

281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

"INTRUDERS"

NHA TRANG
1965-1970

Company Newsletter No. 36

Fall 2008

***REUNION 2008 "R&R HONG KONG"
A FANTASTIC TIME HAD BY ALL!!***



CHOU LEE
#1 Laundry Hong Kong

.... Guess who?....

Our own CSM Bob Ohmes, that's who!!

Bob was the life of the party at the Friday night R&R Hong Kong themed buffet, and he fooled **everybody** with his elaborate costume. He was inscrutably quiet until he sprang up from his table to announce that he was Chou Lee, Hong Kong's Number #1 laundry man and he had unclaimed "laundry" left at his establishment by various R&R veterans over the years. He heard about our reunion and decided to attend to return the left behind "laundry". He then began to call out individual names to come forward to claim and unwrap their laundry. The room erupted in laughter as one by one they opened their packages to find.....



Well done Bob. What are you going to come up with for next years R&R Australia theme... "Crocodile Ohmes"? I can't wait to find out. - *Fred Mentzer*

IF YOU WERE NOT THERE YOU MISSED ONE OF THE BEST!

Just returned from the reunion and I must tell you that Frank Little and his team of "Saint Louis Mighty Men" did an outstanding job in planning and executing this year's reunion. In my humble view it truly was one of the best we have had. It was filled with activities and yet there was time to enjoy old friends and make new ones. Some of the highlights were:

Award of the Silver Star to WO Don Torrini, (Now Col. Don Ret. in charge of registration) was the main attraction of the Saturday night banquet. Previously only four Silver stars were awarded to Intruders (2 crew chiefs and two pilots)

On Friday night the theme was Hong Kong R&R and Fred Mentzer did a great job of organizing and running the event. (We all know that it was the lovely Ms. Fred that did all the work in planning the event and told Fred what, where and when) Karen, we missed you and look forward to seeing you next year. Many thanks for all your help.

The Scholarship Board informed us that the program is up and running and they announced that four of our young applicants had been awarded scholarships for 2008-9. I would challenge you to find another company size unit that has a scholarship program of their own. Watch the news letter for the announcements.

The reunion would never be the same without the organizing skills and masterful MC performance by our own CWO 4 Ret. Joe Bilitzke. Joe, as he does ever year, adds dignity to what could otherwise could be a disaster in that the reunion is organized and put on each year

by folks who are new to these kinds of things. But under his guidance they sure learn fast.

Great food, snacks and drinks in the hospitality room. Thanks to Paul and Bonnie Meledy & Ed Haas the hospitality was well stocked and certainly appreciated by all. (Paul looked a bit tired by Sunday am but Bonnie and the ladies certainly helped he and Ed out. Thanks all.)

All of this was done under the watchful eye of our new past president Jay Hays who, like a mother hen with a flock of baby chicks, keep it all together from the end of last year's reunion until the end of this one. Now the guidon has been passed to Frank Little & Mom Torbert who will do a great job for all of us.

All things said the event **that made the reunion** was the appearance of "**Chou Lee the Hong Kong laundry man**". Chou's act was his best yet and he brought down the house. When you see pictures of the event you will see what I mean. As good as his act was the best part was seeing our dear friend walk on his own after being down and out for so long.

However, those of us that were his victims have a way of getting even; so CSM Ohmes you are herby nominated to be the next reunion chairman. Report to work on Monday. - *Jack M*

The Prez says...

If you haven't already heard, we have been approved to place a monument at the Airborne and Special Ops Museum in Fayetteville, NC. At our last general membership meeting we approved spending the money to purchase the monument, hinging on approval by the museum. Thanks to the efforts of Ken Smith and Paul Galloway with the museum, we have been unanimously approved by their Board of Directors. Ken is working on a design to be approved by the Executive Board, so we can proceed. This will be a lasting tribute to the 281st AHC.

