



BAN ME THUOT BARB

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



Sortie 87

JUNE 2023

REUNION: OCTOBER 19th thru 22nd 2023

Embassy Suites by Hilton Charlotte, North Carolina is located just 12 minutes from Charlotte Douglas International Airport and five minutes from Uptown Charlotte. Each room is a spacious, two-room suite, equipped with separate living room, mini fridge, and microwave. Overnight guests can enjoy complimentary made-to-order breakfast in their beautiful eight story open-air atrium. There is a seven/night per week Evening Reception serving free drinks and light snacks. The first two rounds are on them. Flying in to CLT? They've got your transportation covered with complimentary airport shuttle service. Their shuttle service is also available for local attractions, within a two-mile radius. Complimentary onsite self-parking is also available.

The 155th has a block of rooms at Embassy Suites by Hilton Charlotte for October 19, 2023 through October 22, 2023. Group rates for the 155th are \$159/night plus tax and includes overnight parking.

To book your room, please call the hotel directly at 704-527-8400, ask for Reservations, and refer to group code "916".

For the Banquet night, if you go for the Plated Dinner Duel (Grilled and Sliced Flank Steak & Chicken Break with Chef's Choice Accompaniments) you will just need to know the number attendees in your party registering for dinner and any dietary restrictions (ie. vegetarian, gluten free, any food allergies).

More information will be in the next newsletter as far as planned activities are concerned.

AIRCRAFT FLARES

Tom Hunt

This is a story of how lucky Dave Skoog and I were one night, and it concerns the flares that were dropped all over Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. First, let me explain what an aircraft flare is. The flares were a 24 lbs. piece of magnesium attached to a 21' parachute. The

whole thing was housed in an aluminum tube about 4” x 5’. They were dropped out of one of our aircraft, using a device that could hold up to 30 flares, but you could do it from airplanes too. They were attached to the dropping aircraft with a rip cord, when the flare reached the end of the cord it would break free and start a reaction. A small charge would push the flare and parachute out of the aluminum tube they were stored in. The aluminum tube then fell free. As the flare and chute came out the parachute deployed, and the flare ignited. The flare would light up a grid square (1,000,000 square meters) and burn for about a minute or so. But for Dave and myself this story concerns the aluminum tube.

We had had a mortar attack and those personnel not on guard duty were sent to various locations in case there was a ground attack. However, the flare ship and a Falcon's gunship team were still doing their job of keeping us safe. There were no indications of a ground attack so Dave and I are sitting on the ground talking. We hear a “Whoosh, Whoosh” sound and then one of the aluminum tubes falls to the ground. Now, not just to the ground but to the ground between us. Dave and I are no more than three feet apart. Now remember this tube is five feet long. So it falls to the ground between us and didn't touch either of us. Dave and I looked at each other with this “Oh S__ _” look on our faces not knowing how lucky we were. Dave and I were talking about this not too long ago. We agreed that we were extremely lucky that night and that would be one of our questions for St. Peter someday.

“TIGHTEN IT UP “

Jerry Burton, Stagecoach 12 & Falcon 12

Reminiscing through my diary, I came across this memorable flight in Vietnam. April '67, Kelley Fredericksen and I had been assigned as A/C's to fly two slicks to the coast to support Korean forces there. After an early morning take-off, it was a beautiful day as we flew toward the rising sun. We landed at Nha Trang to refuel, then flew northeast to find the ROK troops. The South China Sea was calm, and winds aloft were smooth, so Kelley suggested we get some formation flying in. I was on his right wing and pulled into position. Kelley radioed that we were too far away and told me to tighten it up. So, I did, closer and closer . . . and then I heard a small “Tink!” I asked Kelley if he had heard the noise, he responded that he had. There were no more noises – and no vibrations – so we continued our flight (with more separation) and landed at a remote ROK base camp about four clicks from the coast. Shut down was normal – until the Crew Chief exclaimed, “Hey you jerks! You knocked off the tie down!” Kelley’s Crew Chief said the same thing when their blades came to a halt. Everyone got out of the ships and looked at the damaged rotor blades. Yes, we had a mid-air blade strike. We had flown so close that the “Tink” we heard was the blades making contact. The tie downs at the very tips of all four rotor blades had been knocked off. We called Wrecker 6 to report the incident, and he passed the info on to HQ. As you can probably guess, they were NOT happy! Both our slicks were grounded until Wrecker 6 could bring out four replacement blades. That night in the club, Kelley and I talked about the mid-air blade strike. We had been VERY lucky and were thanking God for our survival.

