



BAN ME THUOT BARB



Remembering the 155th Assault Helicopter Company & and all who served in Ban Me Thuot and Camp Coryell, II Corp, Republic of South Vietnam

October 2015

Sortie 58

- NOT EVERYONE WHO LOST HIS LIFE IN SVN, DIED THERE
- NOT EVERYONE WHO CAME HOME FROM SVN, EVER LEFT

These are powerful words, as we all know, and regretfully live in the minds and hearts of many South Vietnam Vets. Of the almost nine (9) million who served in Vietnam, many continue to remember the sad times and the good times experienced by all. Many of us were so young and yet given such a high degree of responsibility where others greatly depended upon our judgment and actions. Naturally, the sad times occurred when we lost good friends, guys that we worked with, some experienced marital problems being away from home, injuries to ourselves and/or other 155 guys through our jobs and the enemy.

The good times were when we were able to go home and possibly serve a second tour, R&R locations, social times with our peers, a successful and rewarding mission and of course, ETS and DEROS.

I have a great deal of respect for the actions of our flight crews. You men were in a higher degree of danger and, with pride, completed your jobs to the best of your ability. These same words would apply to those who served in almost intolerable conditions in many parts of South Vietnam.

When I returned home from my tour, a good friend of my parents, who served in artillery in Europe during WWII asked me: You have just experienced a million dollars worth of knowledge and history, would you do it again for two cents? This would be a difficult decision to make involving both the good and bad times. As many of us have heard before and we hope to hear in the future,
WELCOME HOME AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.

WYOMING ACKNOWLEDGES ITS VETERANS

I reside in Wyoming and in June of 2015, the State of Wyoming, in conjunction with various committees, held a "THANK YOU TO ALL VETERANS" banquet and weekend activity. This banquet and events were intended especially for the Vietnam vets. However, during the activities, a "thank you" was conveyed to all who served their country. The VFW post to which I belong, had its UH-1D helicopter (served in SVN) moved to the location for the events. A local Caterpillar Dealer re-painted the entire outside of the helicopter. New decals were installed, and a local trucking company moved the UH-1, all at no cost. The committee on which I served addressed the many issues of food, sales, indoor floor space, advertising, and attendance by our governor, speakers, security, dance band, emergency services and counseling. The response by veterans from all over the state, and to include adjacent states, was very positive. The local newspaper provided coverage of the event and even now, once a week, the paper publishes the stories of those veterans who have allowed their past to be shared with those of today.

One might ask, so where are you going with this story? Well, on the floor of our events center there was a large map (about 12' X 20') with the various countries that played a roll in the Vietnam conflict. The countries were labeled, the 4 divisions of SVN and so on. This large map allowed vets to put the unit of which they served in the respective position on the map with a colored marker. I then put the 155 in Ban Me Thuot and to my surprise; there was another marker on the map with the 155th. After some searching, I was able to locate the individual and learned that he has not been receiving the newsletter. So, starting with this issue, **Jim King** of Casper, Wyoming, (also my residence) will be receiving our newsletter. He served from February of 1968 to February of 1969 with the 155th.

HELP IS NEEDED

In past issues of the Barb, we have asked for your stories and it doesn't matter if they are funny, factual or just things and times you experienced with the 155th and on Camp Coryell. Many of the association officers have been providing articles for the newsletter for 20 years. They are running out of stories to write about and are asking for your help.

The process to complete a newsletter is lengthy. However, upon the letter being ready for review, it is emailed to the association officers for their approval. The intent is to determine the factual events, spelling, and a proper format for the newsletter. This is the procedure for every issue. We all make various mistakes in composing the letter and by several sets of eyes; it assures a proper and acceptable newsletter. If you make spelling errors, grammar errors or may need assistance in composing the article, we will walk you through this process to successfully complete an article.

Honorable Men

Ken Donovan, Stagecoach 28

On a number of occasions and in a recently published book “Abandoned in Hell” about the battle of LZ Kate I stated, “**Ken Donovan** is alive today because of the men I flew with.” It is those men I would like to address today.

Reflecting on my experience with the 155th, I have come to the conclusion that I served with honorable men of great character, and that was what allowed us collectively as a group to do great things. The simple fact is most of the men I flew with valued their honor more than their lives.

While no system is perfect, I now understand what a great job the Army did in our selection and training. I would like you to think about this—in a matter of about two weeks, from the time we graduated from flight school with a little over 200 hours of flight time at the age of 19-21, we were flying our first combat missions. In some cases, within 5 or 6 months after graduation we were leading flights of slicks or gun teams in a very hostile environment, where death was always waiting to strike either due to bad weather, an engine failure with no place to go, or enemy action. While I have met a few men of great character during my civilian career, they are certainly far fewer than I experienced during my time in the army.

While the focus of any aviation unit are the flight platoons, there were other honorable men in the 155th. They could be found in the support platoons that kept us and our aircraft flying. They endured the same bad weather and the same mortar and rocket attacks. Thank you for giving me the best possible aircraft.