At our next year's reunion we will host the 10th Combat Avn. Battalion. This will be something new for us and is shaping up to be quite a reunion. I hope you will make your plans now to attend. Watch the web site for upcoming details.

Congratulations to Fred Mentzer on being selected "Intruder of the Year" It was a well deserved award. Fred continues to serve the Association with zeal.

Please keep our Military men and women and their families in your prayers. If you travel and see a soldier in uniform be sure to "thank them" for their service.

Frank Little
President



Our VP Speaks...

THREE SHORT STORIES

I still like to do it the old fashion way. Now it seems like most everyone else has gone "high tech". Even my kids look at me and roll their eyes, they have their I Phones and Blueberries, but I like my old paper calendar. I went last week to the office supply store and purchased my 2009 book. Of course the first thing I marked in the book was the last week of July and first couple of days in August. Regardless of your method of keeping track of what is going on, put down the dates for our next reunion right now. No excuses for not planning ahead. I grew up in St. Louis, and I have some great ideas of new places to go and fun things to do. And, that coupled with the great price breaks we get on rooms and happy hour suite, I do not think you can come close to a vacation like this anywhere else. I guarantee you will hear a new story that you have completely forgotten or never heard before.

Next week I am going back to college. I am going to be a guest professor at SPSU. That is Southern Polytechnic State University here in Atlanta. They have a class in Vietnam History where I go each semester to present to the class. I have done this each semester for the last 4 years. The actual professor is/was a grunt during the war. My presentation is actually a slide show of pictures I took while in country with the 281st.

For y'all that were in country during my tour, there is a good chance that your picture is one that I show. The students seem to especially like the picture of Jeff Murray and his Wolf Pack crew taking a bath in a large puddle. I have finally gotten my slides converted to digital, and now maybe I can get them put on the web page. That is a great idea for everyone. What a great way to view history. No one else can tell the story like we who were there.

It was July of 1969. Lee Brewer, Fred Funk, and Fred Sherrill came into my room and asked, "Mom, can you make us some chili?" Their only requirement, they wanted it very "HOT". I accepted their request. The result: the next evening they sat in my room, eating chili with tears running down their faces. I continue to make my chili every year. The recipe has been refined over the years, and in fact has won three chili cook-off's. The tradition is to now make the big chili pot sometime around Veteran Day. All Vietnam veterans are welcome to come by my house and share in a "cold one" and have a bowl of my award winning chili. This year the tasting will be on Saturday, November 8th, and starts at 11 AM. Anyone down this way is welcome to stop by my house in Johns Creek, Georgia and try my bowl of red. Just let me know a week ahead of time so I can get your name in the pot.

Jim "MOM" Torbert
Vice President

The Membership man.....

In nine years we have climbed to member **# 354 !** This year I have been very thankful for the wonderful response of the 2008 and 2009 dues received. It has picked up a lot from previous years, so I thank you all very much for your loyal support.

Now it's time to get the 2009 dues out of the way, that way you don't get letters and such from me begging for the dues. So if you haven't sent them in yet, please do. *Just joking about the begging.*

The by-laws state that dues could be sent using reunion registration form. It looks to be a very good response to the payment of your

2009 dues!! Thanks!

All NEW applications for membership and RENEWAL DUES will come to me (unless sent in with reunion registration form) at the address on the membership form. If you need a renewal form or application, email me at: cooter@charter.net or you can also get the application off the 281st web site at www.281st.com

I want to thank everyone that has been sending me their new information to update the master roster, this saves postage and you get your newsletters faster. PLEASE keep your information on the master roster up to date.

Thank you for your continuing support, to the 281st AHC Association!! And making an old man's life easier!!! This allows me the extra time to try to help others thru information to pursue their claims with the VA system. I have put out some feelers to others about putting a pamphlet to assist Intruders in submitting their VA claims. Hopefully we can get it put together in the very near future. This is going to be a combined work of love and concern for our fellow brothers in arms of 40+ years ago.

