



# BAN ME THUOT BARB

Remembering the 155th Assault Helicopter Company  
& All who served in Ban Me Thuot



SORTIE 65

September 2017

## **EVENING REPORT: Aircraft Ready for Mission** *Chuck Markham, Stagecoach 5*

The 155<sup>th</sup> was required to submit an Aircraft Ready for Mission report to the 10<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion HQ in Dong Ba Thin each evening. The Battalion S3 would use those reports to allocate missions among the companies. When I arrived at BMT to be the XO in early 1970, our report always showed between 97 and 100 percent of our aircraft up - regardless of the **real** number. And there were rumors that, even at 97 to 100% availability, the CO was taking heat from Battalion because a sister company was consistently at 99 to 100 percent. I know that part of the reason was that it looked good on the CO's record when it came Officer Efficiency Review (OER.) time, and good OER's meant good careers. When Major Roland Steele assumed command of the 155<sup>th</sup>, everything continued pretty much as it always had while he got his feet on the ground. But changes would come.

One day the Maintenance Officer came by for the Major Steele's signature on the usual report. I happened to be in his office at the time on other business. Major Steele took the report and picked up his pen, but he paused. He looked up and asked if aircraft such and such would be ready for mission by morning. He knew that the aircraft was in the Maintenance tent, and I suspect he knew what the answer should be. The Maintenance Officer replied, "No, sir." Major Steele "suggested" that he recalculate the percent ready for mission, and the Maintenance Officer did so. The Major then asked if this report was correct. Again, the Maintenance Officer answered, "No, sir" - because he knew the Major knew exactly the status of every aircraft under his command.

Major Steele then calmly but firmly directed him to re-do the report and submit it as it should be submitted. He did not specifically give any numbers, but he made it very clear that from here on, the report would show **real** numbers.

That very same evening, Major Steele asked me to take his bird and fly over to the before mentioned sister company and "have a look around." I had never been there before, so I requisitioned a Warrant Officer out of Ops as my P.I.C. and we flew over there. I had confirmed that, as usual, they had reported 100 percent Mission Ready status for that day. When we arrived I joined the commander in the Mess Hall for coffee, and then he proudly showed me around his compound. It was a ship-shape compound, but when we reached the Maintenance area, I saw a slick with no rotor

blades. A team of Maintenance personnel appeared to be preparing to remove the rotor head. There was also a Charlie model with the windshield out. Granted, if they busted their assets, they could replace the windshield within the two hour specified time allotment - but that's only if they had one, and I don't know whether they did or not. Replacing a set of rotor blades would undoubtedly go well beyond the time limit.

I flew back and reported what I had seen to Major Steele. He might have even smiled a little bit - but he never made a derogatory remark about the sister company, nor did he seem to harbor any anger about it. He had simply wanted to confirm that others were circumventing the system based on what had happened in the past. Well, he may not have been angry, but I was. I know of at least one occasion where a sister company was tasked with their reported number of Mission Ready aircraft, but were unable to comply. 155<sup>th</sup> AHC assumed the mission in support of some people going across the border.

Major Steele didn't drink, but he and I spent some long nights in our hootch over coffee or iced tea discussing how much pressure he was under to submit inflated Mission Ready numbers, not only in that case but for other status reports as well. As far as I know, the 155th never knowingly submitted a false or inflated report on Maintenance status - or anything else - from that time on.

*NOTE: This article was penned from memories that are 46 years old. I purposely didn't mention any names because in most cases I don't remember them and I also didn't want to embarrass anyone.*

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## **HURRICANE HARVEY AND CAMP CORYELL VETERANS**

**If you or any member that served on Camp Coryell was directly affected by Hurricane Harvey, PLEASE let one of the officers know.**

All are well aware of the unprecedented damage that Hurricane Harvey has done to Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. This storm has changed the lives of many, many people today and for many years to come. Help to our brother veterans can be in several forms: 1.) Travel to the affected areas and provide direct help. If you wish to be a part of the recovery, we will attempt to provide locations of those that served in Camp Coryell. 2.) Provide clothing and sealed food items through your local Red Cross or local food banks. 3.) A financial donation can be made, however, be sure that the money goes directly to those in need rather than administrative costs. Here is a web site that will provide names of trusted organizations: [charitynavigator.com](http://charitynavigator.com).