STRANGE PLACE, STRANGE THINGS

Bob Maddox, Falcon 1

Early January 1970, a beautiful clear day: we'd been assigned the B-50 (CCS) mission. Our Bell UH-1C gunships were operating flawlessly as usual, thanks to the personnel of our maintenance operation and the crew chiefs and gunners that watched over the birds as if they owned them. After our short hop to BMT East, we walked to the B50 tent for our mission briefing. The dirt road we were on looked like red clay, it reminded me of Australia.

Holy cow!! Is that guy a prisoner or what? There's a Vietnamese guy lying next to the road with no clothes on. He has a towel lying across his groin area, and he is spread eagle on his back and staked out Indian style. I look for the ant hill. There is what appeared to be an old bullet hole scar on his abdomen just to the right of his navel. His eyes are closed, and he is not moving. Wait - one of the leather wrist straps is not tied to the stake. On the other side of him, two big American soldiers are hand-pushing a truck into a parking spot, unconcerned with the unsecured prisoner. Maybe he is one of them and being disciplined for some screwup? Or is this a joke on us? **STRANGE PLACE! STRANGE THINGS!**

Our briefing was short. When we walked back to the aircraft, the "Holy Cow" guy was no longer staked on the ant hill. They were probably rolling on the barracks floor with laughter as they watched us depart.



MEMORIES OF 'NAM

Terry Kirkpatrick, Stagecoach

When I think of Vietnam, I think of the Volcano - or my first mission, a CA when I was about a week in-country. And my next mission was B-50; I remember hearing machine gun fire, and it didn't have an M-60 cadence!

When I got home I tallied up the amount of time I was “really” in danger of being killed by the enemy. By my accounting, it was less than an hour, maybe even less than half an hour. Okay, I know that some of the guys who got shot down spent a lot of time running through the bush, but I was never shot down, and a lot of other guys weren't either. We spent hours flying from one Special Forces camp to another or carrying mail to some remote MACV camp out by Duc Lap, but most of the time we weren't under enemy fire. I know that B-50 was intense, that CA's were intense, that supplying Bu Prang was intense, that mortar attacks were intense (and probably lasted a longer time, but they were measured in minutes, not hours.)

So, given all that, most of our time was taken up trying to keep our sanity. I remember spending hours playing banjo under the baton of Mike Butcher. Or goofing off, while we waited for some Field Grade officer that was out joy riding, or taking four slicks down to the Special Forces club on the beach for burgers. Of course, there's some nutty war stories, like:

The Great 155 Deer Hunt!

(Please know I have a bad case of CRS when it comes to names, and the statute of limitations has long passed, so you guys who were part of this nutty war story back in the day are safe.)

One evening, when the aircraft were all shut down, we'd had dinner, and were sitting around the hootch swapping lies, someone walked in and said, “You gotta see what they got in Second Platoon!”

“What's that?” someone else asked.

“WAR SOUVENIRS!”

Well, now, that got our attention. War souvenirs were hard to come by for those of us who spent most of our time above 5,000 ft, and when we were on the ground, we didn't have time to go exploring. So, we all walked up to the second platoon hootch - and sure enough, they had a VC flag!

“How'd you get that” someone asked.

“Traded a deer with the guys out at a Special Forces camp. They don't get much fresh meat.”

For the next few weeks, the deer in and around BMT were in grave danger, and I must admit I was involved in one of these hunts. (Once again, I can't remember names.)

“Want to get some war souvenirs?” the AC asked over the intercom. Everyone agreed this was an excellent idea, so down we went, and soon found a deer to harvest. We killed the deer and landed. The crew chief, and door gunner jumped out, loaded the prize, and we were on our way, our ticket to souvenirs laying on the floor of the cargo compartment. Only it didn't work out that way. Some of our comrades had beaten us to this Special Forces camp and won the prize.

Not to worry. As part of our assigned mission, we took on two passengers (they happened to be doctors) and headed for the next camp. But at the next camp, same deal. We

were too late in the game. On to the next camp! As we flew, I turned around to say something to the Crew Chief - and was distracted by one of the doctors. Along with pair of tweezers, he was removing a vial from his uniform jacket. He leaned forward and used the tweezers to pick something off the floor and put it in the vial. He then closed the vial and put it back in his jacket.

