



BAN ME THUOT BARB

Remembering the 155th Assault Helicopter Company
& all the Ban Me Thuot Guys



Sortie 59

January 2016

AN EASY DAY

Ken Acker, Stagecoach 18

The day started as always with a check in at Operations to see what I would be assigned to do. The morning weather was awful, near zero-zero, but that was to be expected this time of year. A check of the “Ops” board showed that I was assigned to a resupply and C&C mission for the 45th Infantry Regiment, 23rd ARVN Infantry Division. The unit was located just off of Highway 21 on the way to Nha Trang. The best part was I was assigned to fly with Kelly Fredrickson. We were both senior ACs (Aircraft Commanders.) Most of the company was off on a lift so Kelly and I were assigned together, boy this was going to be an easy day. The unit was only a short flight away and things had been calm in that area.

Kelly and I were off to get some breakfast and then to preflight the aircraft and hope the weather would improve. The weather lifted enough that we decided to load up the requested supplies and try to get them to the unit. With map in hand, all eyes were on the road east as we headed out. It was low - very low - and slow, but we picked our way through the fog. The crew had all eyes out to look for trees and keep us close to the road. If we lost sight of the road we were in big trouble. We dropped off our first load and headed back to refuel and resupply. The weather was still bad, but we knew the road and route.

We started off on our third trip and saw a Dustoff with two gunships departing just ahead of us. The weather was still bad and as we listened to the radio chatter we learned that the Dustoff was heading to the unit we were supporting. The fog was very thick and the Dustoff and guns were a few miles ahead of us as we saw them take a slight turn to the north. We knew they had taken the wrong road and got on the radio to tell them they were off course. We tried to get them to change course, but they never heard our transmissions.

Kelly and I looked at each other and decided we knew where to go, so we called the American advisor and told him we would take the mission. So much for an easy day! The fog was still thick, and the crew was looking out for dead trees as we worked our way to the fire base. The ambush site was a few miles east of the fire base and as we flew over the fire base they started to fire the 155’s. We were almost blown out of the sky! The fog was much worse in the evacuation area and we were forced to just about hover down the road with the rotor in the fog. When we reached the site we landed on the road and loaded the wounded soldier. He had lost a leg and was in shock and needed to get to medical attention ASAP. We lifted off, but would have to make a pedal turn to depart because of the low fog. The Crew Chief and Gunner helped us clear the tail so we could head back to Ban Me Thuot. We flew back as fast as we could. With a lot of luck we made it back and dropped him off to get medical attention.

With that done we needed to refuel - and the crew chief was right we needed to wash the blood out of the aircraft. This gave us all some time to think about the last few moments; the fog, the artillery fire, and the recent pickup in an ambush area. With that done and some

chance for a coke and food we headed back to our assignment.

We are off back to the ARVN unit happily the fog has lifted a bit and we have no problem finding our way. As we get set to land the American advisor calls us on the radio and asks us to shut down and come see him. Kelly and I look at each other and think, "Did we screw up?" We head over to the Captain's tent and introduce ourselves. He started going on and on about he had never seen anything like this. We still think he is getting ready to report us. To our surprise he thinks we did something out of the ordinary. Kelly and I sit him down and try to explain we do this every day. In fact, this was an EASY DAY.

OVERDUE COMMENDATIONS

Dear 155 AHCA Historian,

I am writing with the hope to secure some additional details regarding my father's, **John H. Teaford**, service in general and the circumstances around his wounding during the Tet Offensive on 30 January 1968. The purpose of this inquiry is to try and have my father's record reopened and evaluated so that he may receive the commendations that are long overdue (according to what I have been told). However, if possible, I would like to hear from those who served with him both to confirm the account that has been relayed to me as well as to provide additional evidence of a possible oversight by the Army in recognizing my father for his actions. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions. Thank you for your time.