I have had two super bad computer crashes this past month, so I haven't even started to process 2009 dues paid on reunion registrations and re-verifying addresses. Fortunately I had all the 281st data backed up and hadn't made any changes since. My son and I have totally formatted and reloaded all programs, and it's running great. I lost only about one week's worth of emails on the second crash.

So right now I'll post the new email addresses I have received. Hopefully will get everything else all up-to-date very soon.

Also need to do some fall camping...

Gary Stagman
Membership Chairman

The Chaplain's Corner

It has been a busy summer for me as I have undertaken a large remodeling project at my house. I find that I'm just not able to do all I used to do in one day. So with Fred's prodding I take time to write this article.

Today is September 11 and I am 17 days from my 60th birthday. That's not the importance of this day though. I believe everyone can remember where they were and what they were doing on that fateful day 7 years ago. There are all kinds of things and special days that call for remembrances. Memorial Day and Veteran's Day are national holidays that call us to remember those that have given the ultimate sacrifice. On this day we too pause to remember those who made an ultimate sacrifice.

There is something else I'd like to share with you in this article. A couple of years ago we had a gospel concert at our church. During the prayer time the performer asked God for something that really hit home for me. I knew that many of us who served with the 281st AHC had physical and mental scars that they still carry today but we have a tendency to minimize because we concentrate on those who gave their lives when we have memorial services at our annual reunions.

The performer asked God to bless all the young men and women whose lives had been forever changed in an instant when they were wounded. He also asked for God's provision on all the caregivers of these brave individuals. It made me stop and think how proud I was of this current generation of military personnel that have answered the same call that we answered so many years ago.

So, as we remember all those who lost their lives so tragically on September 11, 2001 I ask all of you to also stop and think of all those wounded young men and women who have waged the war on terrorism since that day.

Please remember all the families whose lives will be changed by this generation's battle scars.

Norm Kaufman
281st AHC Assn Chaplain

The Senior Member at Large

If you read Secretary Jeff Murray's minutes of the Executive Board (EB) Meeting and the General Membership Meeting you may have noted an item about my presentation at

both those meetings of a proposal to the Membership of the 281st AHC Association (AHCA) to have a monument erected at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum (ASOM) in Fayetteville, NC, to immortalize the 281st as "The First U.S. Army Special Operations Helicopter Company". That proposal that was unanimously adopted at both meetings, and I was authorized by the attending members to form a committee and spend up to \$4,000.00, to have this monument erected. The monument to the memory of the 281st AHC will be placed along side of other famous battalions and larger size units that represent the unique and special deeds of distinguished Army and other branch units associated with Airborne and Special Operations beginning with World War II and continuing to the present operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The first step in this process was to convince the ASOM Foundation (ASOMF) that the 281st qualified for a monument. The other alternative presented in my proposal and discussed at both the EB and General Membership meetings was the purchase of a large 24" square paver stone at the entrance of the museum. The EB and the Membership were clear in their direction to me that the 281st AHCA was only interested in a monument and not the paver option. It was, therefore, left to me and the committee to convince the ASOMF that the 281st AHC qualified and deserved to be recognized with a monument. Normally only battalion and larger units qualify for monuments; all the rest must buy paver stones. Bob Mitchell and Jack Mayhew were excellent committee members who provided me with both historical documentation and other information necessary to attach to a letter that was submitted to the ASOMF Board in early August. Paul Galloway was also a champion of our cause with the ASOMF Board. Paul is the Volunteer who is in charge of request for pavers and monuments at the museum. Paul said "Trust Me" and I did! He was able to get approval at the ASOMF Board Meeting on 28 AUG 08 for the 281st AHC to be authorized for a monument space at the entrance of the ASOM.

With the assistance of other committee members, like Fred Mentzer, and interested members, like Gary Stagman, I have been able to pull together art work for the proposed monument. The artwork and the wording that has been approved by the EB can be viewed in the full report posted on the 281stAHC website Bulletin Board including photos of Paul and a representative monument.

