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**281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER
COMPANY ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER**

No. 85



The last of the best. Intruders at the 2023 reunion in the Air Force National Museum

THE LAST REUNION by Jeff Murray, President

I should have prepared a speech for the closing dinner, but to be frank I still haven't come to terms with the end of reunions, and some of the guys (and gals) I would have talked about weren't there, and some I should have talked about I would have left out. I went to Texas A&M and still keep in touch with classmates via reunions and football games and they are in awe of the 281st AHC Association. With good reason. You guys are special, I have the reunion picture we took at the museum hanging beside my computer. Never forget. Also, I am friends with a pilot from the 192nd AHC out of Phan Thiet, they were in our battalion and attended 2 of our joint reunions in St Louis, they have extended an invitation to their next (as yet unscheduled) reunion and Bain and I will put out more details as they become available. Thank you guys for coming year after year, thank you for the jobs you did while I was over there, it wasn't really until I came home from Vietnam that I realized how well the 281st functioned and how many important jobs were done in order to help us accomplish the mission. I live in Ft Worth and have 3 empty bedrooms if anyone happens to be in the AO.

VA AWARENESS by Jeff Murray, President

Most of us have used the VA in some form or fashion in the past. If you haven't or have experienced problems, as I am sure most of us have, let me know. I'm no expert by any means but I will gladly try and get each of you in touch with someone who can help. The VA has their way of doing things, it's frustrating at times and also very rewarding at times. You all have my email, send me your concerns and as a group we can try to solve your problem.

YOUR ASSOCIATION CHAIN IS ACTIVE AND UNBROKEN

It feels like years ago that we got together to attempt to start our own association. None of the existing organizations appeared to meet our needs or wanted all of us. One did not want the pilots, and one did not want the crewchiefs and support guys. We sincerely believed that we were an equal team, and we still do so today! Intruders like Gary Stagman (Mr. 281st) and Jay Hayes (The King of 113) bought into our plan and away we went, and we are still going. Strong. Perhaps not as strong as in past times, but we are still here for you. A year ago we lost Jay, and a few weeks ago Gary

left us. I want you to know that we would not have been successful without the building blocks that these two individuals and the many other crew and support Intruders that contributed, and there are insufficient words to express our appreciation. We still have a strong leadership team that will never give up on us. Jeff Murray is our President for life, and Bain Black has a new project each week. He is now working on obtaining a permanent home for the memorabilia you have donated and the magnificent books that Will McCollum has written about our service in the 281st. Our Scholarship program keeps growing under the leadership of Jim and Joan Baker and it looks like we will be in business for several years to come. Our magnificent treasurer, Walt Pikul CPA, keeps finding money to support our activities. And our resident scribe, Dean Roesner does a super job in keeping us informed. He is still looking for your stories to put in the newsletters, by the way.

There are at least three former Intruder CO's still kicking. Two of them are older than me and I often wonder how I have made it all these years?? However, I believe that you guys have done a great job of keeping us alive, and I know that I speak for them also when I say that we appreciate each of you. You were always above the best of the best, and truly the wind beneath our wings. Know that we are still here for you, just moving a bit slower. Love to hear from you, Clear Left, Clear Right, Jack Mayhew 67-68, intruder06@me.com, 410-721-1675

A SPECIAL THANK YOU from the 281st AHC

For the last several years, David Hartong has been the “unofficial official” photographer at our reunions. He first started doing it as a favor to Jay Hays, his brother-in-law, but with Jay’s passing, he has continued doing it for us. Although a military veteran, he was never “in” the 281st, but he has been a very good and dependable honorary member for many years now. After every reunion, he provides a complete photographic record of all our events, side trips, and banquets to the association for use in the newsletters and web site, and all at no cost to us. So we both thank you and salute you David, our 281st photographer extraordinaire.

REUNION COMMITTEE CHAIR: Bain Black

Hello Again Intruders, Family and Friends. Our last formal reunion in Dayton, OH was a huge success. We saw many old friends that were AWOL the last couple of years.

Our day at the national AF Museum included lunch and our memorial service for the 53 MIA/KIA Intruders. They will never be forgotten.

As we’ve discussed previously, our reunion attendance has been declining and there are fewer people who are physically able to do the work required to execute a reunion. That being said, there are many Intruders who value the camaraderie displayed when we gather as a group. So, the plan is to have get-togethers requiring less planning and work...no PX, no banquets, etc. We can have more than one meeting in different parts of the country. If you have something in mind, let me or Jeff Murray know. For instance, if you live in AZ or FL you could invite Intruders to town during Spring Baseball Training. Just locate a reasonably priced hotel near the ballpark. We will put the word out on the Chat and HQ net as well as the next newsletter. Nothing in your town such as baseball? Just put together a plan of your choosing. Good food, good drink and good fellowship is all that is required.