Regards,
Sean M. Teaford

"s _____@xxx.com"
xxx-xxx-xxxx

Morgantown, PA

SEEKING INFO ON '67 MISHAP



Looking for name of warrant officer who piloted a Huey from your unit that crashed due to mechanical failure west of Kontum on or about 25 NOV 67. I was 1LT passenger taking NVA PW from Kontum to Camp Enari. Have pic. Figure I wouldn't be walking this earth today but for him. Tracked unit from nose decal. Tail number not known. No fatalities, couple of minor injuries.

Jim Anderson

Contact any 155 occifer with info, we'll put you in touch with Jim.

TAPS

Steven "Jesse" James passed away earlier this month in Ozark, AL. Jesse worked in 155 Maintenance during '69 and '70. (Thanks to Joe Thompson for letting us know.)

REUNION WASHINGTON, DC

13 – 15 October 2016

(Well, technically it's in Arlington, VA.)

Hyatt Regency Crystal City
2799 Jeff Davis Highway
Arlington, VA 22202

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday
Single & double rooms are \$99 plus tax

Free shuttle to/from Reagan National Airport and Metro. (Hotel is 1/4 mile from Reagan National.)

Hotel has Valet Parking only: \$32 for all day. (Nearby private lots are less expensive.)

Banquet Saturday evening will be \$60 per person.

We'll likely set up a time to visit The Wall as a group, to honor our fallen brothers.

Some guys are already talking about coming early and/or staying after: great idea. October in DC area is generally nice weather, and there's **much** to see and do (and many are free): Smithsonian museums, monuments galore (new/recent ones include WWII Memorial, FDR Memorial, Martin Luther King Memorial), and history everywhere. If you're a Civil War buff, Gettysburg, Antietam, and several other battle sites are within easy driving distance. Same for the Marine Corps Museum (newly refurbished) at Quantico. Make your plans now. We're hoping for the biggest turnout yet. See you there!

FYI, this is our 10th reunion; the very first one was in DC twenty years ago.

Les Davison is the Point Man, contact him with questions/ideas/suggestions.

Note on 155 Merchandise: Mary and I have decided to fly to D.C., so I will not be able to bring all the shirts and stuff to the reunion. I will have patches and coins. If you want shirts or hats please order them prior to the reunion, and I will ship them to you. Contact me if you need information about availability or cost. Sorry, delivery by drone is not yet available.

Chuck Markham "xxxxxx.xxxxx@.com"



Co An at Camp Coryell, 1968. We called her "Bubbles."

Bradley Peterson photo

BMT MEMORIES

Charlie Ritter, Stagecoach

New kid in town, June 1968, I was a newbie PFC assigned to the 155th as a Mechanic, Aircraft, Rotary Wing. In country less than 30 days, I went through the very first mortar attack of my life time. I wondered if the bunkers were safe - and knew I had a year to go of this. UGH!

Well, the mechanic job did not last - because I was asked if I would like to be a crew chief. Heck ya!! So I was moved to a Stagecoach flight platoon. It meant a promotion to SP4, and later to SP5. In August, we flew many missions over the Duc Lap area.

I think my bird was 236; not for sure, it's been a lot of years to think back. Anyway, if that ship left the ground this kid and my door gunner (Massy, I think that was his name) went with it. As a Crew Chief and in Vietnam, it was an all-new ballgame for me. Just about every place we flew, I sent back home the name of the place so my sister could mark her Vietnam map: Duc Lap, Darlac, Cheo Reo, and Dalat. We even made it up to Pleiku, where I got to see my cousin. And who would know that on my second tour three years later, I would be stationed there at Camp Holloway.

I remember one time that I had just finished early morning lubing and pre-flight on my ship, and one of the pilots during his pre-flight yelled at me because the swash plate still had lube grease on it. LOL! Yes Sir! I wish I could get some of my 2404-12's (I think that was the flight log form), to see where and when we flew, and for how many hours. That would be interesting.