Living in a platoon was certainly a different experience. It was here where everyone was stripped of all external pretenses. We all wore the same uniform, flew the same missions, ate the same food. It did not matter where you were from, how much money your family had, or what you did before you joined the army. What really mattered was what I call the currency of combat; were you cool under fire, were you professional in your decision making, could you be counted on when things turned to hell in a hand basket? Did you value the other guy’s life as much or more than your own? These were the things that really counted, not what you did or who you were back in the world.

Now, a few words about the reunions and why they are so meaningful to those of us who attend: It is very interesting to watch guys that have not seen each other for a number of years greet each other at the reunion. I believe the bonds that were forged so many years ago are unbreakable by time, distance, nor even death. I maintain contact with a number of unit members after nearly 50 years, and remember with a mixture of fondness and sadness those that died so many years ago.

Lastly I need to say THANK YOU to **Charlie M, Jack C, and Jim A**, for getting me out when I went down on Aug 6, 1969. On that day you gave me the

last 46 years of my life, they have been great, and would not have been possible without your actions on that day. To the rest, thank you for your service to America, and your friendship, my life would have been a lesser thing without them.

SOUTH VIETNAM, POSSIBLY A RE-VISIT



If anyone is contemplating a re-visit to South Vietnam, please let others know. My wife and I have talked about a possible trip. In the last Barb, it sounds like **Tony Giordano** could be interested. Maybe the best way is to express our interests on the 155 Web page, the Facebook page – 155th Assault Helicopter Company - or let an officer know and the information could be published in the Barb too.

LZ REUNION 2016

Mark your calendars NOW; Columbus Day weekend, October 2016, Washington, D.C. The 155th returns to the site of our very first reunion twenty (20) years ago. Motel will likely be in Arlington, VA. October in DC is generally less crowded and excellent weather. If you want to come early/stay late, museums, monuments and memorials abound, and there's Civil War history all around. **Les Davison** is the contact person and further info will follow in the next Barb.

Editor's Note: For the first gathering, my records show there were 11 vets in attendance. I am glad to say that attendance has greatly improved.



HELICOPTER NAMES & NOSE ART

John Brennan was with the 114th AHC at Vinh Long. In the last few years, he's authored four books about helicopter names and nose art from Vietnam and now he's working on number five. He says that photos of 155th Helicopters: "Baby Jo", "Grim Reaper", "Ivan The Terrible", "Natural Death", "Ride A Slick to Hell and Back", "We're Slick", "What Me Worry, Hell Yes!", and "Windy City Maggie" are being considered for inclusion. The associated photographers are: Al Bollens, Jim Ferris, Rueben Hunter and Jerry Walker. If anyone has photos, stories, or any info on any of these helicopters, John would like to hear from you. Forwarding of info can be made through any 155 officer.



We are looking for the who, what, when and any relevant info for the nose art on the 155th Helicopters. **Would you please help?**

WHAT UNIQUE ITEMS DID YOU BRING HOME

If there is any interest, the question is asked: What unique items did you bring back from the 155 and SVN? Please respond on the 155 Web site and this could be posted in the Barb each quarter. Think, Think, Think.

MAIL CALL – GUEST BOOK

KURT MAASSEN – Larry, I believe you knew my father, Dosie Maassen, or served with him in the 155th. Any stories would be appreciated. NOTE: Larry “Matt” Matthews contacted Kurt and related his remembrances of 2nd Flight Platoon to SFC Maassen (Daddy Bear), a true leader for his guys.

RON CARLSON – Arrived in BMT on 5/20/63 and was the company clerk. We built the mess hall, barbeque pit and tennis court.

TERRY GALLAGHER – Looking to confirm/find 155 crews for 64-13586 from 10/66-12/66. May have been shot down or crashed.

SAM BELSHAW – On this day (May 1st) 50 years ago, those of us that traveled on the USS Iwo Jima arrived in SVN on our way to the central highlands for our stay with the 155th, later to be named Camp Coryell.

MIKE BORER – Joe Kinder give me a call, gunner 1967 Stagecoach and Falcons.

To War in Vietnam

LT Willis J. Heydenberk, Jun '66, Stagecoach pilot

Vietnam in the morning is hushed
With the quiet of dewdrops and dampness
On its plains and rolling hills.

Choppers don't fly when the clouds hang low,
Only GI's venture forth to meet Charlie blow for blow.

All in a day's work, the fighting's almost done;
Tomorrow will bring more of it, and none of it fun.

Yet perhaps the morrow might even bring peace,
And if it should, what a happy release.

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TREASURER'S NOTE

Please remit your annual dues of \$20 to help with the costs. The month of July is the normal billing cycle, however, anytime of the year will help. The mailing address is: 155th AHCA, xx.

Editor for this issue of the Barb was Rod Waddell.



155 AHC Association
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