



## 281st Assault Helicopter Company Association

### “INTRUDERS”

NHA TRANG  
1965 - 1970

NEWSLETTER  
NUMBER 53

SPRING  
2014



## About Branson

Branson, MO, is truly a **one-of-a-kind family vacation destination** — and an incredible value — with dozens of live performance theaters, three pristine lakes, championship golf courses, an international award-winning theme park, dozens of attractions and museums, an Historic Downtown district, shopping galore, a full range of dining options, and a host of hotels, motels, resorts, RV parks, campgrounds and meeting and conference facilities.



Practically at the center of the United States, Branson is less than a day's drive for one-third of Americans, and with low-cost flights to the **Branson Airport**, as well as **Springfield-Branson National Airport**, it's never been easier for your family or group to get to Branson.

**Branson, Missouri**, nestled in the lakeside beauty of the Ozark Mountains, is America's affordable, wholesome family entertainment capital that emphasizes fun, comfort and the feeling of being right at home. Featuring an array of live theaters and attraction venues and active recreational pursuits, the community embodies essential American values such as patriotism, faith, courage and generosity of spirit in a warm inviting atmosphere that is truly genuine and heartfelt.

**Call us at 1-800-296-0463** for help planning your next vacation, convention or reunion. We look forward to seeing you!

- See more at: <http://www.explorebranson.com/#sthash.vEo3gbXV.dpuf>

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## ***From the Reunion Chairman .....***

**W**ell winter is done here in Missouri and 10 brave 281st souls made their way on the 1st of April to Branson, Missouri to plan for our September reunion. In true 281st manner some of our members did their recon and found a local water hole that served something better than c-rations. After an Executive Board meeting to take care of the business at hand, we met with Renee, our contact at the Camden Hotel, and after a short briefing by her, we checked out the Hungry Beaver Bar & Restaurant. Done good on that recon. Then back to the Hotel to check out the desert bar that the Hotel has each evening. Not bad and it is part of your room rate.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> we were back down to the breakfast bar (similar to the Clouds in St Louis) but it's part of your room rate. After checking out the banquet and meeting rooms it was to work.

The day went smoothly, much like some of the planning meetings I sat in on back in Nha Trang when we were getting ready to go to a FOB. If any problems came up there was someone who had an idea that when worked on a little, lead to a solution.

Some of the things that we handled: It looks like Southwestern Air will discontinue their flights to Branson on the first of June. The Springfield Missouri airport is some 40 miles north and is served by Delta, Southwest, and Frontier, maybe more. Our man Fred Lewis has got a van lined up to use for runs to the airport(s). Also, when not in use for the airport, we can take the ladies shopping.

As we get closer to September, for those of you who are flying into Springfield or Branson, we will keep you updated on any new airline service that might come up.

Another item was checked out also: Jim Christiansen was brave and let his wife come so she used the day to check out the mall right out the back door of the Hotel. The only problem she came up with... it was up hill back to the hotel after a day of shopping!

For those of you who get in on Thur. afternoon we are planning an evening on the Branson Bell showboat. This dinner and show that will NOT be in your registration fee but will be less than \$50 per person. It is a great evening and meal. I've been on it and enjoyed it a lot.

Another big thing is working with the caterer selecting the meals for Friday and Saturday. Working with Beth, the catering owner, we came up with the following menus; the Friday evening Buffet will be Spaghetti, Chicken Alfredo, fish, and all the trimmings. For the Saturday evening plated dinner a choice of one; Beef Brisket, Rosemary Chicken, Salmon and Shrimp, with all the usual. Oh yes, on each evening they will have a vegetarian meal if you ask ahead of time. Beth is also working on a menu for the Saturday Ladies Brunch. Ladies, we are working on a show for you that morning that I think you will enjoy.

We have arranged for a Color Guard to post the flags for our Memorial Service and Saturday Night Banquet through a Branson Veterans group.

Additionally, we will have the services of a professional broadcaster for our master of ceremonies. Some of you might know Scott Arthur. He has done this before at some of our reunions.

On Sat. evening our own Al Owens will share picture's he has taken on a recent trip to Viet Nam including many of Nha Trang.

We covered much more during the day but I think you see that you will have a good time in Branson. When you add 3 hotel nights, and registration of only \$100 per person, and then look at last years cost, you only come up with about \$15 more. But, this year your room has breakfast and a night desert bar included. And of course you still have the Hospitality room run by Ed Hass and Don Budlong. Another plus this year there will not be a cash bar on Friday or Saturday evening. The bar in the Hospitality Room will be open and right next door.

Again I want to thank the ones who gave their time and money to come to Branson for the planning meeting. We covered a lot of ground in a short while and I believe put together a great reunion and fun time for everyone this fall in Branson.

