

# 281<sup>ST</sup> ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

## "INTRUDERS"

Company Newsletter No.10

April 2001

27-30 SEPTEMBER

At the Plaza Hotel in old Las Vegas  
IS WHERE WE'LL BE GATHERING FOR THE

# 281<sup>ST</sup> AHC REUNION 2001

## From the President

running for one of these offices, Dennis Crowe, Junior Member at Large of the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC Association.

**H**ello fellow Intruders. Many of you may be getting this newsletter for the first time. This is due largely to the efforts of Gary Stagman. Gary took over as Membership Chairman after last year's Association meeting and has almost doubled the membership rolls since that time. I want to thank Gary for his outstanding work. If any of the new members know of any other potential members please contact Gary and he will get the information to them. Welcome home to the new members. For all of the new members that have Internet capability, please visit the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC website and join our e-mail network. Renew old friendships and form new ones.

**"Keep your Rotor in the Green"**

Bob Mitchell  
Bandit 24  
President  
281<sup>st</sup> AHC Assn.

Sherry and I will be traveling to Ft. Drum, NY on 11 May to visit with LTC Scott Zegler. Scott is the Commander to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment and was a Staff Officer for me during my Squadron Command. You may wonder why I mention this. The 10<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment has assumed the Lineage and Honors of the 10<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion from the Vietnam era. The 281<sup>st</sup> was in the 10<sup>th</sup> CAB. There is a connection. And as some of you will remember, we were up there last year to dedicate the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion HQ Building to the memory of WO1 Donald Bruce McCoig, a member of the 281<sup>st</sup> who was KIA in the A Shau Valley. I will be speaking at the retirement party of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BN Command Sergeants Major.

## From the Vice President and President-Elect

**M**y fellow Intruders, There are two items that I wish to bring to your attention in this newsletter. First, the election of officers and second is the Reunion/General Membership meeting in 2002. First The By\_Laws were amended at last years General Membership meeting calling for the election of two officers in the Association, a Vice\_President who will assume the Presidency in 2003 and a Junior Member\_at\_Large who will become the Senior Member\_at\_Large in 2003. The election committee was abolished and the current Junior Member\_at\_Large (hereafter called the JMAL) receives all declarations of intentions to run for office. If any of you wish to put your name in the hat, you must be a dues current Regular or Life member in order to hold office in the Association. The JMAL forwards the declarations to the Executive Board for eligibility and conducts the election at the General Membership meeting. For everyone's information, the Executive Board is made up of the following: President, Past President, Vice\_President, Secretary/Treasurer, Senior Member at Large, and Junior Member at Large.

Preliminary plans are being made for our annual reunion, which will be held at Las Vegas this year. We have been working with the guys from Project Delta to put together a joint reunion. Jeff Murray, the Reunion Chairman, will have more to say about this in his article. Please make plans to attend the Reunion 27-30 September 2001.

It will be one of my desires to have the additional duty of reunion chairman come from within the Executive Board. So if you are planning on running for office, keep in mind the additional duty of reunion chairman. Second. Any current regular or life member may submit a location for the next General Membership/Reunion to be held in 2003. In the past, our organization has used the venues of the VHPA and this year the SOA to attach ourselves during their meetings. We are not limited to having our reunion with any other organization. The SOA always has their meeting/reunion in Las Vegas in September and pending any major problems, may invite us back to be with them again. The

The Association will elect new officers to the Executive Board during our annual meeting. The positions that will be elected will be Junior Member at Large and Vice-President. In our organization the current VP moves up to President, the Junior Member at Large moves up to Senior Member at Large and the President moves to Immediate Past President. This provides for continuity on the Executive Board and also allows new blood on the EB. So, if you are so inclined and have an interest in

VHPA has their meeting/reunion during the July 4 timeframe and will take place in Las Vegas in 2003. The Executive Board makes the final decision as to when and where to hold the annual meeting. If you make a motion to host the annual meeting, you should live in that location and become a member of the reunion committee. I am looking forward to meeting many of you in Las Vegas and certainly hope you will work towards making this a fun and rewarding association. I really enjoyed my 2+ years with the fellow Intruders throughout the country. See you in September.