Some of these organizations are:

|                               |                                                                               |              |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| All Hands Volunteers          | <a href="http://hands.org">http://hands.org</a>                               | 508-758-8211 |
| American Red Cross            | <a href="http://www.redcross.org">http://www.redcross.org</a>                 | 800-733-2767 |
| Houston Food Bank             | <a href="http://houstonfoodbank.org">http://houstonfoodbank.org</a>           | 713-223-3700 |
| United Way of Greater Houston | <a href="http://www.unitedwayhouston.org">http://www.unitedwayhouston.org</a> | 713-685-2300 |

Many churches are also taking donations and 100% of the donation goes directly to those affected by the hurricane. This is our time to come together and help those in need. Like many say: “PAY IT FORWARD”

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**REUNION RENO, NEVADA                      OCTOBER 3-8, 2018**

It’s time to start planning to attend our reunion in Reno Nevada. Mark your calendar for Wednesday October 3rd thru Monday the 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018. We’ll be staying at the “Atlantis Casino Resort and Spa”, a casino and spa that’s a level above. Information on making reservations will be forthcoming. The Atlantis provides complimentary round trip shuttle service to the Reno airport.

**Here are the Room rates**

|                                          | <b>Wed<br/>10/03</b> | <b>Thu<br/>10/04</b> | <b>Fri<br/>10/05</b> | <b>Sat<br/>10/06</b> | <b>Sun<br/>10/07</b> | <b>Mon<br/>10/08</b> |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Atlantis Tower Room</b>               | \$79                 | \$79                 | \$129                | \$129                | \$79                 | \$79                 |
| <b>Luxury Tower Room</b>                 | \$ 99                | \$99                 | \$149                | \$149                | \$99                 | \$99                 |
| <b>Atlantis Concierge<br/>Tower Room</b> | \$159                | \$159                | \$209                | \$209                | \$159                | \$159                |

All guest rooms are subject to the local occupancy tax and fees at the time of check-in. Currently the local occupancy tax is 13% and there is a \$2.00 per room, per night, tourism surcharge, both of which are subject to change.

The hotel will provide us a Hospitality Suite and a Memorabilia Room. I’m anticipating that both the Memorabilia Room and Hospitality Suite will be available Thursday, 12 noon; until Monday, 12 noon.

The Banquet will be held on Saturday, from 1800 hrs. to 2200 hrs.

I’m proposing that on Friday Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> we have a tour of the Nevada Army Air Guard Helicopter Facility, located at the Reno Stead Airport, with the possibility of a same-day tour of the private Harrah’s Military Museum. Approximate costs for transportation are \$11.00 per person for 60 participants.

For Sunday, I’m suggesting a Lake Tahoe sightseeing luncheon cruise on the **M.S. Dixie II** paddlewheel boat (leave hotel at 0930, return at 1500 hrs.) This would consist of a narrated coach ride to Lake Tahoe through the summit of the Sierras, a 2 hour cruise on the Lake and return. Estimated price per person is \$125 with a minimum of 45 guests. My wife and I have done the dinner cruise and everyone on board enjoyed it. Another possible tour, not necessarily on Sunday, would be to historical Virginia City by bus. Depending on type of tour options, this would be \$72.00 with lunch (6 hrs.) or \$46.00 without lunch (4 hrs.) with 18 guests min.

Reno has other sightseeing options and these are the highlights I thought would be fun to do as a group. The following links will provide you with more information and previews.

- <https://www.atlantiscasino.com/>
- <http://www.zephyrcove.com/cruises/daytime-scenic-cruises/>
- <http://www.visitvirginiacitynv.com/>

As point man for the reunion, please contact me after October 1, 2017, with your suggestions.

