



BAN ME THUOT BARB

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



Sortie 095

October, 2025

FALCON CREW CHIEF SEEKING PHOTOS

Paul Fadz, Falcon Crew Chief

Well, yeah, it was a LONG time ago – but I'm hoping against hope that someone might have a photo to send me. Maybe one of the Maintenance guys who drove out to recover the wreckage? Please . . . ! Here's how it all went down.

Tet '68 (31 Jan) – I was CE of Falcon 583, Gunner was **Dan McGettigan**, pilots were **Ian Lindsey** and **Larry Hanna**. I don't recall where we were, other than "near a village" (not much help, I know). Our tail rotor was shot out, and we spun all the way to the ground. I was shooting most of the way down, until centrifugal force ripped the M-60 out of my hands. We hit level, the main rotor and tail boom were gone; only the cabin was left. We took cover near the ship as best we could. We were under fire for about ten minutes, when the shooting let up a little we left the aircraft to find better concealment. We came upon a trail with tracks, followed them, and soon found a better hiding place. One of the pilots made contact on his emergency radio, and a Dustoff Huey came to the rescue. Our Falcon sister ship shot up the tree line while the Dustoff came in – under fire - for the pick-up. In the back of the rescue bird, we were firing as we lifted off and gained altitude. BIG thanks to those Dustoff guys! In the end, everyone got out OK, I was the only one wounded.

ROAD TRIP AMERICA: TRIBUTE TO A FALLEN WARRIOR

On a recent drive that took me along some West Virginia backroads, I crossed a number of highway bridges dedicated to fallen WV veterans. A past Barb story came to mind, so I veered a little out of my way to cross over this bridge near Moorfield. **Fred Pratt** was a Falcon Peter Pilot, he was mortally wounded near Duc Lap in Aug '68. Falcon pilot **Gil Terry** flew with Fred. He joined with the Pratt family a few years back when the Fred Omar Pratt Bridge was dedicated. A wonderful tribute for a fallen 155 AHC warrior.



Historical note: On a per capita basis, West Virginia was the state with the highest casualty rate in Vietnam. **Les Davison**

A MEMORABLE MISADVENTURE

Joe Harrelson, Stagecoach Pilot

In late 1968 and early 1969, I was the Operations Officer and Lieutenant **Jim Meadows** was the Falcon Platoon leader. Several times, Jim would come into the Operations shack and ask if I would like to go flying with him. I always accepted, and this was notable because something always happened that I had never seen as a Lift pilot. Once he came in and said he had a UH-1C that had just had its rocket pods removed and reinstalled, and it needed to be fired for boresight check. Abandoning the stack of papers on my desk, we walked out to the Corral.

He said he had already done the preflight, so we jumped in, took off, and headed for a small island in a lake nearby that was used for checking boresight. As we dove down toward the lake, I fired off two pairs of 2.75" rockets. On the second shot we heard a loud boom. Looking back, we could see that the right-hand door had blown off its track and was hung up on the gun mounts.

Jim sent out a MAYDAY call, and we found a clear field nearby to land. I jumped out and took a look. To my dismay, the horizontal stabilizer had broken loose from the fuselage and was dangling down, the engine cowling was missing - and there were VC bunkers all around us. I quickly jumped back in and said, "This thing can still be flown, so let's get out of here!" At least that's the cleaned-up version of what I said. On the way back to BMT, we met a pair of gunships who had heard our MAYDAY and were coming to our rescue. We returned uneventfully on our own.

Later **MAJ Puhl** called Jim and I into his office for a rug dance. A rug dance is when you are standing at attention getting chewed out and shifting from one foot to the other. The "discussion" went something like this:

"You two had a chase ship with you, right?"

"Uh, no sir."

"You two had your M16's with you, right?"

"Uh, no sir."

"Your Crew Chief and Door Gunner had their M60's with them, right?"

"Uh, no sir. There were no M60's on board, nor was there a door gunner."

And it just went downhill from there. At one point, I do remember MAJ Puhl asking if either of us had a brain - or a death wish. In the end, he said he was glad that we made it back safely. and he hoped we had learned a lesson - and then he told us to get out of his office. The event was never mentioned again.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING

It should not surprise anyone that we are all getting older, and our membership is declining. The sad truth is that the time to close down the 155 AHC Association is nearing. Our recent Zoom officers' meeting focused on several issues related to preparing for an eventual shut-down of the organization. To that end, officers adopted significant cost-saving changes regarding the Quartermaster function and publication of the Ban Me Thuot Barb newsletter. Those matters and other highlights are noted below.

