



281st Assault Helicopter Company Association

"INTRUDERS"

NHA TRANG
1965 - 1970

NEWSLETTER
NUMBER 55

WINTER
2014

A GREAT TIME WAS HAD BY ALL



AT THE



BRANSON REUNION!!

And next year?

It's

BACK TO ST LOUIS



The Prez Speaks

This is to anyone who helped in any way to make the 2014 reunion a success.

“THANK YOU”

When we started this year's reunion we were handed a list from our membership; different time; different location; keep the cost close to where we had been. I think we did that, the only thing was getting there. If the airlines had not changed flights on us the middle of the year we would have been OK.

Anybody who thinks they can put on this reunion by themselves is nuts and look for a break down,

You know I am a farmer and I like to watch nature. The other day I was watching a V of geese go over. If you have ever had this pleasure you know the leader is always changing. At the time I thought back to 281st days. In that mess of guys such as we were there was a 06, Jack Mayhew, Woody Wagers, and others. But at any one time there was someone out front doing the job that needed to be done. Be it the PFC in the orderly room, ops personal, maintenance on the line at midnight, commo, or the AC, pilots, crew chiefs and door gunners. Everyone had a time they had to step out in front and be the leader.

That lesson from almost 50 years ago must have stuck. Sure I got to be out front for a little time over the weekend but for the most part I was just one of the V. Each and every one stepped up and did their part whatever it might have been. We seemed to have married wife's who already knew this or picked up on it. There are any number of wives' who stepped forward and helped in a number of ways.

I would like to list each one of you but I know I will leave someone out. You know who you were and what you did. The 281st can be proud that we put on a reunion that the vendors we worked with said was right at the top of their list.

Again a big THANK YOU and see you in St Louis at the 2015 reunion.

Frank Becker
President

A Word from our New VP.....

It's November and we look back at our very successful reunion this year in Branson, MO.

There were more than a hundred registered guests and we hope to improve on those numbers in 2015. As we look back, we saw great success with the Riverboat Dinner Cruise, many “first-time-attendees” (FNG's), good times at the Rowdy Beaver and more Las Vegas style shows and entertainment than you can shake a stick at. A good time was had by everyone.

Next year we will return to St. Louis and the ever so hospitable Crowne Plaza Hotel. If you recall, a few years back management spent around \$12 million to renovate the hotel and it looks spectacular. The Reunion will convene there in early fall beginning Wednesday October 7th through Saturday October 10th, 2015.

All of the details haven't been worked out yet by the newly expanded Reunion Committee, however there is a good possibility dancing will be on the program and if Scott Arthur is back as our Friday evening master of ceremonies, he may host another game akin to this year's “The Oldied Game” which was hilarious. Ask Jeff Murray, Jim Torbett or Jim Christensen about the game. Better yet, ask their wives.

Next year is going to be a GREAT reunion so mark it on your calendars. What makes our reunions so great are the members that attend and the members that volunteer to put the entire program together. For a good reunion, that process begins about 18 months before that actual reunion date. If you would like to assist in any way, shape or form, consider joining the Reunion Committee. Even if it is just to put your two-cents worth in. As they say with elections, “you can't complain if you don't vote”. If past reunions weren't what you wanted or expected, don't grumble if didn't raise your voice to be heard. Get involved and be heard.

If you have any ideas, suggestions or want to help, call or email me at 252-940-8800 or donbudlong281@gmail.com. See you in St. Louis next October.

Don Budlong
Vice President and Reunion Committee Chairman

The Treasurer Say's

So another reunion is over and in the books and I kind of enjoyed it. Branson was different, the hotel was nice, there was more to do than we ever will find to do in St Louis, we had the largest turnout we have had in years and everything went off without a hitch. And because of all that we are returning to St Louis next year.

How did that happen? Well, I'll give my insight. First was the airport. It's too far away and if not for one of our sterling members who spent the entire long weekend driving back and forth to the airport a lot of people would have had no way to get to the hotel or back to their airplane. One member arrived without his cell and no one knew which airport he was at, making him wait way longer than the law of fun allows. To be honest that was about the only knock on the venue, it was a great reunion and everything went off like clockwork.

The numbers though may have been a bit inflated. A group of Wolf Pack Intruders arrived to honor Tubby Brudvig, along with Tubby's wife and some family members. That's fine, we like those guys, especially me because I served with each of them when I was in Wolf Pack. But they don't normally come to reunions and a return trip is not a certainty.