John W. (Jack) Green III  
Mardi Gras 26 & 3

## The Senior Member at Large

Intruders, Now here we are, three months later, and where are we?? We have increased membership now by a total of almost 60 new members this year. We had hoped to double the membership this year and we are almost at that point. With the luck we have had this year so far, it looks to be achieved by reunion time in September 2001.

I still have 4 members that have not paid their 2001 dues yet. Its just a matter of time and then they will get sent in. So in all the renewals went real well. Just hope that next years does the same.

We are really starting to find many of the support personnel, We have had more maintenance, flight operations, orderly room and many more of the 66-68 timeframe flight crews are joining. So we are gaining more personnel from all parts of the unit. I presently have made contact with 50 more old guys that may be joining in the very near future.

In the past months we have completed all the Membership Cards and Certificates of Membership and they have been sent to each individual. As new members join, their certificates and cards are sent out in the next days mail.

We presently have sent Honorary Membership Cards and Certificates of Membership for Next of Kin of Intruders families. We at the present time have 12 Honorary Members.

Now I'm getting ready to be able to print name tags for each individual attending the reunion. Now is the time to start planning if you are attending or not and if you have someone attending with you we will need their name that they would like on their name tag. I'm sure that Jeff Murray, the Reunion Chairman will be putting out the information in his Reunion Section.

I would like to ask all the crew member, maintenance, operations and orderly room personnel to please dig back into your minds about the time in VietNam with the Unit, that you try to come up with things that had happened to you or others. In other words, I am looking for stories to have put on the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC Web site. Its time to get the enlisted side of some of the things that happened. I myself do have a Maintenance story that was done when I was

Maintenance Sergeant in 1970. Its one of those things that you have to be careful of how you tell someone how to do something!!!!

**At the present time the current membership is at a total of 135 !!!!!!!**

Great job to all of you "INTRUDERS" out there for all of your great continuing support. With out that, we would not be where we are.

**"WELCOME HOME INTRUDERS"**

Gary Stagman  
Senior Member at Large - Membership

## From the Reunion Chairman

**O**K we are down to the last few months so here are a few details to help everyone prepare. First, we want as many people there as are willing and able to attend. This organization is only as strong as it's members and right now we have a wide range of participants representing the entire spectrum of the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC. We have pilots (of course), crew chiefs and gunners (without whom there would have been fewer pilots), maintenance geniuses (without whom we all would have been 11B), operations types (they still like to tell us where to go), and even a few commanders (ever wondered what any of them did?). If you show up you are sure to run into someone you once served with ("Hey, I know you!"). Here are a few particulars (not locked in stone but the cement is getting firm):

The official dates for this reunion are 27-30 September 2001. A lot of folks will arrive on 26 September (Wednesday). THIS REUNION IS HOSTED BY THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS ASSOCIATION (SOA). The 281<sup>st</sup> AHC was OPCON to the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group while in RVN, hence the association between the two organizations. We decided, as a group, to have this year's reunion in conjunction with the Special Operations Association Reunion (SOAR). They are our hosts and have laid the groundwork for this year's event.

We are having a joint Project Delta/281<sup>st</sup> AHC meeting on Thursday, September 27<sup>th</sup>. In it we will discuss any pertinent information and hold our Memorial Ceremony. I realize Thursday is a lousy day but rooms are at a premium and we are a bit time-constrained by the SOA. So unless anything dramatically changes Thursday will be the day to honor our fallen Intruders.

We will have a general 281<sup>st</sup> AHC meeting on Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. This will be our business meeting and, like the Memorial Ceremony, will be much better if a lot of folks can attend.

Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup> begins with a general SOA meeting which all SOA members are invited to attend. You must be a member of SOA (discussed later) to attend this meeting. I'm not sure but am guessing it will be fairly boring, however some of our members will be asked to attend and there may be some sort of recognition rendered our way. Lunch is provided,

followed by the General Meeting of the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC Association.