Item 1. Board member personnel update.

- a) **Ken Donovan** has joined as a Member-at-Large.
- b) **Bob Gardner** has agreed to serve as Vice-President.

Item 2. Treasurer report.

Jeff Schrader reported \$11,700 in the 155 account. The decision was made that dues are not needed at the present time. But - note that dues payments may be requested in the future if circumstances require.

Item 3. Merchandise.

No additional items will be acquired for future sale. After the existing stock is exhausted, the Quartermaster activity and position will be closed. (See separate article by Quartermaster **Tom Hunt**.)

Item 4. Ban Me Thuot Barb newsletter.

- a) Newsletters will continue to be published quarterly – if BMT stories and volunteer editors are available. Given that important caveat, be aware that future Barbs may be published on an intermittent basis.
- b) This issue of the Barb will be the last to be mailed in paper form via USPS. All future Barbs will be distributed by e-mail only. Current paper copy recipients must submit an email address to receive future Barbs.

Item 5. Reunion.

- a) The next reunion will be in Washington, D.C. in the fall of 2026 (probably Oct/Nov). Reunion host will be Les Davison. Details will be shared as soon as they become available.
- b) 2026 reunion in DC **could be** our last hurrah. The officers decided not to schedule future annual or bi-annual reunions at this time – but left open the possibility of future reunions if there is membership interest and availability of a volunteer host. We'll see what the future might bring.

Comments, criticism, suggestions, and/or questions are invited. Please contact any 155 AHCA occifer.

Joe Harrelson, President

In case you missed it above,

All future Barbs will be distributed by e-mail only. No paper copies will be mailed via USPS!

MESSAGE FROM THE QUARTERMASTER

As I'm sure everyone knows, Chuck maintained a supply of 155th items for sale. Everything from shirts, hats, patches, coffee cups, pins, and coins. I will refer to these items as "STUFF". After Chuck's passing the "STUFF" was sent to Bob Gardner. Bob will maintain the "STUFF". If anyone wants to purchase some of the "STUFF," please contact me at **THUNT@ALA.NET** or call me at the number shown at the end of the BARB. I will notify Bob what to send you. Now once an item is sold out, we will not reorder that item for inventory. Once they are gone, they are **GONE!** A listing of our current inventory is shown below.

155 Polo Shirt:	Medium	6	Coffee/Tea Cup	24
155 AHC t-shirt	XL	3		
	3XL	1	Coins	58
Ladies long sleeve	S	2		
	M	2	155 pins	100+
	L	1	Falcon pins	100+
	XL	2		
"Pocket" t-shirt	2XL	2	155 patch	6
	XL	1	Falcon patch	6
	M	2		
Youth white t-shirt			155 Hat	11
155 th AHC	2XL	2		
	XL	2	Falcons hat	8
	L	9		
	M	7	Decals/Stickers	31
	S	30		

I plan to send out an "Incoming" message with photos and prices of available items in the near future. As you can see, quantities of many items are already limited. Remember, contact me and I will get the "STUFF" on the way.

Tom Hunt, Quartermaster

SHARING COMMO



Rein Hofgesang - Hey Doofus, I was on an Honor Flight from Chicago. I came to the Wall looking for you – but they said you were a thousand miles away, somewhere north of Bucksnot. WTF!

Jerry Burton – Getting old sure isn't for sissies! Judy and I hope to make it to the next reunion – and I would love to hear from BMT friends. Hard to believe it's been almost 60 years since we were all young and dashing and daring.

Ken Donovan – You know, DC might be our last reunion. It sure would be great if we can get a LOT of the Ban Me Thuot guys together again.

Denny Fenlon – I'm back home after the Honor Flight, tired but happy. We had a good group, most all were Vietnam guys. It was

great to meet up with you at the Wall – and thanks, too, for coming over to have dinner with Diana and me.

Jim Cunningham – Joe's story might have triggered a memory – but my memory nowadays ain't what it used to be. Anyhow, I'll just throw this out. I think I remember a mission where we recovered to BMT, taxied to the revetment, shut down, and got out to start the post-flight inspection – to find that both engine cowlings had blown off our Charlie model during the flight. We all looked at each other; none of us had any idea that two large pieces of the aircraft had abandoned ship during the flight. I'm wondering if anyone else had a similar experience?