Dean asks us for stories and memories for the NL. Like most of you, I have many that pop in and out of the memory bank. Ha. Do you recall who said, “Thanks for the memories?” It was Bob Hope. Were any of you with me in the Wolf Pack fire team covering Bob Hope and Ann Margaret around Christmas 1968? We saw the show from a distance, but most of our attention was looking around the



2023 Intruder of the Year Jeff Murray (left), award presented by Wes Schuster 2022 IOTY

perimeter at Cam Ranh Bay, watching for rocket or mortar fire as well as any enemy infiltrators. It was an honor to fly cover for The Bob Hope Show! All of us have memories of arrival and early days with the 281st. My first impression flying in the back of a D model from Dong Ba Thin and 10th CAB Hqs was...what a gorgeous country. The valley we flew through to arrive at Nha Trang was so lush and green. The road we followed looked so peaceful and the beach was spectacular. It did not seem like a war zone. I would soon find out otherwise.

I was welcomed by MAJ Ruskauf, our CO. He was pleasant and gave the impression expected of a career officer. I knew that I could work for him, for sure. I was shown to the Villa downtown, where commissions and a few warrants lived with the Delta officers. Again this did not seem like a war zone, but this would change.

Only a few days later the unit received word that a Wolf Pack aircraft had been shot down and the crew died in the crash. The atmosphere changed from light to dark. The entire crew was liked by every man in the 281st. It was a very sad time.

Here are a few other early memories...the SF club usually had great food, even weekly steak and lobster. One evening as I walked to dinner I noticed an unusual odor in the air. Damn, the meat loaf was terrible. I ate a couple of bites and pushed it aside. The next day, we had the worst hamburgers I had ever eaten...and the club was almost empty. The third day in a row few people were in the club and the same odor was in the air. The spaghetti with meat sauce was awful. I asked why the food was suddenly so bad and I learned why. The mess was using their allotment of mutton and they used it in anything calling for ground beef, only they substituted mutton. For those of you who do not know what mutton is, it is mature lamb. I do not eat lamb to this very day! Another food surprise was the ice cream stand that served Dairy Queen. We could eat or drink anything we wanted because we burned so many calories in a day that we would not gain weight. When on operations with Delta, the food was still unbelievably good. Of course we had huge appetites, except for lamb.

In closing, please remember the 5 members of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) who lost their lives during a training mission over the Mediterranean. May they Rest In Peace. I hope to see you in 2024.

MY TURN by Brent Gourley, pilot 66-67

August, 1967. My turn in the barrel to be the Korean CG's personal pilot for a month. I'm not sure that choice was close to being random, but it was ok by me. I can't get in trouble if otherwise occupied. So, we stood by mostly for a month, with occasional missions to take the Korean boss man somewhere, along with his personal staff. Only one mission stands out. It may be the same mission that resulted in my collection of A-1E photos in my photo page. VNAF had a place on NhaTrang AFB. It's wet season along the coast. The weather in Nam alternates every six months or so. Wet along the coast, or wet in the mountains. Along the coast means the weather west of the beach could be horrid with "clear, blue and twenty-two" east of the beach. On one such day we received a mission to pick up the man across the runway at the 201st ramp. He had to go to a place just west of Qui Nhon. The weather was as described; the trip north was easy. The little hop west was, as the Germans describe cloudy conditions, Wollkich: Woolly.

We were sort of on top west bound from Qui Nhon, or maybe in and out. The rocks that poked thru allowed some semblance of navigation. Maybe I had been there before, but the surrounding terrain became identifiable thru the gaps in the clouds. The resulting approach reminds me of the "tactical" we used in various places, as I remember from the activities in or near the A Shau Valley when I made that first approach to rescue Buddha Hood and Leroy. So, a hard bank, tight spiral down thru the clouds, rolling out on very short final to the helipad at some Korean installation. They would not have known we were coming until the very last rollout. Upon touchdown, a Korean 2LT aide to the big man lost face by jumping out of the aircraft and losing his Kimchi right there on the pad. I've tried to be informative and humorous somewhat here; but I reckon that poor LT is still in perdition for getting his face all over his shoes.

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS by Jim Baker, Chairman

I want to convey some important information to anyone considering including the Scholarship Fund in your estate plans. Those of you who attended our recent reunion in Dayton may remember the announcement that the Scholarship Fund had received a very nice donation from the estate of Fred Mentzer and his wife Karen. Part of their donation was from an IRA, and because of an issue with the

beneficiary designation, it has taken many months (and a lot of time on the part of Walt Pikul) to have the money released and transferred to the Scholarship Fund. Our Scholarship Fund is a separate entity from the 281st AHC Association. The two are incorporated separately, and the Scholarship Fund is also designated a 501 (C) (3) corporation under the Internal Revenue Code. The bottom line is if you plan to donate money from an IRA or insurance policy, your beneficiary designation is important. It can't be the "281st AHC Association, Inc." or the "281st Scholarship Fund" or something close. The correct name is the: "**281st AHC Memorial Scholarship Fund**" and it must be exact.