During the General Membership Meeting a point was raised about possibly moving to Florida to accommodate those Intruders who find a trip up north to be a bit expensive. That was a nonstarter as that would greatly increase the costs of flying for the west coast Intruders. St Louis is centrally located, the airport shuttle solves the transportation problem, we are moving the time to later in September or early October to gain more favorable weather and the location and pricing fit. They are raising the room prices a bit next year but tossing in 2 free breakfast buffets per room, making the cost a wash if you get up and eat.

And some of us can't dismiss the one main draw of St Louis...Kreiss Restaurant. If you like prime rib you will be hard pressed to find a better one. I've been told it will rot my arteries, maybe so. I also eat one of these a year so, tough. They're my arteries.

So watch for the announcement, clear your calendar for next fall and plan on meeting. I keep

reminding myself that every reunion I attend may be my last, that's why I make as many as I can.

Jeff Murray
Treasurer

The Senior Member@Large

This was my first trip to Branson, Missouri, it was a long drive down, but kinda pretty as the trees were beginning to start showing off their fall colors. I was thinking that this was a small town out in the middle of no-where. I was pleasantly surprised at the size and layout as Bain Black and I took the wrong turn while making our way to the hotel, we had a nice long ride through town and back.

The hotel was pretty good, my room had a nice view of the hotel just across the street. I do believe that Frank Becker did a good job with all the planning and I heard mostly good comments about all that. The noon lunches were well prepared, very good and there was always plenty of food and drinks for everyone. Ed Hass deserves a promotion for all the work he did with making sure we had plenty to eat....of course he had some good looking women helping him.

Jay Hayes as always had a good display of items all laid out. He and his pretty wife have done an excellent job planning and making sure the PX had lots of 281st items for sale at a very reasonable price. I always loved going to the PX. Don Budlong, thanks for helping make the color guard come together as a team. There were lots of positive comments about that. Only one person (and he knows who he is) said that we need to practice more so that each person knows his left from his right..... Oh well.

Bain Black was nominated and voted in as the Junior Member of the Executive Board. Welcome aboard Bain.....we expect great things from you in the years ahead.

Those of you that read this and did not come, you missed out, you missed the excitement of seeing old friends, making new friends and most of all looking and thinking everyone but you are getting older. Think about coming next year to St. Louis, you will be glad that you did.

Overall I think it went pretty darn good, there is so much that goes into making sure that everything comes together, lots of work, telephone calls and it takes more than one person to make it work. Thanks to everyone who helped.

I am always surprised as to how the guys find such good looking wives. I am smiling.

One last thing.....I heard conversations from the womenfolk that they always enjoy seeing their men set around and talk about those yesterday days. Each one telling his story, each one tells it a little different each year. It is good therapy....yes it is.

Will McCollum
Senior Member@Large

From our Past Prez

For the Intruders who didn't attend the this year's reunion, you missed a good one. Frank Becker and his reunion committee did a super job of organizing it. The Camden Inn's staff was very accommodating. They made sure breakfast was ready every morning and the cookies, cobbler, and ice cream was ready every evening.

There were several first time attendees one of them was the man who "turned out the lights" of the 281st, Nollie "Woody" Wagers the last CO of the 281st in Viet Nam.

Will McCollum did a great job with the color guard. Unfortunately, some of us couldn't remember which side is left and which side is right. Cheryl Becker and Carolyn Christensen organized a shopping trip to the Dress Barn at the outlet mall located behind the hotel. On Thursday evening we went for a dinner show and cruise on the Branson Belle. The headliner was a female violinist acrobat who put on very unique show.

Jay Hays ever the entrepreneur tried to open up a valet parking concession with Marshall Hawkins' new Jaguar after Marshall left the driver's door open when he got out to say some goodbyes. Jay saw the open door and thought he could turn a dollar or two by parking it for Marshall. When Okie Hawk saw his car moving I had never seen a man of his age move so fast. Every one, except Marshall, had a good laugh.

Next year the reunion will be held in St Louis in October during a cooler part of the year.

Stay warm this winter, as for me, I'll be shoveling sunshine.

Jim Christensen
Past President

In Memorium

"An Intruder is not dead until he's forgotten"

† **CSM Robert Leo "Bob" Ohmes †**
October 6, 2014

† **LTC Jack William Serig, Sr. †**
October 16, 2014

†

Membership Chairman

Well here we are again after working just about three weeks posting all the changes from the reunion registrations forms. This was very time consuming as there were many changes, addresses, phone numbers, and new email addresses. Those were the main changes and anything else on the form if it didn't match my roster, I either emailed or phoned to get the correct information. So that means if you want your newsletters or any other association information you must send to me any and all changes to your information. Keeping all data up-to-date on the rosters makes it easier for some of your old buddies to be able to find you.

