



BAN ME THUOT BARB

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



Sortie 84

August 3, 2022

155 AHC ASSOCIATION 2022 REUNION

Guys, I'm sure I'm not the only one; my body talks to me a lot these days - mainly bitching and moaning.

When I advance the calendar to a new month, I'm reminded I'm not getting any younger. I sometimes think of those days at Ban Me Thuot and the guys that I shared my daily problems, successes, pains, sorrows, and good times with that became my BMT family. I'd really love to see those guys again. I can't imagine I'm the only one with these feelings. With each passing year we lose more of those guys that were our "family".

Take the time to call or write your old buddies (yes, eMails are a form of writing) and make plans to meet up at the next reunion. Weather should be nice (average temperature that time of year is 61 – 90 degrees). You can play a round of golf if that is your pleasure or take a ride in a slick or gunship – you won't have many opportunities to do that as the years go by.

I hope to see you at the reunion.

Larry "Matt" Matthews

Reunion Particulars

When: 19 – 23 October 2022

Where: Crowne Plaza San Marcos Golf Resort – Chandler, AZ (a suburb of Phoenix)

Room Rate: \$149.00 (with tax \$174.00) Includes free parking and Internet.

Reunion Cost: Estimated to be \$100.00 which includes banquet

Hospitality Room: Available from 1500 on Thursday, 20 October – 1200 Sunday, 23 October. The 155 AHC Association will provide snacks, beverages, and adult beverages.

Banquet: Saturday, 22 October 1800 – 2200 Hrs.

Transportation: 18 miles from Phoenix airport, no airport shuttle. UBER estimated at \$55.00

Registration: Phone 877-685-5594 – ask for "155 Assault Helicopter Block"

On-line link:

<https://www.crowneplaza.com/redirect?path=hd&brandCode=CP&localeCode=en®ionCode=1&hotelCode=phxqq&P MID=99801505&GPC=qwf&cn=no&viewfullsite=true>

NOTE: If you have trouble making a reservation with the above link, PLEASE, call the hotel at 877-685-5594 and make your reservation. And then please read this Special Note: When receiving a confirmation letter after making a reservation online or through our call center, it will automatically show a resort fee. This is an IHG standard, however, since this has been waived per your contract, the hotel will absorb that fee upon check in. This last paragraph is important. Let me give you this example: our per night fee when you register will be \$188.89. When you go to check in, the \$15.00 per night resort fee will be deducted, and your per night fee will be \$173.89.

Cut-off date for reservations for our room block is Monday, September 19, 2022.

Optional Excursion: A visit to Falcon Field, Friday, 21 October

Arrangements have been made to visit Falcon Field in Mesa, AZ where we will have a docent-led tour of the Commemorative Air Force Museum (CAF) and the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation Facility (AAHF). After the tour we'll have lunch at the Steak and Stone Steakhouse & BBQ Restaurant near the field. Tour Cost: \$15.00 per person. Lunch Cost: TBD.

Time: Leave the Resort at 0830, tour the CAF Museum 0900-1100, visit the AAHF facility from 1130-1230. The AAHF offers UH-1 Huey rides at \$100.00 for vets and \$110.00 for others, with a front seat of an AH-1F Cobra priced at \$600.0 Lunch from 1300-1400, and we return to the Resort at 1430.

If you're interested in the tour and/or lunch, please contact Jim by 19 September.

Questions: Jim Cunningham, phone: 530-xxx-xxxx

eMail: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com

If you're comin' to Phoenix, here's an idea of what to expect.

There might be 30 - 40 BMT guys, accompanied by a similar number of wives, friends, kids, grandkids, and hangers-on. Relatives of one or two of our guys who didn't make it home might join us. All are welcome.

Nobody salutes, nobody says "Sir;" we're all on a first name basis here (and yes, there will be name tags).

Our only rule is: **NO POLITICS!**

The 155 AHC Hospitality Suite at the hotel will be "Reunion Central." Liquid refreshments will be available and maybe some snacks - courtesy of an anonymous benefactor. Informational notices will be posted and/or broadcast there. During the Reunion, you will almost always find BMT guys in the Hospitality Suite - mostly just talking, some showing pictures (bring 'em if you've got 'em), some telling tall tales from long ago.