Even if you have a will, **when a retirement account or insurance policy has a named beneficiary, the will is irrelevant. The beneficiary takes precedence.** Remember, not using the correct name will probably create a lot of extra work, and may significantly delay our receiving your donation. Contact Walt Pikul or me with any questions.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO....
by Thomas Lundrigan, Pilot 68-69

I was just about to take off on a mission. I called the tower for clearance and was told to hold for a Chinook that was coming in to sling load a Huey to a maintenance depot for repairs. So I opened my door to let some air in and proceeded to watch the show. The Chinook landed, they hooked the sling from the Huey mast to the Chinook hook. He went to a hover over the Huey, lifted it and called for takeoff. When he took off, he just dumped the nose of his aircraft as if it was a normal take off without a load. The Chinook went forward, the Huey didn't. Then the Huey swung forward, then back, then forward etc. The Chinook punched off the load which came crashing to the ground. After the Chinook pilot gained control of his aircraft, he called the tower and asked "Is there anything else I can take?". I nearly fell out of my aircraft laughing. In retrospect, why not. We have all done the same thing. At the end of a mission, we would head back to wherever we were based at the time. We'd get fuel and call the tower wanting to know if there was something or someone going to our destination. No sense in going empty. But the situation and just the way the Chinook pilot said it, I cracked up. I chuckled all day long thinking about it.



Marshal "Hawk" Hawkins (left) and Jeff Murray (right) with Darryl Stevens, former 281st CO, at his wife's (Joanie) service, December 2022.

QUILTS of VALOR & PLACE of HONOR



Jim Torbert



Jim Rogers



Dave Devere



Rylee McCollum

Rylee was a cousin of Will McCollum and was killed in the blast at the gate in Afghanistan during the evacuation. This memorial was spotted by Jack Interstein on Richmond Ave, Staten Island NYC.



Are War Memorials Important? by Wes Schuster

Have you stopped and read the inscription on a monument lately? Perhaps it was dedicated to a historic event, or it is at the site of something we did not realize took place there. While it may have piqued your interest, will you remember it a year from now, five years from now? Probably not. War memorials can be different. Have you noticed the more recent ones are inscribed with names? Names of real people. People we knew. That hits you in the gut. Those memorials don't let you forget. Recently I visited my hometown, Gloucester, Massachusetts. It is one of the oldest small cities in the country. It was originally part of the Mass Bay Colony, established in 1623 on a harbor, well suited to protect fishing vessels. The harbor has a beautiful boulevard today. At one end of the boulevard is a well landscaped garden and a new memorial dedicated to 11 men who died in Vietnam. I knew some of those 11 men. When I read their names, they bring back vivid memories of what they looked like, their personalities and the things we did together. I'm sure their families and relatives also feel that memorial is important. It gives them solace that their loved ones have been honored. To the public, this war memorial is a statement of our city's values. The community has not forgotten these men. They were

important. Memorializing people is so much more important than just an event. That is why the Vietnam Veterans Memorial "The Wall" is iconic. The names on the Wall were people we knew. We remember the 58,276 who died for our country. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the most visited memorial on the National Mall attracting more than 5 million people each year. The memorials in Gloucester and Washington D.C. remind us of these men. These war memorials are important.

THESE OLD MEN

Now we stand behind old men's faces, and speak of forgotten times and places. So bent are those who wouldn't break, who did fearsome things with lives at stake. Their shadows sharp and darker then, now fading away are these old men. But none can steal the legends bold, not thieves nor liars nor growing old. To never weave excuses that some men must, but to stand with men who earned our trust. And speak of what we did back then, before we became these old men.

A SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT THANK YOU

Dear 281st AHC, thank you very much for the scholarship. It is my honor to receive this award in honor of SSG Robert Earle Jenne. This 281st AHC Memorial Scholarship will help as I attend Montana State University studying Agriculture Business. Thank You, Lance Rutledge (grandson of John Korsbeck)

OBITUARIES

Marge Kaufman, wife of Norm Kaufman, 2nd Platoon (Bandits) died on 9/6/23.

Lawrence Harris

Served in Maintenance
6-66 to 5-67



7-12-44 to 10-2-23

Frankie Esquilin

Served in 3rd Platoon
“Wolf Pack” as a Crew Chief
67 to 68



1-2-48 to 9-13-23

Earl Roak

Served in 2nd Platoon
“Bandits” as a Crew Chief
69 to 70



11-6-45 to 8-11-23

Jackie Keele

Served in 3rd Platoon
“Wolf Pack” as a Pilot
1969



1-8-37 to 7/17/23

Alan “Al” Kruck

Served in Motor Pool/POL
and as a driver for 281st CO
69 to 70



1-31-49 to 6-19-23

George Little

Served in 281st
as Commanding Officer
“Intruder 06”
8-69 to 1-70



12-17-34 to 1-12-23

Virgle Samples

Served in 3rd Platoon
“Wolf Pack” as a Pilot
and as Maintenance
Officer
66 to 67



8-27-38 to 12-28-22

Gary Stagman

Served in 1st, 2nd, & 3rd
Platoons as a Crew Chief
& in Maintenance Platoon
as Maintenance Sergeant.
1-66 to 12-70
Served in 281st AHC
Reunion Association as a
Recruiter Extraordinaire



3-29-44 to 9-9-23

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