Jim Cunningham

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**COMMO FROM HOME PAGE ON WEB SITE**

*Mike Sullivan* says:

My brother was a medic at Ban Me Thuot, 68-69. His name is Eddie Sullivan. If anyone from that time frame remembers him, I would appreciate to hear from you about him. Good or bad. Thank you and God Bless you all for all you did for your country.

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**“CLASSIFIED REPORT? – Yea Right!”**

The following was taken from email sent between members of the 155<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company Association:

Question: How many aircraft were assigned to the 155<sup>th</sup> and a breakdown of each platoon?

Answer: 12 slicks in 1<sup>st</sup> flight platoon  
 12 slicks in 2<sup>nd</sup> flight platoon  
 8 Falcon gunships  
 1 maintenance aircraft

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33 Total aircraft assigned

Reply: There was also one B-52 for C&C (command and control)

Reply: I thought there were only 8 slicks as several were flown into lakes, etc.

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**MATT SAYS:**

In the event your address should change, no longer wish to receive the Barb, a change in your Internet Service Provider that provides your email service, or find a new member that was assigned to the various units at Ban Me Thuot, please notify me at:

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**155<sup>th</sup> SALE ITEMS**

Just a reminder, the following 155<sup>th</sup> AHC items can be ordered and shipped according to your instructions:

- 1.) Falcon Hats \$20
- 2.) Stagecoach Hats 20
- 3.) Stagecoach and Falcon patches 15 each

- 4.) Grey Tee shirts with picture 15
- 5.) Dark Blue Tee shirts w/155 Guidon 15
- 6.) Mugs 15
- 7.) Hat pins 10
- 8.) Challenge Coin 15

TO ORDER:

Simply email Chuck at: . Provide the size for shirts, item(s) to be ordered, and address for shipping. Chuck will reply with the total cost and ask you to mail a check to:

155<sup>TH</sup> AHC Association  
c/o

When you notify Chuck by email, informing him that the check is in the mail to Jeff Schrader, he will mail the requested items. It's as simple as that!

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Just got this from Col Stanley this morning. I would say someone hit the nail squarely on the head!  
Falcon 5 bob gardner

**"A tribute to the Army's first generation of combat helicopter flight crews"**

Received this in an Email

*(Yes, by God, we flew in Vietnam and we were winning when I left.)*

By J.C. Pennington

As we get older and we experience the loss of old friends, we begin to realize that maybe we ten-foot tall, bulletproof Army aviators won't live forever. We aren't so bulletproof anymore. We ponder... if I we're gone tomorrow, "Did I say what I wanted to my Brothers?" The answer is "No!" Hence, the following random thoughts:

When people ask me if I miss flying, I always say something like, "Yes, I miss the flying because when you are flying, you are totally focused on the task at hand. It's like nothing else you will ever do (almost)." But then I always say, "However, I miss the unit and the guys even more than I miss the flying."

Why, you might ask? They were a bunch of aggressive, wiseass, cocky, insulting, sarcastic bastards in smelly flight suits! They drank too much, they chased women, they flew when they shouldn't, they laughed too loud and thought they owned the sky, the bar, and generally thought they could do everything better than the next guy. Nothing was funnier than trying to screw with a buddy and see how pissed off they would get. They flew helicopters that leaked, that bled RPM, that broke, that couldn't hover, that burned fuel too fast, that never had all the radios and instruments working, and with systems that were archaic next to today's new generation aircraft.

But a little closer look might show that every guy in the room was sneaky smart and damned competent and brutally handsome in his own way! They hated to lose or fail to accomplish the mission and seldom did. They were the laziest guys on the planet until challenged and then they would do anything to win. They would fly with rotor blades overlapped at night through the worst weather with only a little position light to hold on to, knowing their flight lead would get them on the ground safely. They would fight in the air knowing the greatest risk and fear was that some NVA anti-aircraft gunner would wait 'til you flew past him and open up on your six o'clock with tracers as big as softballs. They would fly in harm's way and act nonchalant as if to challenge the grim reaper.

