hometown, the ones from that village who didn't make it back from RVN and most of all that one Falcon mission.

What are the odds of two guys from the same town of maybe 800 people becoming Army helicopter pilots, then being assigned to the same Company (even if different years), the same Platoon and then flying a mission together in that same Platoon?

It really is a small world.

Chuck Markham addresses membership

Since I am editing this issue I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the support I've had during this tenure as your president. The officers have been, and always will be, essential if the Association is to thrive. Les has been my rock. He calms me during my frequent panic modes and spends hours preparing for each episode of THE BARB. Jeff is also a mainstay managing the finances for us. Matt and Elizabeth have the most active and ongoing jobs. The time they invest is incalculable. John Grow also keeps an eye on me and adds things to the agenda that I may have overlooked. Rod Waddell has been available for any task I ask of him and is an asset I used often. So as I begin to think about passing the guidon I think back to all those who have been behind me and have made much greater contributions than I. Please support the next president like you have supported me and we will have another great bi-annual.

Las Vegas has much to offer for most anybody. any activity; to include things that do not cost money.

Some of the many **things that are free**:

- 1.) Mirage Volcano every hour from dusk
- 2.) Golden Nugget has the worlds largest gold nugget
- 3.) Harrah's Casino has the KC Twins dueling pianos, 9 PM nightly
- 4.) Bellagio Hotel/Casino has the amazing musical and water displays on the strip
- 5.) Bellagio's conservatory and botanical gardens, open 24/7
- 6.) Wayne Newton's mansion on Pecos & Sunset
- 7.) Sam's Town Hotel has a laser and light show, times are 2, 6, 8 and 10 PM
- 8.) The Venetian@ St. Mark's Square has various performing artists 12,1,2,4,5&6
- 9.) Flamingo Hotel has a wildlife habitat, open 24/7
- 10.)The Speedway has Shelby Mustangs, for the Ford lover
- 11.)Nellis AFB "Aviation Nation" airshow, 11/8, 11/9, 4700 L. Vegas Blvd. N.
- 12.)Caesar's Palace to see the Fall of Atlantis show, hourly 10 am to 11 pm
- 13.)Circus Circus the worlds largest permanent circus, 11 am daily
- 14.)Bellagio Hotel has a truly beautiful colored glass art in the lobby ceiling
- 15.)The City Center Fine Art Collection with 15 renowned artists
- 16.)Harley Davidson Café has a variety of collectibles
- 17.)New York-New York has a tribute to the 9-11 Memorial
- 18.)Fremont Street Experience has a 7 block open air mall w/largest TV screen
- 19.)Mirage also has a salt water aquarium that is continuous
- 20.)Pawn Stars, as seen on TV, 713 Las Vegas Blvd, South
- 21.)American Restoration, as seen on TV, 1112 S Commerce St
- 22.)Counts Kustom Cars, as seen on TV
- 23.)Pin Ball arcade museum where you can play the machines
- 24.)On Veterans' Day (Tuesday) there will be a parade in downtown area

So don't hesitate to jump on that hop on hop off bus and motor around the city taking advantage of these and numerous other attractions.