Come on in, introduce yourself; you WILL be among friends. We're a quiet, low-key group these days; no more dancing on tables and closing down the bars. Just good friends sharing memories, remembering fallen brothers-in-arms, and catching up. **Spend as much or as little time in the Hospitality Suite as you want.**

The Saturday evening banquet will be the "Grand Finale." Dress code is anything from coat and tie to T-shirt and cut-off jeans. No worries, eh? Food will be better than C rations, and there might be a BRIEF guest speaker.

Cost: You make your hotel reservations and pay for your stay. The 155 AHC Ass'n will ask for about \$100 per person, to cover the Saturday evening banquet and general hotel/reunion expenses. (So if it's you and your wife, about \$200 to the Ass'n. If you can't/don't want to attend the banquet, you and your wife would pay \$100.)

Except for the banquet on Saturday evening, meals are on your own. If you eat breakfast in the hotel, chances are VERY good that you'll be invited to join other BMT folks already there. Lunch and dinner plans are often made among small groups in the Hospitality Suite.

You don't have to attend all the days. Based on previous reunions, most folks will arrive Friday and leave Sunday or Monday.

And once again, for emphasis: **SPEND AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE TIME WITH THE GROUP AS YOU WANT!**

Reunion Statistics

Statistics are almost always boring, but I'm going to include these anyway.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Members Attending</u>	<u>Point Man</u>
2006	Savannah, GA	17	Gil Terry
2008	San Antonio, TX	38	Chuck Markham
2010	St. Louis, MO	21	combined with 10 th CAB and 92 AHC
2012	Atlanta, GA	64	Bobby Goolsby
2014	Las Vegas, NV	53	Chuck Markham
2016	Washington, D.C.	51	Les Davison
2018	Reno, NV	57	Jim Cunningham
2020	Postponed/Canceled	--	Rueben Hunter/Joe Harrelson

For guys that were together over 50 years ago the numbers are still strong – hopefully, they will be good this year.

I want to emphasize the role of the Point Man. This is a VOLUNTEER that gives of their time, vehicle mileage, and money to investigate hotels in the chosen city. They spend quite a bit of time – face time and phone time – conversing with the hotel staff to ensure we have as good a monetary deal as possible for the members attending and identifying other activities the membership might want to participate in while at the reunion (e.g., visit to Falcon Field, helicopter rides, etc.). For the planned 2020 Reunion that was scheduled then postponed until 2021 and then canceled due to COVID-19, Rueben and Joe still put in the hours and calls for our benefits locating the hotel and area attractions. Take a few minutes at the reunion to thank these guys for their efforts in your behalf.

My reunion records only go back as far as 2006 (and I'm sure they are not perfect) but I wanted to mention three guys have attended all the reunions since 2006; Jack Drewiega, Bruce McInnes, and me (Matt Matthews). The three of us have already made our reservations – we hope to see you there.

The last statistic I'll share; fourteen of the guys that have attended reunions since 2006 have passed away - guys, you are missed FLY HIGH! Don't miss this opportunity to spend a little time with friends from long ago – friends that were “family” that you may not have the opportunity to see again.

SHARING COMMO

Earl McKee – I was a Door Gunner in '69 and '70. Thanks for sending out the Barb.

Jim Haga – Very sad to learn that two good friends have passed recently. **Larry Hanna**, **Wayne Johnson**, and I extended our tours together in late '67 and went home on Special Leave. We met up in Seattle on the way back and got to BMT just in time for TET. Those two were Falcons, and got back to flying immediately. I had to wait for a check ride because everyone was too busy flying so I spent a few nights with my M16 guarding the runway. Sometime later, Larry and Wayne and I went on R&R together to Taiwan and Bangkok - I miss them both.

Les Davison – I was at BMT for 18 months and didn't even know we had K-9 guys; clueless with a capital “C”! Thanks to ALL the K-9 guys for working to keep us safe – and especially Mort and Mark, for sharing their story.

TAPS

Larry Hanna passed away in March 2022 in Enterprise, AL, where he had been a Fort Rucker Instructor Pilot before he retired. Larry was a Falcon pilot in '67 and '68.