I am moving forward with Paul Galloway to have the monument ordered this fall. Our “boot on the ground” in Fayetteville is Walt Pikul, who lives there. Walt has offered to do anything that we need if they need someone close by. The next step is to get a little bit better artwork of the Intruder Patch and Fred Beck, our treasurer, has sent the check to Paul Galloway to get it done. The lead time on a monument is roughly six months from the time the order is placed. The monument could be in place as soon as next April.

Standby and watch for a possible dedication ceremony and more updates as we progress toward this event. If you have not visited the ASOM, and you get the chance, I highly recommend it as a stop if a trip or vacation takes you that way. The ASOM is a modern museum with a Smithsonian level quality of displays that honors Airborne and Special Forces and other Special Operations unit starting with the Airborne and Glider assaults of WW II and the famous OSS of WW II up to current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ken Smith
Senior Member at Large
Chairman, ASOMF Museum Committee

The Junior Member @Large...

Having gotten out of Texas City a few hours ahead of the ravages of hurricane Ike, I finally got settled back home in Connecticut and got a chance to reflect on my new duties as your Junior Member @ Large. Yes, there will be Executive Board elections again this year and as Chairman of the Elections Committee I'll be seeking members to run/serve for three positions this year (Vice President, Secretary, and Junior Member @ Large) and with the Committee conduct the

elections, but there is still plenty of time to complete that task and I would really like to talk about the 281st AHC Association Annual Reunions.

Reunion 2008 is in the history books and this year's Reunion Committee certainly lived up to the high standard set by the three previous reunions my wife, Ellen, and I have been privileged to attend (Check out the 2008 Reunion photos on the website). The decorations and food for the Friday R&R Hong Kong party were outstanding and Ellen still insists Bob Ohmes really is a Chinese Laundryman just trying to catch up on overdue deliveries. Not to be outdone, the Saturday Banquet was topnotch as well and in addition we got to witness Don Torrini receive a long overdue (40 years) Silver Star and four Intruder descendents receive the first annual Intruder Scholarship Awards.

As is fitting the Reunion focal point was once again the Intruder Remembrance Ceremony which has become an annual fixture in my life and which I don't think I could miss. The Annual General Membership meeting rounded out the scheduled activities and was characterized by spirited discussion and eventual unanimous agreement when it came to authorizing the EB to petition the board of the ASOMF to allow an Intruder monument at their museum.

As you can see my fellow Intruders your association has several “irons in the fire” not the least of which is our sponsorship of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion's Reunion in conjunction with our own 281st Reunion from July 29 – August 2, 2009 in St. Louis. If you only make two trips a year plan one of them for next year's 281st Reunion. If you only make one trip next year make it your Intruder Reunion.

On a continuing personal note Ellen and I both established “personal bests” at this year's reunion – she exceeded her spending goal for four consecutive reunions and I closed the Hospitality Suite every night/morning for four straight reunions. So come join us next year and help us set a new record.

Ed Haas
JrM@L



Fred Mentzer
Wolf Pack 36 (1967-68)

The Secretary’s Report – Minutes from the General Membership Meeting...

August 2, 2008

The meeting was held at the St. Louis Crowne Plaza Hotel, opened by President Jay Hays, Ken Smith gave the Pledge of Allegiance and Frank Little offered a prayer. Jeff Murray passed out the previous year’s minutes which were approved unanimously.

Fred Beck gave a finance overview and we have over \$38k in the bank, including over \$4300 in increased savings due mainly to membership renewals.

Jay Hays reiterated the need for more state coordinators, responsible for building membership within their respective state.

Gary Stagman reported on membership, we lost 6 members and gained 4, and he also reported he

received 5 unidentified Money Orders with instructions to set up Life Memberships on 5 people. Obviously someone out there likes us. He also reiterated the policy on Honorary Membership.