Another time I was trying to spruce up my ship with new stuff: sound proofing and gray paint in the cabin area. Well the paint was still wet and my ship was scheduled for Starlight stand-by that night. Ops was yelling at me on that one. It ended up that another ship was scheduled, but after that I had the best looking ship on the inside with new paint and soundproof padding! I made it through the year, got a nice reenlistment bonus, and went home June of 1969. Back for a second tour in 71-72, was Medevac'd out in 72.

DEAR VETERAN,

I am a high school student. I am 17 years old and I am from El Salvador, maybe you heard about that country before. I am not an American girl, but I'm living here, and I can be free here. That's one of the most powerful reasons why I moved to this country. My country is a "free" one, but not everyone is really free. I just want to say thank you so much for fighting wars for us. Thank you so much for all your sacrifices. Thank you so much for our freedom.

Sincerely,
Heritage High School student

Handed to a 155 guy at The Wall on Veterans Day.



A Falcon B model gunship, '65 or early '66, showing the ship's armament displayed in front: 2.75 inch Folding Fin Aerial Rockets, 40 mm HE grenades, and M-60 ammunition.

Rueben Hunter photo.

LIBERTY WAR BIRD ASSOCIATION

155 guys Jim Haga and Al Owen are members of the Liberty War Bird Association, which is a non-profit flying museum, 100% volunteer organization based at Lancaster, PA. The Association shares a hangar with Dutch Country Helicopters at the Lancaster Airport. Jim Haga, Chief Instructor at Dutch Country, is the President of the Association. The Association is now the proud owner of UH-1H Serial# 66-16823. Huey "823" is a documented Vietnam War combat veteran that served with the 101st Airborne Division and the 170th Assault Helicopter Company in 1969 -1970. You can learn more about the Association from their website: <http://libertywarbirds.com>.

PENTAGON CEREMONY HONORS GREEN HORNETS

Last December, Green Hornet crew chief Ron Brodeur and door gunner Eric Roberts were awarded Silver Stars for their heroism many years ago. (Green Hornets were US Air Force, they flew UH-1F's out of BMT East, supporting the B-50 mission into Cambodia.) Back-story is that two pilots were decorated for a Feb '69 mission west of Duc Lap, backseaters were not. Many years later, Ron and Eric gathered witness statements and submitted paperwork (in triplicate, of course) for a review, and were awarded DFC's. They felt like the medals should have been higher, appealed, got turned down at least once but kept plugging, and finally the Air Force decided Silver Stars were warranted. The process took 7 years.

But when the Air Force finally got it right, they did the awardees right, too. Family and friends were invited to tour the Pentagon, attend the ceremony, and enjoy a very nice reception afterward; first class, all the way. USAF Chief of Staff (FOUR stars) presented the medals, and two or three lesser generals were in attendance. And, maybe best of all, five or six other Vietnam Green Hornets were able to attend. Well deserved, well done.

I was honored to represent the 155 AHC at the ceremony. Afterwards, I was talking with one of the backseaters on Green Hornet Jim Fleming's Medal of Honor mission. Hot extraction in Cambodia, LOTS of bullets flying - Fleming stayed until everybody was on board, and they all made it out. Quite a story there, too.

Les Davison

MOTOR POOL MISADVENTURES

Roger Elliott ('68-'70)

As I remember it . . . I was the 155th AHC Motor Sergeant. One day I was sitting at my desk, thinking what had to be done. An E6 and an E7 walked in and asked if they could get a wrecker and a driver to go with them the next day. I didn't really have a driver, but I did have a 5 ton wrecker. I told them I would go with them, if they could get it approved by the CO and First Sergeant.

They came back later in the day and said the CO had given his permission. They told me to meet them at the front gate at 0600 the next day, but they didn't really give any details about the mission. I just said yes because it seemed like a good excuse to get away from Camp Coryell for a while.