William “Bill” Goldman passed away July 13, 2022 in Carlyle, IL. Bill went over with the original detachment of CoA/1/1 on the carrier Iwo Jima in 1965. He retired from the Army after 20

years as a Chief Warrant Officer. While a helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War, he earned the Air Medal and 15 Oak Leaf Clusters.

Alan S. Borsella passed away Feb. 8, 2022 in Hopewell Junction, NY. Alan was a Falcon crewchief and served two tours with the 155th AHC in the timeframe 66-67-68.

WE'RE PROUD TO HAVE SERVED WITH YOU. FLY HIGH, FRIENDS!

ASH and TRASH

The Association is looking for some “new blood” (perhaps a bad way of putting that). The existing slate of officers have been serving for quite some time (quite effectively I might add) and we’re looking for other members of the Association to step forward and take over one of these positions:

Vice-President - the President normally serves for 2 years and the Vice-President moves up into the President’s slot so we maintain continuity.

Member-At-Large – this is a voting position that doesn’t have specific duties other than to voice their opinion on matters addressed by the officers that impact the Association.

Command Decision at the Oasis

***Gary Gale, Platoon Sergeant
Second Flight Platoon***

In the spring of ’66, we were operating out of the Oasis in an operation with the Third Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division. Our platoon leader (**MAJ James Hayes**) and assistant platoon leader (**CPT John Shine**) were piloting one of our slicks. They had been gone about 45 minutes when they returned to our landing area. Their aircraft had been hit heavily by enemy fire; it had to be grounded. MAJ Hayes told me that he and CPT Shine would take the next Second Platoon ship that returned.

A few minutes later, one of our ships returned – and the two pilots commandeered the ship. (The flight crew was more than happy to be relieved of duty that day.) Soon after, they flew off to rejoin the operation – but returned about 30 minutes later with another shot-up ship. (Thankfully, no one had been hurt.)

MAJ Hayes again turned to me and said, “John and I will take the next Second Platoon ship that comes in.” As it turned out, that didn’t happen. CPT Shine quietly responded with this; “We have had two aircraft shot out from under us in less than two hours. If you take the next ship, you will be by yourself. I’m staying on the ground.”

MAJ Hayes looked at CPT Shine and then looked at the bullet holes in the second slick. Then he put his arm around CPT Shine’s shoulder and changed his mind. He said, “What the heck, John. The war will be here tomorrow, let’s go get some coffee.”

THE HUEY

Ken Donovan, Stagecoach 28

This article was inspired by a documentary called “Spitfire” of WWII fame, one of the great aircraft of all time. In the documentary, former Spitfire pilots, now in their eighties, talk of their love affair that started during the Battle of Britain when many were only 18-20 years old - about the same age as many of us in Vietnam.

When you stop to think about it, what was central to our collective existence in the 155th AHC? It was the Huey. No matter what you did in the 155th, your life revolved around the Huey. Collectively we took care of it, armed it, refueled it – and flew it. Much as the Spitfire pilots did for the Spitfire, we gave the Huey a heart and soul. We would also give it bravery, and in some cases our blood and our lives.

When I finished the first part of flight school at Fort Wolters, I volunteered to go to Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia, rather than Fort Rucker. If you went to Hunter, you flew instruments in a Huey - and I wanted as much Huey time as possible before I deployed to Vietnam. I remember the first time I strapped into a Huey, WOW! I was amazed at the instrument panel and all the switches. I immediately understood this was a much different aircraft from the TH-55 I had flown at Fort Wolters.

Less than three weeks after I graduated from flight school, I began to fly missions with the 155th. For the record, I took my in-country check ride with Gil Terry, it was not an impressive beginning. So began the process of turning a green 20 year-old kid from Flint, Michigan into a hardened combat veteran. Looking back on it now, while my aircraft commanders may not have been that forgiving of my many FNG mistakes, the Huey was always kind and forgiving. So began my love affair that is still very real today.