The dinner begins with cocktails at 1800. Don't forget to bring a coat and tie. In fact, bring an extra, we have folks who seem to need them. Expect it to be relatively military in function, with posting of the colors, etc. **“You have never eaten dinner until you have done so in the military. For those who have not sat through it, dinner has a special flavor the civilianized will never understand.”** You can expect everything to end around 2300 hours.

SOA membership. You do not have to join SOA to come to this reunion. However, it is probably a good idea to do so. We are their guests and are piggy-backing on their meeting. Delta is doing the same thing as us. It will probably be the last time for awhile that we have a co-meeting so if you join it may be for only a year. If you do join you will get some cool literature and a neat certificate and pocket card to scare your grandkids with. If you do not want to join we will marry you up with a current member (don't get excited Phread) to bring you along as a guest. The cost for the entire event is \$80/person, which covers all the SOA activities. This includes 2 lunches, a sort of formal dinner, and booze (the booze is brought in by SOA and, as I understand it, located in the SOA general membership room...the term free booze does not mean we can saunter up to a bar and order a round, but it does mean we can hit the SOAR hospitality room and imbibe). The hotel is the Plaza (1-800-634-6575), all information is on the webpage, and the cost is \$40/night. If I lock the doors to my house and keep my kids out of the refrigerator I will save \$40 a night, so I am coming early. When making your reservations you need to remember to tell them it is for SOAR, this will get you the \$40 rate.

During our joint meeting with Delta we will have our memorial ceremony. We may hear a few words from a former Delta commander (one all of Delta thought highly of by the way) as well as at least 2 of our former commanders (we think higher of them, by the way again). We plan on including every 281<sup>st</sup> member in the ceremony

OK, so what do you do now? First go to [www.281stahc.org](http://www.281stahc.org) and click on the reunion link. This will get you to the hotel so you can reserve a room. If you don't have access to a computer call the Plaza direct (1-800-634-6575). We will provide a reunion sign up sheet as soon as we get one from SOA. If you are an SOA member you can fill it in and send it off with your \$80/person. If you are not a member you just send it to me or to someone you wish to be your sponsor. I will collect all the applications/money and forward them on to SOA. My mailing address is 5105 Los Padres Ct, Ft. Worth, TX 76137. Let me know when you are coming. If you have questions you can call me at 817-428-1458 after 7 p.m. CST or 817-390-6136 during the day. You can also try 800-552-5205 but I think my employer purposely tries to deflect calls on this line. Just pretend you want to make a trade with your local broker and you may get through. See you in Vegas. Jeff Murray

## From the Secretary/Treasurer

**F**inance: We continue to improve financially, thanks to the great effort of our membership chairman, Gary Stagman. Remember, your annual dues are the sole means of support for the Association. Life membership funds are transferred to a savings account and when that grows larger, a transfer is made into a certificate of deposit (CD). Life funds are not used; rather they are our "retirement funds" as the Association members get older (hard to imagine, I know). Our balance sheet follows (figures rounded)

<b>Assets:</b>	
Certificate of Deposit	\$4007.00
Savings Account	2903.00
Checking Account	4664.00
<b>Total Cash &amp; Bank Accounts</b>	<b>\$11,574.00</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Equity	11,574.00
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Equity</b>	<b>\$11,574.00</b>

Our on-going expenses include costs for publication and mailing of the newsletter, recruiting expenses, and monthly web hosting costs. President Bob Mitchell would also like a salary comparable to his position so he's receiving nothing. (Just kidding, Mr. President)

### Actions by the Executive Council:

Your elected Executive Council (EC) continues with business in support of the Association. Among the major accomplishments to date include:

Participate in the Special Forces/Special Operations Museum. Motion made by President Bob Mitchell and seconded by Fred Mentzer. Motion passed unanimously.

Establish a Memorial Fund to help defray costs for commemorative collateral. An example is the wreath purchased for the David Bittle funeral. Motion made by Jack Green and seconded by Bob Mitchell. Motion passed unanimously.

Webmaster Steve Matthew requested a change to our web-hosting site. After a detailed explanation and cost analysis, the decision was made to make the move. A better looking, faster loading site may be found at: <http://www.281stahc.org/>. Kudos to Steve for creating and maintaining an OUTSTANDING web site. It's one in which we can all take pride.