And of course in the middle of updating rosters, CSM Robert L. "Bob" Ohmes , DOD: 6 Oct 2014 and LTC Retired Jack Serig, DOD: 16 Oct 2014 passed away, so I had to get everything put together for the familys' which included flag cases with a engraved plate attached. Plus six of us attended CSM Ohmes funeral in Kansas City, Mo and then LTC Jack Serig in which I have to thank Jim Rodgers in FL for taking the task in hand and delivered the package to Jack's son Art. Jim did a real great Intruder presentation to the Serig family.

At the reunion the membership criteria was revised, which changed the dues back to 1 Jan - 31 Dec for the membership year. Any dues not paid before 31 Jan of the New Year become delinquent, not able to vote or hold any of the Executive Board positions. The dues year will not change even though the reunions are going to be held later in the summer/fall so it will be cooler.

One of the positives, dues have come in more regularly along with some annuals changing to life memberships and also the gaining of a quite few new members, both life and annuals. So folks keep up the great work!!

Finally, as a reminder, this unit was not just comprised only of the 281st AHC, remember all the Pilots, Crew Chiefs and Door Gunners, plus 95% of the aircraft from the 145th ALP, 6 Platoon (Fangs) and all the 2/172st Helicopter Company were added to the new guys to complete the unit. If I left out any other units or personnel I did not do it on purpose, maybe it may have something to do with my age!!

All of your dedication and hard work resulted in the 281st AHC being:

"Designated as the first US Army Special Operations Helicopter Company".

Gary Stagman
Membership Chairman

The Junior Member@Large

Intruders, I am sure there are many of you that I have not met. Here is a bit about me and my 281st background. I arrived as a 1LT in Nha Trang early May '68 and departed a year later. Initially I was assigned to a lift platoon, but after about 3 weeks was approached about becoming the Wolf Pack platoon leader. I gladly accepted the job. Later I was assigned the job of Operations Officer, but I continued to fly missions with Wolf Pack.

Following two years in Germany, I returned to college and joined the NC Army National Guard, retiring in 1989. I flew guns until the day I retired.

In July 1998 I attended the VHPA reunion in Fort Worth. I believe this was the 281st mini-reunion when we first voted on the bylaws. I have certainly enjoyed the camaraderie of all our Intruder friends over the years. Since I retired in August of this year, I feel that I can give something back to our association. Thank you Will McCullum for giving me the call suggesting that I join the EB; and thanks to the association for electing me.

Bain Black
Junior Member@Large

From the Treasurer

While in the process of performing one of my duties as treasurer, that of getting the reunion financial results prepared, I received a nasty email from the editor of this newsletter stating that I am late submitting an article. It actually wasn't nasty but they say when an email or text is in capital letters it is like the writer is yelling at the recipient.

As long as I was working on the results I may as well talk about them. I don't have the final numbers yet because one vendor has not submitted a bill and some reimbursement have to be made. However preliminary numbers show that we are well within budget and complied with the policy that the reunion is self-supporting.

My records show that we had approximately 104 attendees of which 56 were members. We also had 40 ladies attending the ladies brunch.

We also collected \$6,539 for the Scholarship Fund from 25 members during the registration process and at the reunion. Walt Pikul, treasurer of the fund, has sent out acknowledgement letters to make the IRS happy.

Fred Beck
Treasurer

The PX Chairman

The reunion was excellent and good for the PX. I want to thank the PX Committee and those volunteering to man the PX: Ken Smith, Gayle and Lance Ham, Larry Hubbard and Dennis Crowe, who each took 2 hour shifts. This year the PX was set up in the corner of the Hospitality Room which allowed better visibility and access for attendees.

Sales were down a little mainly due to running out of larger size T-shirts. We also sold out of Helicopter Pins. The committee is working on a little larger replacement pin that should be announced by the next Newsletter. There are still some Mouse pads and Coffee Mugs which were new last year. We still have plenty of the company and platoon pins, patches and window stickers. The new Guideon and Wolf Pack pins were very good quality, our new supplier (made in the USA) kept the costs down. They are still priced at \$5.00 each. Ball caps make a good Christmas gift and always bring conversation wherever you go, at the airport, grocery store or sporting events.

Grandchildren's T-shirts were a big hit a couple years ago, pre-ordering sizes prior to the reunion worked well and we are discussing having them again next reunion. We found a pen that can be used as a stylist and will be available in November. Several have asked about company size Guideons, so far a vendor has been the hold-ups but we located 3 potential suppliers, price quotes have been requested waiting for replies. Help is needed in finding new items that you the Members would have interest in. Email orders and suggestions to jhays@haysenterprises.com. My cell number is 330-770-2278.