Like the Spitfire, the Huey was a pilot's aircraft. It was a highly capable aircraft, but at the same time a very forgiving one - you really had to climb out on a limb before it would bite you. If you were willing to listen, it would talk to you. When I was an aircraft commander going in on an assault, one of the pilot's jobs was to call out power and RPMs. Many times we overloaded and the rotor RPM would start to bleed off; 6600 . . . 6400 . . . 6200. I got to the point where I already knew what the RPM was before the pilot called it out. If you were willing to keep it within the performance envelope, it never said no.

It was also a very tough aircraft. My longest day was during the battle of Bu Prang; 15.5 hours. Fly, recover, do a walk-around post flight, add some fuel and 7.62 ammo, and do it all over again. Many of the flight crews owe their lives to a Huey that got them home, that in retrospect many would not believe to be possible.

The first aircraft I had been assigned was an AC blown up in December 68 during a mortar attack. After that, I was assigned a new Huey, tail number 540; it only had 25 flight hours on it. I would fly it eighty percent of the time during the remainder of my tour. What an aircraft! I remember the night before I DEROS'd going out and just sitting in it, knowing I would never fly it again. Much like the Spitfire guys when they hear the roar of a Merlin engine, we hear the beat of a Huey making a low pass and we turn and search the sky and go, "Man, what a Ride!"

The Guys

Ken Donovan, Stagecoach 28

This article is a result of a discussion I had with Les Davison after the last Barb came out. I told Les I was running out of ideas to write about. Les said, "why don't you write about the Guys? That, plus an eMail string, convinced me he was right.

First a few things about the Guys; we came from the four corners of America to serve our country, and most of all to fly. We were young; most of us were only 19-21 years old. Our year or more in Vietnam would soon make us old before our time. Looking back on it now, the Army did a great job in training us to become the finest combat helicopter pilots in the world. We had some great leadership, I now believe this was a key element in getting the missions done in a very hostile environment while losing very few unit members. Most would get out of the Army and go on to become solid citizens.

My Crew

After my first aircraft was trashed on the pad during a mortar attack in December of 1968, I got a new H model with only 25 hours on it. Mike Wilcox was assigned as the crew chief, and Dave Clements was assigned as the door gunner. I got both a great aircraft and crew. Mike was a very knowledgeable crew chief and was very steady as he was the old guy at, I think, 23. If he said it was ready to fly, we flew it. Mike was with me when we flew into LZ Kate.

Dave was another story as he was a bit of a free spirit and was always late to the aircraft, but he would jump up on the skid and start to clean the windshield. One day I said, “you know Clements, I am really going to chew your ass for being late one day”, he continued to clean the Windshield, and said, “I know Sir”. Dave was with me on May 23, 1969 across the fence and saved Dan Widener’s life when he was wounded in the arm. Both are gone now before their time due to Agent Orange – guys, you are with me always.

Charlie Marvin.

Charlie and I first met in Oct 1968 we were both assigned to the second platoon and were roommates before Charlie went over to the gun platoon. Charlie has been the subject of two articles, Marvin’s Monkey and This Is Really Insane. Charlie was Falcon lead when I was shot down in Aug 1969.

Charlie was shot down with about three days to go at Bu Prang and had to spend the night (and I thought Motel 6 was bad). I requested the early mission to Bu Prang the next day but some damn Dust Off crew got there before I did. Charlie and I have been friends now for more than 50 years and is now more of a brother than a friend. Thanks Charlie.

JC Cole

JC and I were in the second platoon; I did not know him well until one night during a mortar attack. This was in late 1968 when all of the officers were working on what we considered super bunkers. At the time our bunker did not have any overhead cover and was just a large hole in the ground. All of a sudden the bad guys started to hit us with mortars and recoilless rifles. They hit a couple of hooches and stuff started to rain down on us. JC and I then pulled a 4x8 sheet of plywood over us. We got to be friends and roommates after that and were roommates at Ft. Wolters after we got back. JC would do a second tour as a Cobra Pilot with the 101st. Was shot down over the Ash Shaw valley and evaded for 3 days before he was picked up. He was the smartest of the group and went on to become a chemical engineer.

