



BAN ME THUOT BARB

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



Sortie #69

August 2018

**LAST CHANCE TO RESERVE A DISCOUNTED
RESERVATION FOR THE OCTOBER 2018 REUNION
IS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 5TH, 2018, AT 5 PM
(PACIFIC TIME) !!!!!
SEE PAGE #4 FOR DETAILS.**

REMEMBERING NACH

Dan Reeves, Falcon Armorer

Spring of '69, I'd just gotten to BMT earlier that day. After all the paperwork was done, I wandered out to the Corral to look over the Falcon gunships – and the armament systems I would be working on. The doors were closed on the first two ships, but open on the third one. I stepped up close for a good look, and up popped a guy from the other side of the Charlie model – and he was yelling at me! I heard “FNG” several times, and some of the words he used weren't nice. It seems he had just painted the skids on his ship, and I had walked on his fresh paint with my size 12's. It wasn't the best introduction to one of the guys I would be working with.

Eventually he ran out of steam, I introduced myself – and apologized – and we talked some. And that's how I met Dave Nachtigall, Falcon crew chief. It wasn't long before we became good friends: He was from Omaha; I came from Iowa. We even talked about going pheasant hunting together when we got home. And then his ship went down in Feb '70 with no survivors. Four good men lost. Dave had been at BMT a long time; I think he had extended twice. That was a VERY bad day. Some time back I called his twin sister Mary to tell her what a good friend Dave had been – and tell her how much I missed him. It wasn't easy for me to make that call – but I knew he would have done the same for me.

Editor's Note: The photograph on page 8 is the formation flyover, and was taken to honor the downed crew on February 23, 1970. The crew members were: Joe Erickson, Paul Dolik, David Nachtigall and Calvin Serain.

FLIGHT TIME

A bunch of BMT pilots were recently exchanging e-mails about flying hours. As best we can recall, in '69 and '70, pilots were supposed to check in with the Flight Surgeon if they flew 120 hours in 30 days. Just a quick visit, usually the Flight Surgeon said, "Go fly some more." But if a pilot flew 140 hours in the 30 day period, he was supposed to be grounded. That was the unit SOP during that time.

To help keep track, Operations posted a big board showing every pilot's flight hours during the previous 30 days. The board was updated daily. The hours were posted to help platoon leaders in scheduling, so they could put high-time pilots on low-time missions, and vice versa. At least, that was the theory - because there just weren't all that many low-time slick missions. Stagecoach pilots during that time were always over 100 hours - usually well over 100 hours - as in, bouncing up against the 140 hour limit.

On the other hand, Falcon pilots didn't much care for the board. We typically spent a lot of time on Stand-by, waiting for something to happen - and then we flew. Rarely did the board show a Falcon pilot with 100 hours.

Anyhow, with that as background, here's some of the conversation.

Larry Ingram: I was flying one day and received a call from Ops to return to BMT. When I got there, a CW3 from an inspection team said that I had 156 hours and that I would not fly for 3 days. After one day I was bored to tears.

Lew Sain: One time I went to Dr. Blair after exceeding the 140 hour limit, and he told me I was grounded. Sounded good to me. But First Platoon was short AC's since Marlin's death and Phil Watson's DEROS. The CO overrode Doc Blair's order. I finally was given a day off after 34 days.

It ended up I flew 1134 hours during 12 months in country. My first month was limited to getting checked out, and I went on two 1 week leaves and a 3 day pass. We were all overworked, especially when we went into Cambodia in May 1970. One of those days I logged 15 hours and never shutdown, we hot refueled and ate C rations. It was different in those days. I understood the CO's decision to exercise a commander's prerogative so I followed his order and flew.

John Ahearn: I do recall vividly hitting 120 cumulative hours in 30 days 2-3 times and going off to visit Dr. Blair. At least once, if not twice, I hit 140 hours in 30 days and stopped flying for a day or two. As to tired, I remember coming back after one 11 hour day and shutting down in the Corral - just tired to the center of my bones. As I remember that day, we never shut down the engine; just fly, refuel, repeat.

Bob Beaudreault: Specifics are, shall we say, a bit hazy for me in recollection. However, I can recall more than an occasional grouching about the lack of leisure time we got in the 155. Day off? Surely you jest. Time off was more rare than an Abbie Hoffman sighting in Pleiku. The Old Man was a hard nose when it came to aircraft availability and number of missions. He took pride in what we did in the harshest of conditions and with the existing equipment and personnel and drove us like plow mules. But remember what we did and why the 155 was what it was.

Bruce McInnes: I clearly remember the 140 hour / 30 day limit. If my memory is correct, I once bumped up against the 140 in few enough days to weasel a seven day leave to Sydney.

Frank Uhring: I never over-flew my hours, maybe because I flew so many B-50 missions where you would mostly just sit on the ground and wait.

I remember at the end of one long mission, it was well after sunset and we were on final into BMT. Phil Watson came up on the Purple Gang BS frequency to say that he was glad the day was over because he had 'left cheek failure' for the last two hours - and that his right cheek was starting to fail, too.

I also remember Doc Blair in the O Club, loudly complaining (perhaps after a few brews) to the whole room about how the CO over-ruled his grounding of Lew Sain and how it was his duty and obligation to ground pilots if he determines it is a medical necessity and why be here at the 155 if he couldn't do his job. He was really mad and was telling everyone what he thought of the CO.

Mike Butcher: Memories have faded, but I do remember more than one 11-hour day. The lead in my bottom was so heavy that I thought my chicken plate had slid to my buttocks.