Jack Mayhew reported in his capacity as Remembrance Chair that he is trying to get 2 of our DAT's added to The Vietnam Wall because they died due to wounds received in Vietnam. Knowing Jack's tenacity we should know something by the next meeting.

Bob Mitchell reported that he is sliding out of the History Chair and passing the pen to Ken Smith. As our website is the primary repository for our history Fred Mentzer will pick up the slack on website maintenance and reported there will be no major changes planned but that he does intend to reduce some of the pictures and do some reorg on the roster. Fred also apologized for the one late Newsletter and it was noted that it is now a budgeted item and Fred will not have to ask for money every year. A few people asked why they are mailed a Newsletter and the answer was fairly obvious, their email address was not on file. That is a self fix.

Ken Smith presented a very detailed and informative Power Point presentation on the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville and requested we consider participating. They have various levels in which to do so, from brick pavers up to concrete unit monuments. In order to have a monument a unit must be battalion-sized, which we were not, but Ken felt a waiver would be approved due to our status as the first aviation unit OPCON to Project Delta. He also let us know that the museum is non-profit, has only one paid position, and is a first class operation, an observation that was echoed by several members who have been there. Lots of discussion ensued, all seemed to be favorable including discussion our possible donation of memorabilia to this organization. Bob Mitchell then let us know our By Laws require us to give that sort of stuff to the Army Aviation Museum and urged we pursue a change. Fred Mentzer motioned we vote, the entire room seconded and we voted to authorize a move forward to obtain a waiver in order to have a monument in front of the museum, and the motion passed unanimously.

Jay Hays showed the membership a Joe Kline print he wanted everyone to sign so we could present it to Shirley, the main POC at the Crowne Plaza, as without her help we would not be meeting where we are at the cost we are paying.

Marshall Hawkins had to leave the reunion early so Jack Mayhew reported for him on Survivor Assistance. Hawk has been doing this by himself for a long time but needs some help, not what he is doing but what is not getting done due to a broken system. For example, Ron Javins passed away and no one knew until 2 weeks after and several members were in that area and not only could have attended his services but would have liked to. There is no easy way to fix that but Jack did point out that if each member prepared his own "I'm Dead" book and put it on their mantle at home and listed some 281st members as primary contacts upon their demise it would help us a lot, make your funeral a whole lot better, and probably provide some closure for your family members as well.

Ed Haas was announced as the new JM@L and Mom Torbert as the new VP. In New Business some 8th Trans and 281st Reserve members were in attendance and recognized, their eligibility for membership was discussed and approved.

Jerry Stanfield informed the attendees of a Vet History project, one that records vet's oral histories. He was asked to do an article for the Newsletter.

Joe Bilitzke gave a Scholarship Fund update, said it was initially funded by Jack Mayhew's company, there are no 281st funds in there as of yet, all monies coming from individuals and corporations. He updated the balance to \$15,500. He reiterated the importance of matching contributions by corporations some of our members may be working for.

The meeting was adjourned almost exactly on time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Murray
Secretary

THE SILVER STAR



**Awarded to WO-1 Donald Torrini
Now Colonel Torrini Retired**



Col Donald & Mrs Carol Torrini with their two daughters and son-in-laws following the presentation of The Silver Star to Don By Congressman John Shimkus for his heroic performance of duty during a Delta Recon Team recovery on 4 May 1968. Details of the mission are published on the web under the remembrance/stories section in a story entitled "Remembering the 281st AHC" by SGM Donald Taylor.

http://www.281st.com/281Remembrance/remem_html/stories-index.htm

... Notes and Comments ...

A message from Jim Baker...

I had not been to a 281st reunion since 2001 until last weekend in St. Louis, and I'm really glad I made it. I had a lot of fun.