ROAD TRIP AMERICA: STAGECOACH 136

Much thanks to **Jim Haga** for letting us know that one of our Stagecoach slicks is on display at VFW Post 7377 in Sankertown, Pennsylvania. I took this photo when I visited a few months ago.

The years haven't been kind; except for the nicely done Stagecoach and Falcon patches on the nose cover, wear and tear on the ship is evident. Amazingly, the armor-plated pilot seats are still installed. Best of all, the ship is open for visitors, so you can climb up and sit in the cockpit.

The Gold Book shows that UH-1H 68-16136 flew with the 155th from Sep '69 until Dec '70, logging over 1,500 hours.

If you want to stop by, the address is 133 Pennsylvania Avenue, Cresson, PA.

Les Davison



CHICKEN LITTLE: “THE SKY IS FALLING, THE SKY IS FALLING!”

Jeff Schrader, Falcon 7

December, 1964. I was a sophomore in high school. I'd just turned 16 and bought a car; a 1956 Chevy Bel Air. I spray painted the whole car primer gray. I was driving down the road, and the radio turned up playing a new song by Roy Orbison, “Pretty Woman.” A light turned red, I was going too fast, hit the brakes hard - and while coming to a stop, my muffler fell off, clattering like some cheap pile of tin on the pavement.

December, 1968. I was a Falcon gunship pilot on night standby. If we got hit, my job was to run to my aircraft, get into the air as quickly as possible to look for telltale blue flashes, and fire on these mortar positions. We did get hit that night. I grabbed my gear and ran toward the Corral. I had just reached the company street across from the Officers Club when I heard the sound of a muffler hit the street behind me. The sound, that of some cheap pile of tin, took me immediately back to 1964. WTF was that? I turned and pointed my flashlight behind me. There, about 12 feet away, not a muffler, but a smoking mortar round! It hadn't gone off! On take off, I reported to Operations that an unexploded mortar round was on the company street. They must have had an EOD guy come out and take it away because it was gone when I got down later.



**DO YOU
RECOGNIZE
THIS MAN?**

Keith Lane sent this photo from '68, it shows a Falcon Crew Chief or Door Gunner posing next to "The Exterminator." Can anyone identify him?

And by the way, Keith. What's the story on the hole in the windscreen?

REUNION WASHINGTON, DC (FALL, 2026):

TWO REQUESTS - and a LATE NEWS FLASH

1) Even though we don't have any details yet, we would like to get an idea as to how many folks might be coming to this shindig. **If there's even the slightest chance that you'll attend, please contact any 155 AHCA occifer.**

2) **And we're asking each and every one of you to contact your best buddy from BMT and agree to meet up at the reunion.**

We expect to send you all reunion details via an "Incoming" e-mail message in the near future. Thank you in advance, gentlemen.

3) But wait, there's more. As this Barb is going to press, Treasurer Jeff Schrader proposed to the Occifer Board of Directors that the reunion fee for the DC gathering be waived. The motion is being considered, and will be decided soon. Stay tuned.

VIETNAM WAR HISTORY: LIMA SITE 85



During 1967 and early 1968, Lima Site 85 was an isolated, top secret USAF radar installation located on a karst mountaintop in northeastern Laos, near the border with North Vietnam. Helicopters flown by Air America (the CIA-funded airline) provided the only support lifeline to the remote outpost. One day in January, 1968, an Air America UH-1D was ferrying supplies to Lima Site 85 when the pilot saw North Vietnamese AN-2 "Colt" biplanes attacking the installation. Of course, the Huey pilot gave chase.

This painting depicts the chase, showing the Flight Mechanic shooting his AK-47 at the enemy aircraft. The AN-2 could not escape the Huey and was shot down. Narrative information on the incident indicates that this was the only time during the Vietnam war that a helicopter downed a fixed-wing aircraft.

*Source: Secret Aviation Ops of the CIA
The painting hangs in the CIA Gallery of Art.*

155TH AHC Association Officers

Joe Harrelson – President
Bob Gardner - Vice President
Jeff Schrader – Treasurer
Tom Hunt – Quartermaster (Merch)
Les Davison – Historian & Roster
Bruce McInnes – Member-at-Large
Jim Cunningham – Member-at-Large
Larry Matthews – Member-at-Large
Rueben Hunter – Member-at-Large
Ken Donovan – Member-at-Large

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Green Hornet gunship, Vietnam, 1970

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