“Ask him what he's doing.” I said over the intercom.

“He says he picked up a flea crawling off the deer, Sir.” The fleas were leaving the dead and cooling deer - and were now looking for warm living meat!

We gave the deer away at the next Special Forces camp.

TRIP REPORT

Les Davison, Falcon

Just home from a quick road trip to visit family in Florida panhandle. After that I met up with Prez Tom at Fort Rucker, we donated two 155 items to the museum there. Attached photo shows Tom handing off 155 company sign from BMT to Museum Director (and Tom's good friend) Bob Mitchell. Another item donated was Dave Nachtigall's jacket patch (Dave was a Falcon CE, KIA in Feb '70.) Then it was on to the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah, where Gil Terry gave me the DELUXE tour! All I can say is "WOW!!!!!" Well done, sir - and thank you! Now I'm back home and plan to volunteer at the Wall over the weekend.



OBTAINING STORIES FOR FUTURE BARBS

It has been difficult getting stories from our members. Some have donated repeatedly. Others remain silent. We now have six Members-At-Large and would ask them to obtain a copy of the current roster of members. In turn, we would further ask them to contact a couple of members each month and help develop stories to be used in future BARB's. This should help us maintain enough material for publication. We ask our fellow members to aid in this venture. Don't be so shy – everyone has a story to tell! Thank you!

SHARING COMMO

“Doc” Redman - In the latest Barb, I read with interest the amazing account of **Bill Richardson's** first BMT flight. I was also new to BMT, having arrived there in August as a medic with 254th DUSTOFF. It was our crew who medevac'd the soldier with the M79 round in his chest to the 8th Field Hospital in Nha Trang. We found out later that the round had been successfully removed by the surgeons! Thanks for sharing the Barbs! Peace.

Dave Skoog – Hope to see y'all at the party in Charlotte.

Bill Collins – I was a Stagecoach DG in '67-'68; Tet was the worst. Early on, one of our pilots was badly wounded. Then a few days later, the Crew Chief and I were both wounded. When I went back to the World, I still wasn't old enough to buy a beer.

Al Owen – I was Chalk 2 on the CA when **Bill Richardson** was shot down (*Barb 086*). We took a lot of rounds but were able to get out OK. Later, after swapping our shot-up aircraft, we went back to help pull out the wounded and the downed Stagecoach guys.

THE BROTHERHOOD

Ken Donovan, Stagecoach 28

At the reunion when Gilbert Terry brought out the Fred Pratt poster for all of us to sign, I wrote the following: “Dear Pratt Family. I just want you to know that Fred is still a member of the brotherhood in good standing.” On the flight home, I found myself thinking about what “the brotherhood” really means. While many of the stories revolve around the flight crews, I would like to state for the record that all of the following comments apply to anyone who served in the 155th.

First, to be a member of the brotherhood, you were a person of good character, when America needed you most. When in this writer's opinion many in America were lacking character, you were willing to put on the uniform of the United States when many took the easy way out. I believe our character was a gift from our fathers, members to America's greatest

generation. Second, members of the brotherhood were both physically and mentally tough.