**Corrections or Questions:** May be addressed to me via email [bilitzke@juno.com](mailto:bilitzke@juno.com) or by snail mail: 69 Dorman Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94124-1806. My 24-hour phone is 415/206-9898.

Joe Bilitzke  
Secretary/Treasurer

## The Immediate Past Pres

**W**ell guys, here it is the fourth year since the since the 281<sup>st</sup> Association was reborn. The latest effort began in 1997 at the VHPA Reunion in Orlando when Lance Ham, Corky Corcoran, Jerry Montoya, Ed Duke and myself were back-slapping, telling lies and generally having a great old time. Lance mentioned a reunion he'd been to in Philadelphia in the early nineties and we all got to bating it around about trying to crank up some interest in a new association. We decided to try to be more organized at the Ft Worth 1998 VHPA Reunion and to work out if the idea was feasible. At Ft Worth a 281<sup>st</sup> mini reunion gathering resulted in some nineteen of our folks getting together to discuss the forming of an association. Everyone agreed we should try, I volunteered to be the Secretary Pro-Tem, the hat was passed to collect money to finance a newsletter (\$90), and as the saying goes; "The rest is history". And look where we're at now. I think we've got a great thing going, don't you? See you at Vegas!

**"We Rotor On"**

Fred Mentzer  
Immediate Past President  
Newsletter Publisher

p.s. - If I forgot anyone who was at the Orlando gathering mentioned above, please forgive me, CRS you know. I'll let you buy me a beer in Las Vegas. I hear it's a cure!

## The Web Master

**D**uring the past couple of months the 281st AHC Website has undergone some design changes, as well as some expansion and improvements. The new Table of Contents has links to the various sections of the Website that have stories and pictures about; The Villa, War Stories, Vietnam Today, and other pages of interest to all Intruders. There are also some new "In Country" thumbnail picture pages, so check those out thru the icon just below the map section of the homepage. Anyone who has pictures they want on the Website needs to contact me about how to submit those image files so that I can better accommodate getting that done. Don't forget the "Reunion 2001" page that lists all the latest info about the Intruder Reunion 2001. You'll find LOTS of info about Las Vegas attractions and even the airport, so check it out, and keep checking it out for

the latest info. Many thanks to my better-half, Peggy, for designing the Reunion 2001 webpage and contents. She has contributed much to the new look of the Website.

Now that there are two email Nets, the "CHAT" Net for just that, and the "HQ" Net for official business, pictures, stories and anything that might be for the website and our official history, the incoming email traffic will get harder to manage. Anything broadcast from now on that you want on the 281st AHC website will need to be put onto the HQ Net, or sent to me 'CC or back channel [atmatthews@kscable.com](mailto:atmatthews@kscable.com). I can not guarantee I will catch stories and pictures that are placed on the "CHAT" Net. When there was only one Net group we did a pretty good job of collecting these things, but now that there are two groups we only intend to collect from the "official" HQ Net.

As always, if you have anything to contribute to the Website or have any suggestions, feel free to send it to me. Likewise, if you find any errors or features that don't work as advertised/expected, let me know so I can check it out. The 281st AHC Website is best viewed using Internet Explorer browser

Steve Matthews  
"Rat Pack 15" 6/68-6/69  
281st. AHC Webmaster

### Notes & Memo's

*Here's an email written by CSM Ret. Bob Ohmes earlier this year.*

Subject: Maintenance

Hey, Galkie and all

Read your message yesterday and it led me to thinking about my tour in Nam and all that went on. Your question, while it didn't bother me, made me think about the poor slugs who stayed back in the Allied Shop area and the Maintenance Hangar and did their jobs, sometimes the same thing day after day and very long hours. They weren't able to come home and tell about their "glory" days unless they had very active imaginations and could make up some wild stories (usually told to them by someone else). There was the man who worked in the engine shop and repacked short shafts—just think how many thousand hours did a unit fly in a year's time and then divide that by 25 to get the approximate number of short shafts this poor E-4 or E-5 had to repack for his tour in Nam. Or, inspect the hot end of an engine, realign a rotor head, repair the radios, buck the rivets, repack the bearings on push/pull tubes, and the many other 100s of small jobs needed to be done by the maintenance people to keep the aircraft flying. All the time, the Maintenance Officer was yelling to get the aircraft out to keep availability up to 80%. These guys don't have great stories to tell to their kids or grandkids but their jobs, I feel, were just as important to the overall mission as the pilots, crewchiefs and gunners. I know that I yelled alot at these kids myself to get things done, some days they didn't feel like working and neither did I. But I was and am very proud of the

