



July
2020

281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER
COMPANY ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

No. 75

IT'S A DIFFERENT WORLD by Wes Schuster,

President Wow, what a year 2020 is becoming! One thing for sure is that the history books will highlight this year as the year that many things changed. This is the year we stopped shaking hands, wore face masks and didn't travel far. It has touched us all. Unfortunately, it has set the 281st AHC Association reunion schedule into hibernation. We were looking forward to a great venue in New Orleans at the WWII museum, a boat ride on a PT boat and the Krewe of Boo parade. However, because of all the hard work in planning, the groundwork is in place for this same event in 2022. Let's hope by 2021 we return to some state of normalcy and we all meet at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia. The organization is as active as ever in all other respects. In May we had our Executive Board meeting. It was neat to see old friends on Zoom and conduct all the functions necessary to keep our association healthy and viable. Printed in this edition of our newsletter is our report on finance, elections, our scholarship committee, and membership. If you have any questions about our association, please send me an email. We want you to stay informed and in the loop. Speaking of Zoom, have you tried it? It's a great way to chat with a friend or a group of friends. Families are using it, as well as businesses. If you chat for 40 minutes or less, it doesn't cost you anything and it is a lot better than emails. So, if you were looking forward to seeing some old buddies at the reunion this year, you might consider calling them up on Zoom and see how they are doing. If you aren't into communicating with your computer, pick up the phone. If you're looking for your buddy's phone number go to the HQ281AHC@groups.io website. Look at the left-

hand column and hit "Files". You will find the Master Roster with all the known addresses and phone numbers. Whatever you do, stay in contact and plan to get together next year.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS by Jeff Murray

As Vice President one of my duties is to supervise the election of officers. Since we are having no formal reunion this year we will also not be holding a formal member meeting so I propose we simply keep all the current officers in their current jobs thru 2021 and we can revisit elections in Savannah. Now if anyone objects and feels an urgent need to run for a position feel free to let me know, I'm an accommodating kind of guy. We do have more than a few Intruders working on the Savannah reunion as well as the follow-on New Orleans trip in 2022, and we also have two new reunion committee members, Jay Hendrix and Neil Sprague, and believe me, the Reunion Committee always welcomes new workers.



Wolf Pack doing what it did best, giving very low and close gun support! (In reality, sighting in on a hill while sitting on the ground.)

**THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE US,
OUR WWII VETERANS**

Vic's close relatives by Victor L. Rose Jr.

My father's three brothers also served during the war (Dad related to me that my Grandmother's hair was dark brown in early 1942 and by the war's end her hair had turned pure white): Herman was an aviation cadet, who was medically discharged due to a childhood injury. Rexford served in the Pacific Theater as a yeoman aboard a Navy LaSalle-class transport. George was a B-17 tail gunner who flew 30 combat missions with the 8th Air Force. My wife's father, William Jeffreys, was a Navy corpsman who served on a transport ship in the Atlantic.

Victor L. Rose by Victor L. Rose Jr.

My father, Vick Rose, enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Forces in April 1942, and trained as a machine gunner at Tyndall Field near Panama City, then at Hendricks Field outside of Sebring, and then at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. He was then assigned to a B-17E bomber and became an aerial gunner. The crew flew to Florida, got a new B17F and headed east across the Atlantic to the China/Burma-India theater. On the way, they were reassigned to North Africa and then diverted enroute to the 8th AF in England where they joined the 306th Bomb Group. He flew 25 combat missions as a ball turret gunner, was awarded the DFC, Purple Heart (1OLC), and got credit for shooting down a FW-190. He then became a gunnery instructor in England, returned to the U.S., got married, trained new gunners in the States, and then volunteered to return to combat flying. He became a tail gunner on B-29's and flew 29 missions against Japan in the 29th Bomb Group. Most of the missions were at low altitude at night and the resulting fires below caused such severe thermals that the plane almost flipped over on two missions. He flew his last mission on August 15, and then came home by ship in October, 1945.



Victor Rose - 1942

A. F. Johnston by Jerry Johnston

My dad served in the USMC in various positions in the 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. Originally sent to Iceland to prevent a Nazi invasion of that country, he then was sent to the Pacific and fought on Guadalcanal, Tarawa and Saipan. In Iceland he had a radio operator named Leon Uris. They worked together well and Leon stayed as his RTO through all of the combat until Leon came down with malaria on Saipan and was sent back to the States. This was years before Leon wrote many books, one of which, Exodus, was later made into a movie.



A twice wounded A. F. Johnston (seated, with cane) and his RTO operator Leon Uris (seated, bottom right) on Saipan.