I want to thank all those who supported the PX.

Jay Hays
The 1st C/E of Bandit 113 and the PX Grunt

From Jack Mayhew

Remembrance : Since the last newsletter we have adjusted the number of our MIA/ KIA's to 52 by adding all of the individuals who lost their lives while serving with the 6th and 145th Aviation Platoons in the 65-66 time period. We had previously listed three of these individuals on the web site (281st.com) and are now in the process of adding the remaining individuals to the web. We have also purchased memorial guidons for each individual to be displayed at our annual reunion.

We have some indication that there is progress in locating the wreckage of one of our two missing UH-1 Helicopters. However, the next search effort is not scheduled until next year. We will inform you as soon as we have solid information. We again ask that you contact your Senators, Congressman and the Secretary of Defense and ask them to please push the Department of Defense's effort to find our ten missing brothers. This process works, one of our former CE's wrote his congressman who in turn contacted the Sect. of Defense and shortly thereafter the Sect. came out with a plan for increasing the search efforts in Vietnam. We now have a new Sect. and several new congressmen so please help make them aware of our concern for our missing brothers and their families. Contact me if you need assistance in doing this.

Scholarship : Thanks to contributors like you we saw another great year for the scholarship program. The Board of Directors voted to extend scholarship support for the three continuing students one of which is in her final year of Pharmacy School. All of the ongoing students are honor students. The board also awarded Scholarship support to three new students who started college this fall. We have been able to continue this program with your support and that of our outside supporter, Human Resources, Inc. On behalf of the students we thank each of you. Along that line the President of the board issued a challenge to the membership asking that Ten Intruders contribute \$10,000. to the fund. He also reminded everyone that the program is an IRS approved 501.c and as such all contributions are tax deductible. The President also reminded us that the Scholarship Program is a great program to include in your estate planning. Two 2014 awardees, Jamie Kushner-Greiner and Morgan Torbert, have written letters of appreciation to Association and can be viewed on the website at: http://281st.com/281MemberArea/Scholarship%20Program/index_scholarship_fund.html

The Book Project : As you may know by now we are finally on our way to write an all-inclusive book about the 281st AHC; America's First Special Operations Helicopter Company. Will McCollum, USA Ret., Operations NCOIC 1967-68, is an accomplished author and has volunteered to take on this

project. The goal is to develop and publish a book about you that you can hand to your grandchildren when they ask what you did in the war. To do this we have enlisted individuals to serve as advisors from the 145th PLT, 6th PLT, the two Detachments and the 281st.

Will McCollum will start at Fort Benning and move forward to March of 1971 when Capt. Nollie N. "Woody" Wagers turned out the lights. In between we need your stories especially those of the CEs', DGs, Maint. and Adimin.

Folks. If you were a supply or company clerk and have a story to tell we want to hear it. Same goes for those of you who flew the daily missions, be it resupply, Recondo or Delta. To make this a book about and for everyone who served in the unit, Will interviewed almost everyone who attended the reunion. We also gathered several individuals, to include wives and widows, in a conference room and after Will explained what we are doing we asked each individual for their input. The feedback received was very positive and thanks to Will's work we feel that the book project is on track. However, this is your book and as such needs your input. Dust off the cobwebs on your brain, dig out the old files and pictures and contact Will with your stories and pictures.

We would not like to go to press without you being in the book and you do not need to be a member of the association to be in the book. (However, you are always welcome to join) Contact Will at: William (Will) McCollum, 1231 Doreen Ave., Waterloo, IA 50701-3203, Tel: 319-239-5529 Email: WillDanMac@yahoo.com

Notes and Comments

The following is from Art Serig, son of Jack Serig, on the passing of his father



Dear, Military friends of Jack and Lou Serig. I think it's important that you know that Dad's passing was peaceful. On Thursday evening, 10/16/14, at 21:10 hours, Jack passed away with my Brother Chuck at his bedside and his wife Lou.

Last night my brother left mom and dad for half an hour to go over to the Perpetual Adoration Chapel at St. Louis Church. There, he prayed and asked God for a peaceful passing. On the way out, his girlfriend asked him to take some holy water back to Dad. He returned to the house, because he felt the time was near and he didn't want my Mom and Dad to be alone.