work they accomplished. Many of you are here now because of their dedicated work. Guess I will get off my soapbox, I have preached enough today. - *Bob Ohmes*

## 281<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company Association

**President....Bob Mitchell**  
**Vice President....Jack Green**  
**Secretary/Treasurer.....Joe Bilitzke**  
**Senior Member at Large....Gary Stagman**  
**Junior Member at Large....Dennis Crowe**

**Immediate Past President....Fred Mentzer**  
**Legal Advisor, Chat Site Admin....Brent Gourley**  
**Reunion.....Jeff Murray**  
**Historian....Dean Roesner**  
**Webmaster.....Steve Matthews**

### Web

281<sup>st</sup> AHC - [www.281stahc.org](http://www.281stahc.org)  
**Members Only Chat Net** - [281AHC-HQ@yahoo.com](mailto:281AHC-HQ@yahoo.com)  
**Informal Chat Net** - [281AHC\\_CHAT@yahoo.com](mailto:281AHC_CHAT@yahoo.com)

### Notes & Memo's (con't)

April 2001

From: **Jack Mayhew**  
Chairman Remembrance Committee

### **BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE IN PROGRESS REPORT (ALSO A PLEA FOR HELP)**

We have made a good start on the goal to create a living memorial to those brave forty-four individuals that we lost and or left behind in Vietnam. To date we have three of the individuals completed and posted on the web site. I have one more in my possession waiting for sketches and transfer to Steve Mathews for posting on the web. I am also preparing separate books on each individual, which will become a part of the 281st AHC history file to be placed in the Fort Bragg museum site for visitors to view. As those of you that are participating in this project know, This is truly a work of love and healing. Jim Torbert sums it up best when he wrote, " This has been a wonderful experience. At first I felt like I was "snooping" in their private world, now I feel like I am truly part of the family." I have worked on three of the stories and I have had the same reaction from each family that I worked with. Here is where we stand today:

(KIA/MIA) **Leon D. Flanders**-(being worked on by) Jack Green; **William R. Beasley**-Lou Lerda; **Michael P. Gallagher**-Robert Ohmes; **Walter F. Wrobleski**-Jack Serig; **Michael A. Goffredo**-Ben Sharrow; **Les H.Paschall**-Jack Mayhew (completed); **Donald B. McCoig**-Jack Mayhew (completed); **James L. Dayton**-Jim Torbert; **Terry L. Alford**-Michael Olson; **John A. Ware**-Aileen Ware & Jack Mayhew (completed); **Stanley J. Miller**-Bill James; **Scott E. Southerland**-JR Saunders; **Allen H. Johnson**-Bob Mitchell; **Ned Heintz**-Roger Green-Daniel Jurecko; **Patrick Ronan**-Steve Mathews.

As you can see we have 14 of the 44 covered which leaves us with 30 individuals that need to be worked on. If you can spare a few hours to work on a bio for some one you knew or served with please let me know. This is not a solo mission. Bob Mitchell, Steve Mathews and I, along with the other 100 members of the association will help and guide you in any way possible. However, I must warn you that this starts off to be a research project and quickly becomes an obsession, but I do promise you that you will carry the results of your contribution with you for the rest of your life. Please give one of the individuals that we lost or left behind a few hours of your time and you will be rewarded forever. What a way to give back something for those that gave everything. - *Jack Mayhew*

**20 April 2001**  
**From: Joe Bilitzke - "Going for VP"**

Some of you might know of my involvement with the VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION (VHPA) since 1986. I have been an elected member of the national Executive Council (EC) for the last three years. My terms expires this July.