Jim Abbott (aka Aba Daba)

Jim was a very steady AC and is famous for two things. The first is that he and his crew came in and picked my crew and me up when I was shot down. The second was the night of the resupply into LZ Kate. We launched around 0100 and Jim fell asleep before the mission. He was in the lead air craft with Maj. Owen and we were supposed to crank on lead, we were waiting when over the PA system “Will Mr. Abbott report to his aircraft immediately” rang out. It was really great to see him for the first time at the reunion in Reno and say thanks again.

Mayday

This individual’s name will remain unknown due to the nature of this story. He was flying as a peter pilot on an assault when the AC was wounded in the legs when some rounds came up through the floor and he was hit with some splash in the legs, but nothing bad. The AC gave him the aircraft so he could check things out. Mayday began screaming Mayday, Mayday over the radio. The wounded AC then took control and flew himself back to BMT. Thereafter he was known as Mayday.

Denney Fenlon

Denny started in the second platoon and then went on to be an outstanding gun pilot. We were flying one day when a bad guy shot at us from 12 o’clock. The tracers went right by his door. Over the intercom Denny declares “Donovan they are trying to kill us.” I laughed and said, “that’s what we try to do to each other over here”. In fairness to Denny, on my first assault when the M-60s opened up, I would have launched myself through the green house if I had not been strapped in.

Dave Bennett (Dust Off Pilot)

Dave and I did not know each other until a day in November 69 at Bu Prang. There was a call for urgent Medevacs in the Bu Prang area. For some reason I was the only aircraft in the area and called for help, Dave and his crew answered the call and we pulled out about 70-80 guys including the three American advisors who were all wounded. Dave and I still talk several times a year. Thanks for the help Dave.

Bruce McInnis (2nd Platoon Pilot)

Bruce was part of Dick Rains' crew that went down at Lac Thien and, according to his logbook, we flew assaults the next day. Bruce and I shared a similar medical condition thanks for the calls and thanks for caring.

My Commanders

Major Bobby L. Moore (CO 155th)

Was the CO during about the first half of my time with the 155th. On night Bob Gardner and I got lost and damn near ran out of fuel. The next day we were called to his office and he gave Bob and I the most professional ass chewing of my 28-year Army career. Kind of felt sorry for Bob, being a real live officer he took a lot more fire than I did.

On a very dark and scary night Moore and I picked up Dick Rains and crew at Lac Thien. In a truly insane move we turned on our landing and search light on at night during a gunfight to find Dick and his crew. Talked to Les Davison about three years ago and he indicated Moore was not doing well, and it would be nice if unit members would give him a call. I asked if he remembered the night mission we flew together. His statement was very simple, "We did good that night". Yes Sir, we did. Well done - be at peace.

Major Dean Owen (CO 155th)

Was Commander during the big gunfight at LZ Kate and Bu Prang. Was simply the finest commander of my career. One of the rare leaders that truly lead by example. Would fly in the lead aircraft during the night resupply into LZ Kate - combat leadership at its finest. Thanks Sir, it was an honor.

Captain Dave Churilla (2nd Platoon Leader)

Was a great platoon leader, knew his guys, supported us and let us get on with the mission. Got out of the army and would become a world-class pistol shot in the 80s. Sorry Dave for all the headaches I may have caused you.

1Lt Jim Hitch (2nd Platoon Section Leader)

Jim I still feel bad about getting you shot down on your first mission in Vietnam. The aircraft was lying on its side, Jim was on the upside and I helped him out of his seat. We both then climbed up and jumped off the aircraft. I jumped first and then Jim landed on top of me and then said, "excuse me". Was able to talk to him once after I got out of the Army; he joined the National Guard and retired as a Full Bird.

The Maintenance Guys (Maintenance Platoon)

To all the unknown maintenance guys who, through your hard work, gave me a great aircraft that never said no - especially when I needed it the most. Thanks guys.

The above are some of the great guys I am proud to have served with. I urge you to write about the guys you served with. Your story and their names are worthy of being told and remembered. Too soon, our last call will be, "Lead turning final for our last LZ on planet Earth."

155TH AHC Association Officers

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Chuck Markham - Quartermaster
Jeff Schrader - Treasurer
Bob Gardner - Treasurer's Aide
Larry "Matt" Matthews - Database Guy
Les Davison - Historian
Bruce McInnes - Member-at-Large
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2012 Reunion Attendees

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