Chuck sat next to Dad, his eyes were open and his breathing was shallow. He held his hand as he sat next to him. I told him that I loved him and he replied, "I love you too". With a tissue he softly rubbed his arms and hands with holy water, made the sign of the cross with it on his forehead and placed the damp tissue in his right hand. He told him to rest and smiled at him, he seemed to like that and stared back with a very peaceful gaze. Silently, he began to pray and watched over him, still holding his hand, Jack closed his eyes and passed. It was quiet, without struggle, willing. Dad was ready.

Circumstances didn't allow us all to be there at the moment of his passing but his "I love you" was for all of us. My brother was so honored that he was able to be there for all of us and we are all comforted in knowing that he was not alone. The entire family had spent the last few weeks at his bedside in the hospital and at home. He was very proud of this large extended family and of his military family!

As you all know we are a very close family as is your Military Family! Thank all of you for the tremendous love and support that you have shown my Mom and Dad, especially over the last few weeks and for the many years he served so honorably with you, protecting our country and way of life.

All of your efforts, big and small as they may be, are just another chapter in what is surely a continuance of his legacy. God Bless you all and those other Warriors that have gone before him.

Captain Art Serig

In tribute to Command Sergeant Major Bob Ohmes, an excerpt from the poem, "A Soldier Died Today" by A. Lawrence Vaincourt

*He was just a common soldier and his ranks are growing thin,
But his presence should remind us we may need his like again.
For when countries are in conflict, then we find the soldier's part
Is to clean up all the troubles that the politicians start.*

*If we cannot do him honor while he's here to hear the praise,
Then at least let's give him homage at the ending of his days.
Perhaps just a simple headline in a paper that would say,
Our Country is in mourning, for a soldier died today.*



"Rest in Peace Bob, you were one good man"

Jack Interstein feeling his age.....

After many years and several (5?) reunions attended since 2000.....that pernicious nemesis, time is starting to take its inevitable toll. Have to admit that loss of CSM Ohmes was particularly sad, though certainly not surprising. I had gotten to know Bob and wife Bonnie at the several reunions mutually attended. The Poem that Fred sent, which I have seen before, "A Soldier Died Today" really reinforced that most fitting sentiment as regards Bob Ohmes and now the news of Jack Serigs illness and Tubby Brudvigs earlier loss. The loss of such seemingly irreplaceable treasures affects this country more than we can ever know.

May I take this time to salute all you gentlemen for your honorable endeavors on behalf of your country and fellow Intruders. I will forever be humbled by my time spent in your presence.

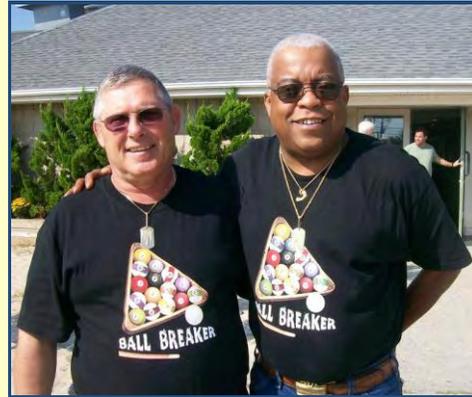
JINT

Intruder Ops (69/70)

10thCAB HHC (70/71)

Don't know why I included this, maybe it's because I'm Wolf Pack, and, Editor of the Newsletter... think?

Wolf Packer's Frankie Esquilin and Joe Corney. Pals forever. From 1967 to 2014



From the Editor

Well, that's it for this newsletter. As always, let me remind you that this is YOUR newsletter. Let me know how you feel, good or bad. Whatever I can do to improve this publication just send an email, drop a line or give me a call and I'll "git-er done". After due consideration of course. : =)

Fred Mentzer
Wolf Pack 36 (1967-69)
Editor

"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 Becker
Vice President
Don Budlong
Secretary
Jeff Murray
Treasurer
Jerry (Fred) Beck
Senior Member@Large
Will McCollum
Junior Member@Large
Bain Black
Immediate Past President
Jim Christensen

APPOINTED OFFICERS

Awards Chairman - Fred Lewis
Book Committee Chairman - Jack Green
Chaplain - Norm Kaufman
Commo Committee Chairman - Fred Mentzer
Historian - Bob Mitchell
Historical Memorabilia Chairman - Fred Lewis
Internet Groups Administrator - Brent Gourley
Membership Committee Chairman - Gary Stagman
Memorabilia Sales Committee Chairman - Jay Hays
Newsletter-Public Relations Chairman - Fred Mentzer
Remembrance Committee Chairman - Jack Mayhew
Reunion Committee Chairman - Ed Haas
Survivor Assistance Team Chairman - Marshall Hawkins