Historically, the Senior Member at Large runs for the only other elected office in VHPA, Vice President. If successful, he follows the same succession rules we've adopted for the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC Association; the Vice President serves a year and then assumes the duties of President. The following year, he becomes Immediate Past President, also a voting position on the EC.

After much thought and deliberation, I've decided to continue the historical precedent and run for the office of Vice President at our VHPA reunion in Denver this July. If successful, I will assume the office of VHPA President during our Las Vegas reunion in 2002.

Again if successful, the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC will be the first unit to have two individuals function as president of VHPA. Don Hildebrand was the organization's first president to serve after our founder, Larry Clark. Unfortunately, Don passed away a few years ago. We served and flew together in 1968. Some of you might remember a tall, lanky, red head that was always smiling.

I'm asking for the support and votes of all 281<sup>st</sup> pilots who are current members of VHPA. Of course, you'll have to participate in the business meeting during the reunion to vote. If you've needed a reason to attend the Denver reunion, you have it now. I need every vote I can get! - *Joe Bilitzke*

**Sun, 1 Apr 2001**  
**From: "C" Chester Howard Delta Recon 69\_70**

*Note: This message was written when a series of emails were circulating about awards and decorations.*

I don't want to offend anyone about this medal crap and that is not my intention. There has never been a doubt in my mind that the 281st AHC were the Best of the Best. I can remember training new pilots on ladder and the McGuire rig, or going into their first hole. Our orders were to go to our Section leader if anyone did not do what we wanted, this extended from the lowest rank to the highest. Sufficient proof and they would leave Delta.

Like our TEAMS, your CREWS became one and performed well above 100%, if you didn't you might all disappear. I'm not one of these phony bastards that gives all credit to the AC, it took four to make that chopper function properly and that's who gets the credit. Not to take away from anyone, but support was understood, it took the 281st AHC, Nungs, Rangers, Medics, Supply, Maintenance and Clerks to make it all work for everyone. The simple fact remains the Purpose of Project Delta revolved around the Missions run by the Recon Section. Since I haven't been able to tell Delta Stories I want you guys to know that I can and have bragged on the 281st AHC all my life. A helicopter never flies near without thoughts of you (the unknown to me). I have yet to see anyone land, near me, on TV or in the Movies that I don't tell the people with me "That's nothing, you should see what "Delta Air" could do." People find it hard to believe the little hole's you set down in or dropped the Mc Guire into, to save our sorry ass's. But then they'd find the whole story hard to believe, so why tell em.

You see I'm no hero, never have been, never wanted to be. Just found work that I was suited for and enjoyed the good company. Delta changed my life forever. Doc once told us, "As long as you can look yourself in the mirror and know who you are and what you've done, nothing else matters". This was the talk to let us know we'd never be known, dead or alive and we would not be awarded anything of consequence. All of which proved true. I know I do not think like you guys, I am most thankful for John Korsbeck, and Brian Paine. JK is Special Forces and has the background, he understands the mind set to volunteer for anything. Brian has been a good friend, I sure he doesn't like what he see's in me, but the key word is FRIEND.

All this is to say, If you want medals or feel you've been over looked, go for it. Fight your best fight. I'm not against you, it's just not my way. Some of the Straphangers in Delta may well join the push but I don't think any of the Troops will.

I am forever thankful to have served with you all, and I am sorry for your losses. - *Chester*

**ATTENTION 281st LADIES**

Hi! I'm Peggy Matthews, and I would like to invite all 281st Ladies who are interested in being involved in organized activities for all the ladies at the Reunion, to contact me. There has been interest in forming a 281st Ladies Association, so now's the time to get involved. We will be having a Ladies group meeting to decide this, time and place to be announced. Also, we are planning a luncheon, some shopping, and perhaps a tour during the reunion in Las Vegas. Please contact me at emails: smatthews@ksable.com. You can also call me at; 785-273-3395, or write me at; 2014 SW Regency Parkway Drive, Topeka, KS 66604. Hope to see you in Vegas! - *Peggy*