Reunions are always fun, especially if you haven't attended in several years. I must say that somebody deserves a lot of credit, probably many people over the years, because the reunion has made a lot of progress. I told Jay Hays it was first class and very professionally done. The association seems to be well organized and well run, which is demonstrated by how good the reunion was. The Memorial Service Saturday afternoon was impressively done, and the closing banquet that night was very interesting and entertaining.

Also, the success of the scholarship fund to this point really shows the integrity of the organization as a whole. Of course there was plenty of time for socializing and those "other" activities that are the staple of all good reunions - and plenty of that was included all during the weekend.

Another thing, though not specifically reunion related, is the hotel, the Crowne Plaza Hotel St. Louis Airport. It is a great hotel - clean, attractive, and well managed. I had read and been told how good they were to us, how well received we were, how glad they were to have us, and how much they catered to us. Well I saw that with a first hand experience. I purchased a significant quantity of merchandise (tee shirt, hat, pins, and etc.) from our PX, and decided I wanted to ship it all home to myself. I inquired at the front desk if there was a small package delivery service near the hotel. The clerk instead provided me with a small box to pack everything in, gave me sealing tape and a label for the box, and then told me the hotel would ship it for me and pay the shipping charge. I thanked her, handed her my package, and immediately went to the hospitality room and saluted them. What else could I do?

All in all it was definitely a good reunion experience for me, and I definitely plan on returning next year.

Jim Baker
Rat Pack 15
'68/'69

A message from the Commo Committee...

Reunion 2008 photos can now be found on the Association Website at <http://281st.com>. The website homepage now also includes a link to the newly established "**Company Bulletin Board**". Directly underneath the BB a scrolling marquee of late breaking news has been added. To have an announcement posted to the bulletin board, whether mini-reunions or any news of interest to the general membership, contact:

Fred Mentzer - ffmentzer@ocmcast.net
Bob Mitchell - bob.mitchell@mitchellsbodyshop.com
Jack Mayhew - intruder06@comcast.net

Some Reunion2008 Pics



Don Torrini & Jay Hays at Check In



On the bus to good eats..



Cheryl Becker at the Remembrance

A few words on the Reunion from the Editor...

As Jack Mayhew wrote at the beginning of this Newsletter; *"If you were not there you missed one of the best"*. No doubt about it, it was! In my opinion four events were of particular note during the reunion; the general membership approving the placement of a 281st AHC monument at the 82nd Airborne and Special Operations Memorial at Fayetteville, NC; the ceremony awarding the Silver Star to our own Don Torrini; the first awards from the newly established 281st AHC Scholarship Fund; and the unforgettable performance of "Chou Lee, Number #1 Chinese Laundry Man" by CSM Bob Ohmes during Hong Kong R&R night.

We'll be hard put to top this year's reunion..... but we're sure as hell going to try!

See you next year mate, at the "R&R Australia" 281st AHC 2009 & 10th COMBAT AVN BN REUNION

"Sure the LZ is secure, I'm whispering because I have a cold. Trust me."

281ST AHC ASSOCIATION, INC.
Established 4 July 1999



EXECUTIVE BOARD

President
Frank Little
Vice President
Jim "Mom" Torbert
Secretary
Jeff Murray
Treasurer
Jerry (Fred) Beck
Senior Member@Large
Ken Smith
Junior Member@Large
Ed Haas
Immediate Past President
Jay Hays

APPOINTED OFFICERS

Awards – Ken Smith
Membership Committee Chairman - Gary Stagman
Remembrance Committee Chairman - Jack Mayhew
Historian - Bob Mitchell
Historical Memorabilia Chairman – Fred Lewis
Internet Groups Administrator - Brent Gourley
Communications Committee Chairman – Bob Mitchell
Reunion Committee Chairman – Frank Little
Survivor Assistance Chairman - Marshall Hawkins
Memorabilia Sales Committee Chairman – Jay Hays
Chaplain - Norm Kaufman

Newsletter Editor/Public Relations
Fred Mentzer