We heard you say that you wanted to go somewhere else and at a cooler time of the year. Well we went somewhere else and only time will tell if it is any cooler as Missouri has a way of messing with you when it comes to weather.

Be watching for the registration packet, they will be coming out in June this year. Room rate this year for Thursday thru Saturday nights is \$80 for two Queen beds; \$85 for a King bed per night; up to 3 day before 3 days after \$73 queen, \$78 king per night as availability permits.

I will close with; **“Ya'all come to 281st Reunion in Branson, Missouri 25-28 September 2014”**.

Frank Becker  
Reunion Chair & Vice President

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### ***The Prez Speaks.....***

**S**pring has sprung. Fall have fell. It will soon be hot as.....

Well, let me tell you what is coming into the landing pattern.

First, in the pattern is our upcoming reunion.

The reunion planning committee met Branson Missouri. Frank Becker and Fred Lewis did an outstanding job of preparing for the meeting.

The committee worked out details that need ironing out all day. We think it will be a great reunion.

There are many activities and things to do such as shows morning, noon and night. Shopping at the outlet mall located behind the hotel, the river walk shopping area, and Dick's Five and Dime store on Main Street. There's Silver Dollar City theme park for the children.

Then my wife and I headed west after meeting to the Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, National Parks. We got the 40 and 90 degree gear boxes from Mr. Hays to be delivered to the H.E.A.R.T.S. museum in Huntsville, TX. It will be one of the longest parts delivery runs from Missouri to Texas ever recorded.

Ship 113 has almost all the parts needed to complete the restoration for display. If anyone knows where we can find a pair of sync-elevators please let Ed Duke know.

I look forward to seeing you in Branson in September.

Jim Christensen  
President

### ***And Now the SM&L.....***

**“Branson Here We Come”!**

**S**ome people call Branson the Las Vegas of the Ozarks. There is gambling, entertainment, good food, friendly people, shopping and something for just about everyone. What Branson is not as well known for is how they honor veterans like no other city I've seen.

While the Reunion Committee met in Branson this past April to further plan this year's reunion, the Branson Daily Independent newspaper had for its headline, “Veteran's Task Force Gearing Up for 2014”. How many cities have a Veterans Task Force to plan how best to fulfill the needs of veterans? The people and establishments in Branson treat veterans like they should be treated – with RESPECT. When someone there asks if you are a veteran and then thanks you for your service, you know they really mean it. I'm not talking about just the hotel staff either, although by the time we left the Camden Hotel they knew all of our names and we knew theirs.

Speaking of the Camden Hotel and Convention Center, they will be providing us with two kitchens and a banquet room that is so spacious that we have options for multiple configurations for just about anything the 281<sup>st</sup> could ever want or need; and there is no charge for it either.

So for those Association members looking for a change from St. Louis and others that want to visit a city that knows how to show veterans a good time, come on out to Branson in September. More details will be forthcoming. Watch your e-mail, visit your Association's web site and register to see your buddies in Branson.

Don Budlong  
Senior Member&Large

### ***From the Election Man.....***

**I**ntruders, the time for the annual election is rapidly approaching.

Based on our experience over the past several years there are three possibilities:

First we change the election to “Recruiting” and hire recruiter to fill the positions.

Next, we change the by-laws and open the positions to the wives and children. (We now have four very active wives on the Scholarship Board and they are great contributors).



And last, but not least, we get more of our male members to step up and contribute keeping our association alive and growing.

We now have more retired members than ever and helping your association help others is a great way to give back to one of the best military units in existence. For those of you who have been waiting, now is your chance to get active as we need you and your experience to pickup the load. You will not regret it.

The following positions will be open and filled at the next reunion: **Vice President.**

Please contact me if you are willing to serve.

Will McCollum  
Junior Member&Large

### ***A Word from the Past Prez.....***

**O**ur annual reunion is going to have a completely new look and feel this year. As you know by now, Branson, MO in late September is where we will be. Although both are in the same state, Branson is quite different from St Louis. Located in the beautiful northern

Ozark Mountains, Branson has a real small town feel to it. But, there is plenty to do for everyone.

There are many different entertainment opportunities for the entire family, plus outdoor recreational activities like fishing, boating, and golf. I'm not even going to mention the many types of shopping opportunities available that I'm sure none of the wives will care about. One thing I can guarantee for the reunion this year is that heat and humidity will not be a factor for whatever coming and going you would like to do.

The reunion committee is putting together a wonderful weekend, and has found a great little hotel for us in the middle of everything. Travel options are being developed to make it easy getting to, around, and from the reunion. Registration details, and etc. will be forthcoming soon from the committee.

Branson is going to provide a great opportunity for a great reunion this year in a community that really welcomes veterans. Mark the dates on your calendar and make your plans to come on down in September.