Another memory is when Dave Desio grilled (something) on top of our bunker for a much needed New Year's ('70) Eve celebration. At some point the conversation turned to the preceding four months and accrued flight hours. During that discussion, it became apparent that most of us AC's had overflowed our 140-hour limit more than once - but in most cases, we kept on flying.

And I do remember some guys grouching with Doc Blair about being flown beyond the authorized limit.

Phil Watson: Here's my story. I got back from R&R in early January 70, and Operations really loaded me up with high flight time assignments. They gave me continuous eight hour plus flight hour days. After only three to four weeks, I was told I could not fly for three days because I had timed out. I'm not sure how many hours I had flown. I want to say 120 hours but maybe it was the 140 hour limit. So, I asked for and was granted a three day pass to Cam Rahn - with implicit instructions to go no further. Well, I went to Cam Rahn - and then hopped an Otter flight to Saigon and had a great time! Afterward, I rode in a C-130 back to BMT. Slicks were great!

Ken Donovan: I got to 140 hours 2 or 3 times, earned me a day or two off the flight schedule each time. The longest single day I can remember was 15.5 hours during the Bu Prang siege; surprisingly, I was flying with the Falcons that day. It was Thanksgiving ('69), Bu Prang was HOT, and I was short - so of course I volunteered to fly a gun mission with Les Davison. Ops woke us up about 0200, we took off about 0300 - and we flew until dusk. My assets were hurtin'! Looking back on it, we really abused 20 and 21 year old bodies.

Postscript: During the discussions, a couple of pilots mentioned the hard-working crews. They logged the same flight hours as pilots - and at the end of the day they worked on their aircraft to ready it for the next day's flight. Often, they teamed up to help other crews when an Intermediate Inspection had to be done. And then, after all

that, every second or third night, they had to pull guard duty – or pay someone to take their duty. Heck, 140 hours was probably a couple of weeks work for our back seaters, or three at the most. Enlisted guys, we pilots salute you for a job VERY well done!

Dean Owen, Stagecoach 6: Many times over the years, I have thought about how little recognition and/or appreciation the 155th “crews” received. Not only did they have little to no input about the mission, or who they were riding with, after they took care of their aircraft before and after the mission, they also pulled guard, etc. Not many 18 to 25 year old kids today have any idea about working that hard and hanging their butts out day after day. Well done, gentlemen!

TAPS			
Michael Goldenbee	E-5	67-68	1/26/18
Frank Lengyel	E-4	1969	5/17/18
Jerry D Watson	CW2	68-69	2018

INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH THE BARB

Matt Matthews has been our database guy for 15 years and due to changes, he has elected to resign from this position. If you do well with the computer and wish to be an active participant in the quarterly publication of the Barb, and other 155th Association functions, please contact Matt or any officer for additional information. You stepping forward and helping would be greatly appreciated and welcomed.

RENO REUNION (cont.)

Jim Cunningham & Rod Waddell

The reunion will be held in Reno, Nevada, from October 3-8, 2018. The hotel is the Atlantis (3800 S. Virginia Street, Reno, NV 89502) and the cut off date and time for a **discounted room is 5 PM** (1700 hours) on **September 5th, 2018**, Reno, Nevada, time. After 5 PM, all remaining rooms will be released to the general public and room rates will change. There is a free shuttle to and from the airport. There is a notable savings if the reservation is made prior to the cut off date. So, if you value your past service with those that served with you, and you want to enjoy their company, please act before the deadline date of September 5th, 2018. The telephone number for the Atlantis is: 800-723-6500 or 755-825-4700 and use code “S155AHC” to receive the special room rate. The memorabilia/hospitality room will be open from 1000 hours until 2200 hours on October 4-7th. The Saturday night banquet will be at 1800 hours and the total cost is approximately \$100/person.

BMT ROSTER DISTRIBUTION

Les Davison

Over the past few weeks, our latest roster (with contact info for all BMT guys) was sent via online and snail mail. In response, a LOT of you sent in updated contact info. THANK YOU!!! We heard from a few guys who had perused the roster and then called up BMT friends from years back. YAY! Any time your address, phone number or email changes, we would very much appreciate hearing from you. If you would like an updated roster, please contact Les or Matt at the above contact information.

SHARING COMMO

GREG BUNDROS – Thanks for compiling the roster list but I wasn't on it. So here's my info; however I hope I'm not on your "Of Questionable Character" list.

DAVE TALBOT – I Was part of the original Falcon Gun Platoon commanded by CPT Jack Gordon. My call sign was Falcon 3. In Dec '65 a bunch of us were transferred to the 170th AHC in Pleiku.

Lloyd Wussow – Thanks for putting together the roster, I recognize some of the names. My time period was '67-'68 and flew slicks and guns.

Phil Lehman – Thanks for sending the roster.

WITNESS TO WAR PROGRAM

A Witness to War representative will be at the Atlantis Hotel during our convention. He has a suite set up to offer any members of the 155th and other vets, that are interested in sharing their military experience by having the interview recorded for history and one's family. For further information, contact Jim Cunningham. Web site is: witnessstowar.org

INFO ABOUT SVN/WALL

Information gathered by Allen McCabe (Wall Volunteer)

Submitted by Rod Waddell

*The 10,000 Day war was from September 26, 1945 to May 15, 1975. This was actually 10,848 days.

*The granite wall is from Bangalore, India, and was used because of its deep color and consistency. Each 5 foot panel weights about 900 lbs.

*There have been over 400,000 items that have been cataloged from being left at The Wall.

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



155 AHC Association
711 Walsenburg Drive
Durham, NC 27712-1325