We met up as planned the next morning. They had a deuce-and-a-half, and led the way. I followed in the wrecker. We started out toward East Field, then turned off the main road and headed south – I think. We travelled for a few hours, and the road got smaller and smaller. We started fording rivers, and the road seemed to disappear. I looked to the right and saw several people walking through a rice paddy. They were all wearing black pajamas and carrying AK-47's. I could hear artillery and air strikes, pretty close. No one was messing with us, and that was all right. I just kept following the deuce-and-a-half. And then we started driving around vehicles that had been blown up and burnt up.

We finally came to our destination. It was a large GP tent with lots of antennas sticking out of it. We hopped out of our trucks, and one of the NCO's asked me, "Where's your shotgun? You do realize we just went through the hottest pass in Vietnam? The artillery and air strikes were to support us."

It seems the unit was a radio relay station, out in the middle of nowhere. The troops came out of their tent with long hair, love beads, and no rank on their uniforms. I did like that part. We were there because they needed some Conex containers moved from the valley to the top of a hill, so we got to work. I had a Conex on the hook on my wrecker when I turned a corner – and found myself staring eyeball-to-eyeball with a bull elephant. Luckily, I think it scared him as much as me. He didn't want to have anything to do with my wrecker, and I sure didn't want to bother him. He wandered off to rejoin his herd.

After that, it was a pretty easy mission. I got the Conex containers moved, but it took me a little longer than I thought. I wondered who was going to escort me back to BMT. The two guys who brought me out said they weren't going back that day. They advised me to stay also, because it was too late to get through the pass before dark. I told them I needed to clear that with my CO. Since they were a radio relay station, it was easy for them to contact the 155th – but the CO said something like, "Hell no, I'm not letting one of my men stay out there overnight." So off I drove – alone.

I don't remember much about the drive back. I do remember, though, that I couldn't press the foot feed down hard enough! I wanted to go faster! Well, I made it back and didn't run

into any problems. Needless to say I was very happy to be back home. I think it helped that you had to be “beaucoup dinky-dau” to go through the pass without support. Just another day in the ‘Nam.

COMMO CHECK

Bob Poast – Thanks for sending me the roster.

Jim Cunningham – I finally pulled the plug, retired in December.

Dan Reeves – Thanks for calling, good to hear from you after all these years. I remember one mission, I’m pretty sure we got sent out to be bait – and it worked!

Jim Abbott – I was Stagecoach 23 in ’69. I had my old tapes converted to digital, here’s a CD with a 1969 mortar attack at Camp Coryell. Besides the explosions, you can hear Falcons Charlie Marvin, Denny Fenlon, Norm Simpson, and Jack Coonce. Also on the CD is audio from the night resupply of LZ Kate in late October, ’69. If anyone wants a copy, give me a call.

Herb Hess – Just called to wish you a Happy Holiday.

Bob Stucke – Hey, I am definitely interested in a trip back to Vietnam, would love to go with other 155 guys.

Reid McQuinn – I went to Duane Poulin’s funeral service, there were lots of Vets there to pay their respects.

Bob Maddox – Peaches and I will be driving our RV to the reunion, looking forward to seeing old friends again.

ASH & TRASH

VHPA reunion 5-9 July in Reno, NV. VHPA is Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Assn, Jim Cunningham (Falcon 6 in ’69) wants to gather 155 guys there. If you’re not a VHPA member, Jim says he’ll get you in as his guest. If there’s enough interest, maybe there will be a 155 AHC mini-reunion. Contact info for Jim is: “xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.com” or telephone xxxxxx.

Shutting Down - MANY thanks to **Roger Elliot, Charlie Ritter, and Ken Acker** for sharing their BMT stories, and to **Bradley Peterson and Rueben Hunter** for their great BMT photos. If you enjoyed reading this newsletter, please let them know it. And please, consider sending us your stories and/or photos, for a future Barb. That’s all I’ve got, hope to see LOTS of youse guys – and your gals – at the reunion in October.

Les Davison, *Editor-This-Time*

“xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.com”

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Falcons, circa late '65 or early '66.

Rueben Hunter photo

155 AHC Association

Durham, NC