Jim Baker  
Immediate Past President

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### ***Notes & Comments***

#### **The Saga of 113**

***Following is the Newsletter version of the Saga of Bandit 113. This 281<sup>st</sup> helicopter was found, tracked down, procured, and finally transported across country to Texas where it is being restored for display at the HEARTS Museum in Huntsville. The driving force behind this continuing effort has been our own Ed Duke, Rat Pack 1966-67. Ed has devoted many, many hours of blood, sweat and tears (and no small amount of \$\$\$) to this project. Along the way he has been ably assisted by Jay Hays and Lance Ham. Jay and Ed trailered 113 from Lance's barn in Florida to Texas in April. Below are a few photo's followed by a brief story from Jay Hays. A more complete narrative of the Saga will be published to the 281<sup>st</sup> website. - The Editor***



Ed Duke Jay Hays



Ed Duke on the left-Lance Ham & Jay Hays right

## 113 TO TEXAS

On the afternoon of March 16, 2014 I arrived at Lance & Gayle Ham's Bar LH Cattle Ranch and viewed 17113 for the first time since my last flight on it to Cam Ranh Bay VN November 7, 1968. It was very emotional. It is amazing the good condition for a 46 years old. Serial number matched, evidence of the floor mic's for CE & DG, L-side switch removed and hole patched, R-side switch missing but wire still there. Holes in rear cabin wall where ammo cans had been mounted were evident.

Monday a large tri axle wrecker from Brewington Wrecker Service and crew of 5 very carefully and professionally hoisted it from Lance's trailer to Ed Duke's trailer for the trip to Huntsville, Texas. This was a \$1000.00 job done at no charge, donated by Mr. Brewington.

That afternoon we toured a local museum viewing a Huey and several other aircraft. That evening the volunteers were taken to dinner, provided by the HEARTS Museum. Tuesday A.M. the load was rechecked, we received strawberries from Lance & Gayle and we were off to Texas. Photos were taken as we crossed the State lines, arrived Wednesday evening, Thursday at the museum and at Bearkat Collision who had volunteered to paint 113 at no charge and also got their suppliers to furnish the paint at no charge.

Many contributions and donations have been made by 281<sup>st</sup> Association it's members including cash (just over \$6,000.) transportation, financial, parts, photographs, portraits, flight records and labor.

The professional press release, Privileges of War Books, and portraits were donated to the museum. Texas US congressman, Kevin Brady came to the museum and talked with Ed and I and expressed appreciation for all the 281<sup>st</sup> association and members had done to make this happen. At this writing the tail boom and most cowlings have been painted, in a week or so the cabin will be painted.

We also did media events with Dave Nicholson, Plant City Courier, Amber Jurgenson, Plant City Times and Observer, Winston Spencer, the Huntsville News Item. Judge Charles Wagamon, retired, Huntsville also wrote a very positive letter to the editor.

All photos, news clippings and press releases are being sent to our web master for our web site.

Thank you for all your support, see you in Branson.

Jay Hays the PX Grunt

PS: The PX is open and stocked so contact me for orders. [jhays@haysenterprises.com](mailto:jhays@haysenterprises.com)

### **Museum Acquires Vietnam Era Helicopter for Collection By Tom Ross**

To many people, Bell Corporation's UH-1 Iroquois was just a helicopter. But, to Vietnam era veterans, the UH-1 was a "Huey" and the distinctive whop, whop, whop sound of its spinning blades often meant help had arrived.

For soldiers injured or in trouble on the ground, the sound of the Huey's pounding blades was like hearing a bugle announcing the arrival of a cavalry unit to the rescue. A Huey's arrival over a battlefield could mean evacuation for wounded soldiers, extraction for a Special Forces unit operating deep in enemy territory, or protective air cover for an American unit in a life or death firefight.

The UH-1 was developed and produced in response to the US Army's need for a medical evacuation and utility helicopter in 1952. It first took to the air on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1956 with the original designation of HU-1. It was this designation that led to the "Huey" nickname. Even though the designation was later changed to UH-1, the nickname stuck.

The Huey went into full production in March 1960 and was the first turbine-powered helicopter to enter production for the United States military. The single turboshaft engine provided power for the helicopter's two-bladed main rotor and tail rotor. The Huey would serve as a military workhorse for many years.

Bandit 113, official designation UH-1 #66-17113, served with the 281<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam. It was one of approximately 7,000 Hueys to see service during the Vietnam War. This

particular helicopter played a key roll in countless missions as it was piloted and crewed by a courageous and distinguished group of men during its military service.