When we flew to another base we proclaimed that we're the best unit on the base as soon as we landed. Often we were not invited back. When we went into a bar, we owned the bar. We were lucky to be the Best of the Best in the military. We knew it and so did others. We found jobs, lost jobs, got married, got divorced, moved, went broke, got rich, broke some things, and knew the only thing you could count -- really count on -- was if you needed help, a fellow Army Aviator would have your back.

I miss the call signs, nicknames and the stories behind them.

I miss getting lit up in an O' or NCO' Club full of my buddies and watching the incredible, unbelievable things that were happening. I miss the crew chiefs waiting as you got to your ship for a Zero-Dark:30 preflight. I miss pulling an armful of pitch, nosing it over and climbing into a new dawn. I miss going straight up and straight down. I miss the tension of wondering what today's 12 hours of combat flying would bring. I miss the craps table in the corner of the O-Club and letting it ALL ride because money was meaningless. I miss listening to BS stories while drinking and laughing until my eyes watered. I miss three man lifts. I miss naps on the platoon hootch porch with a room full of aviators working up new tricks to torment the sleeper. I miss rolling in hot and watching my rockets hit EXACTLY where I was aiming. I miss the beauty and precision of a flight of slicks in formation, rock steady even in the face of tracers flying past you from a hot LZ. I miss belches that could be heard in neighboring states. I miss showing off for the grunts with high-speed, low level passes and abrupt cyclic climbs. I even miss passengers in the back puking their guts up.

Finally, I miss hearing "In-Coming" called out at the bar and seeing and hearing a room full of men hit the deck with drinks spilling and chairs being knocked over as they rolled in the beer and kicked their legs in the air—followed closely by a Not Politically Correct Tap Dancing and Singing spectacle that couldn't help but make you grin and order another round.

I am a lucky guy and have lived a great life!

One thing I know is that I was part of a special team of guys doing something dangerous and doing it better than most. Flying the most beautiful, ugly, noisy, solid helicopters ever built... an aircraft that talked to you and warned you before she spanked you! Supported by really talented Crew Chiefs and Gunners committed to making sure we came home! Being prepared to fly and fight and die for America. Having a clear mission, clear vision, and having fun.

We box out bad memories from various missions and events most of the time but never the hallowed memories of our fallen comrades. We are often amazed at how good war stories never let truth interfere and how they get better with age. We are lucky bastards to be able to walk into a reunion or a bar and have men we respect and love shout our names, our call signs, and know that this is truly where we belong.

We are ARMY AVIATORS and CREWMEMBERS. We are Few and we are Proud to have been one of the first combat helicopter FLIGHTS CREWS the world ever saw.

I am Privileged and Proud to call you Brothers. Clear Right! Clear Left! Pullin' Pitch - Huey Driver".  
Signed, Bill

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155<sup>TH</sup> AHC Association Officers

Rod Waddell - President

Joe Harrelson - Vice President

Chuck Markham - Quartermaster

Jeff Schrader - Treasurer

Matt Matthews - Database guy

Les Davison - Historian

Wayne Coward - Member at large

Jim Cunningham - Member at large

Bruce McInnes - Member at large

Bob Gardner - Member at large

Tom Hunt - Member at large

Elizabeth Coward - Webmaster

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If any of you would care to share a story, experience or anything related to the activities on the Camp Coryell Compound, please email Les (our historian) at [@gmail.com](mailto:les@campcoryell.com) or any above officer. In case there should be questions, you may also call Les at 571-389-8765, or any officer. Through your efforts, we will continue to provide the Barb publication.

The editor for this edition of the Barb was Rod Waddell.



**BUNKER – A WELCOMING LOCATION, WHEN NEEDED**

155 AHC Association

Durham, NC 27712-1325