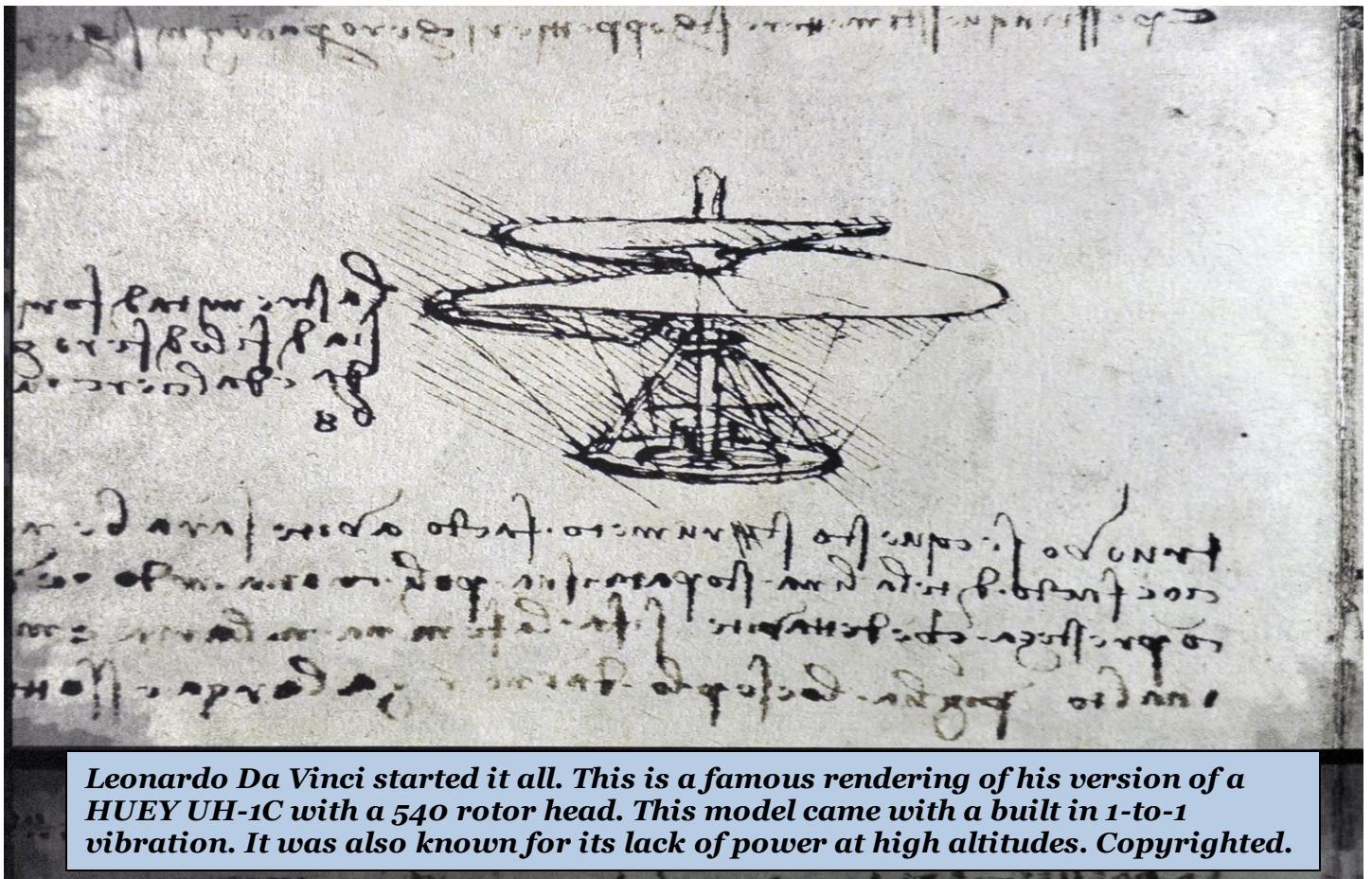
The living conditions were harsh, the food was lacking, we worked without sleep many times due to rocket and mortar attacks to get the mission done. The most difficult challenge was to keep going after a brother was killed or wounded and sent back to the “World”.

Most importantly, we shared a common value, we each valued the other’s life as much as our own. This led to a shared commitment that allowed us to do great things, at times under very difficult circumstances. I like many others am alive today, because guys like Charlie Marvin, Jack Coonce and Jim Abbott and their crews willingly demonstrated that our shared commitment was not just idle talk.

155 Association Officers				
Ref_Name	eMail	HomePh	CellPh	155_Officer
Alberts, Robert D. "Bob"				Member-At-Large
Coward, Elizabeth				Webmaster
Davison, Les				Historian/Roster Guy
Gardner, Robert "Bob"				Member-At-Large
Harrelson, Joe				Member-At-Large
Hunt, Tom "Tommy"				President
Markham, Charles E. "Chuck"				Vice-President
Matthews, Larry N. "Matt"				Member-at-Large
McInnes, Bruce L.				Member-At-Large
Sain, Walter Lewis "Lew"				Member-At-Large
Schrader, Jeffery W. "Jeff"				Treasurer

Officers’ contact info is shown above. PLEASE contact Chuck or Les if your address, phone number, or e-mail address change. If you have any questions or matters of concern relating to the Association or BMT, calls and/or messages are welcomed by all the occifers.

And if you just want to call to say “hi,” we’ll take those calls, too – gladly!



Leonardo Da Vinci started it all. This is a famous rendering of his version of a HUEY UH-1C with a 540 rotor head. This model came with a built in 1-to-1 vibration. It was also known for its lack of power at high altitudes. Copyrighted.

155 AHC Association
8_____Cir. N.W.
North Cantina, USA