When NVA (North Vietnamese Army) and VC (Viet Cong) units ambushed a supply train on route from Cam Rahn Bay to Nha Trang, Bandit 113 was immediately dispatched from a pad at its 281<sup>st</sup> base. Within minutes of the explosion that derailed the train, 113 boldly made pass after pass over the derailment to intimidate enemy soldiers that were attempting to loot the train of its military cargo. Like a mighty guardian angel, Bandit 113 provided protection for the train and its crew until South Vietnamese soldiers with their US advisors from a nearby Special Forces camp could move in and secure the area.

In March of 1968, Bandit 113 became involved in a ferocious battle with enemy units while flying in support of an American ground unit in the notorious A Shau Valley. As 113 flew in and out of the battle with all four of its M60 machine guns blazing, it was met with a hail of incoming enemy fire marked by green enemy tracer rounds pouring in from multiple ground locations. At different times during the intense fight, other 281<sup>st</sup> Hueys were shot down from both in front of and behind Bandit 113. On that day, Bandit 113 was the only ship of twelve to remain flyable after the fight had ended.

Bandit 113 was on a single aircraft combat-support mission when the pilot and crew overheard a radio transmission between a ground unit and a Medi-Vac (Medical Evacuation) helicopter. The ground unit had suffered casualties during an ongoing battle with an enemy unit that was still believed to be in the area. Concerned that the area was not secure the Medi-Vac pilot was reluctant to land and pick up the wounded until he was assured the landing zone was secured.

Trained and experienced at landing in “hot” LZs and knowing that the lives of injured soldiers could depend on a quick evacuation, the pilot of 113 suggested to the Medi-Vac helicopter that 113 make the pick-up. Without further conversation Bandit 113 prepared its weapons for a potential combat assault and immediately moved in over the ground unit’s position, landed, picked up the wounded soldiers and flew them directly to the nearest medical facility.

Not all of Bandit 113’s missions were combat related. During a documented intrusion into enemy territory, Bandit 113 served as the lead ship for a daring rescue mission. Risking their own lives, pilots and crews of the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC first delivered Vietnamese soldiers and their American Special Forces advisors into rugged mountainous terrain in an attempt to rescue mountain villagers held hostage. Then, 113 led the 281<sup>st</sup> back to the mountainside to extract village families and fly them to safety and their first taste of freedom in years.

Later, after all the villagers had been flown to safety, the American Special Forces mission commander along with two other American advisors and a handful of Vietnamese soldiers became stranded in the mountains when thick clouds and rain closed in on the area. Refusing to leave the men in such a dangerous area on their own, the pilot of 113 and his crew along with two other Hueys and crews once again took to the air. Again risking their own lives and against regulations, Bandit 113 guided the flight towards the mountains in near zero visibility conditions to rescue the stranded ground unit.

The story of this mission, dubbed “Rescue in the Valley of the Tigers”, aired on the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite in August of 1968. In ending his report on the rescue mission, CBS reporter, David Culhane, closed by saying, “This is a rare occurrence in this war, an act designed to give life and freedom in a place and time noted mainly for death and destruction.”

The rescue mission and countless other missions similar to those described above have ensured Bandit 113 and the other ships of the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC and, more importantly, the men who flew in them a well-deserved and respected place in history. In 2009, the 281<sup>st</sup> was honored with a memorial at the Airborne & Special Operations Museum at Fort Bragg. This unique and trail blazing unit was recognized and cited as the first United States Special Operations helicopter unit.

There are many people, military and civilians, who quite literally owe their lives to the courage and bold actions of the men who flew and served in UH-1 Hueys such as Bandit 113.

Tom Ross

Author

“Rescue in the Valley of the Tigers”



## ***A reminder from Jeff Murray.....***

From: Jeff Murray  
Sent: Wednesday, May 07, 2014  
To: Chat; HQ\_281AHC@yahoo.com  
Subject: **A Day To Remember**

Just a short reminder that on this day in 1968 UH-1C 64-14172 was shot down with four Intruders on board: WO1's Tom Condrey and Jim Dayton were the pilots; SP4 Bob Jenne was the gunner, SGT Danny Jurecko the Crew Chief. They are still over there. I never knew them but I can't forget them. That's something to ponder as Mother's Day approaches. - Jeff

## ***From the Editor.....***

That's it for Newsletter #53. The email version will go out immediately followed by the snail-mail. A reminder to all; start your planning or finalize for our gathering in September at Branson, MO. Branson is a different kettle of fish from St Louis. More family oriented, loads of down home eateries, lots of great shows, and of course, the annual gathering of the greatest guys and gals on earth.... The 281<sup>st</sup> AHC Association! Keep an eye out on the Website Bulletin Board for announcements and updates.

On another note, the PX will shortly be offering short (\$44) & long (\$46) sleeved denim shirts, polo shirts (\$33), and T-shirts (\$15). XX and XXX sizes will be approx two bucks more.

The shirts will be embroidered with the following logo of your choice.



**.... "SEE YOU IN BRANSON" ....**

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***"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**

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