A painting of Joe Biltzke of WWII in A-20's

BUBBA THE LION by a Special Forces Soldier

We got him in Laos after his mom tramped on a land mine. He was only two days old, but I had him in my jungle jacket wrapped in a towel and when we were extracted we fed him milk and got him on his way. He did well because he got much larger than Asian Tigers usually grew to.

His weakness was real beer (he had two cans a day) which he slurped down, went to a corner of the hooch, rolled on his back, showed his junk and snored like the last day! If the bubster wanted to get in your bunk with you, you just rolled over and dealt with it. It's such a shame so many tigers were killed over there because most were just killed for sport and not in human defense.

When we cycled out, the question was what the hell to do with Bubba? He couldn't survive because he only knew SOG, SF, Seals etc.

Here is where we got creative. We had access to things the normal military didn't. So we got on the phone and a call went out to a research zoo in Sidney Australia. We asked them if they wanted a free tiger. When the lady at the other end realized we were for real, she excitedly said yes, but how do we get him? I don't want to reference Air America, but we somehow flew the bubster to his new home and I got off the airplane with him walking beside me like a dog on a leash. They all went nuts when he walked to the lady and heeled by her side looking at her for instructions.

He must have had a very good time and life there because he sired tons of babies. When I was back in Sidney in 1987, I saw a bronze plaque telling about the SF Tiger that came to them in 1969 and made lotsa great baby tigers.

That part of my life is gone, like Bubba who lasted to '85, but every time I hear a Tiger make those special noises, my head and heart goes back to a tiny little baby we found in Laos in 1968. God I miss him! BTW, the Bubster never lived in a cage. He was always shown love from a bunch of very dangerous men whose hearts melted when they met him. To discipline him you grabbed a handful of hair and flesh on his shoulder and simply said no. He never retaliated he just complied. When I said he never lived in a cage, the decision about the zoo where he ended up was a research zoo that was very excited because of gene diversity. It also had the new concept of no animals in cages. People were the ones in cages or behind glass.



It took a bit for him to get back to being a tiger, but after he figured out the male/female thing, nature took its course and he was off to the races and made a bunch of tiger babies who are in zoos around the world. God Bless him, to my knowledge he was the only Special Forces tiger in the history books.

An interesting side note is that SF and MACV were in many ways involved with the CIA. The coats and ties back in Langley, VA couldn't understand how our intel was so accurate. Picture an NVA prisoner strapped into a chair and questioned. Also picture the prisoner telling us in multiple languages to go F**K ourselves. So a hood goes back on and the prisoner was told to spill the beans or we were going to feed the guy to our tiger. Of course, they all laughed their asses off and said we were crazy. So, enter the Bubster and have his head about two feet from the prisoner, pull the hood off at the same time I would pinch the back of Bubbas neck. He roared in the prisoner's face with his extremely nasty tiger breath and the prisoner got sick or worse while he sang like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

God I miss that stuff. BTW, our intel was so accurate that the pencil necks back in Langley were amazed, and they never did find out why.

And now (as Paul Harvey would have said), for the rest of the story, thanks to Jack Mayhew and his contacts.

There were three very young Tiger Cubs, who were left on their own when their mother stepped on a land mine in Laos. One of the cubs, a male, was raised by a member of SOG and was given to the Zoo in Australia. One was a Female and was raised by Jay Graves, who at the time was a member of the MIKE force in Nha Trang. His tiger, who grew to be 11' 6"

long was given to a zoo in Atlanta (also flown there by Air America) when Jay transferred to Project Delta. Jay's Tiger lived with him in the Mike Force compound, and was named "Clyde" after Clyde Sincere, who was the Mike Force commander. One of Jay's favorite tricks was to put "Clyde" in the passenger seat of his jeep, chained to the steering wheel column, and drive around Nha Trang. It was Jay's tiger that I recall seeing. Jay and David Bittle, our Wolf Pack Platoon Sergeant, were running mates and when Jay joined Delta he also became a Wolf Pack Door Gunner. When he was not on a Delta recon mission he was flying with the WP. The third Tiger was probably raised by a member of the Mike Force located near Cam Ranh Bay, as I found out that one was seen living in a cage, at that location.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT, Wes Schuster

One of the requirements in our By-Laws is for the Executive Board to meet face to face once a year. We did that recently using Zoom, the internet meeting venue.

As you can see in our Executive Board Meeting minutes, we have been active in planning reunions, assisting a family of recently departed member, running our scholarship program, publishing newsletters and selling PX items. While the pandemic is playing havoc on our daily lives the 281st Association is as strong and viable as ever. If you have any questions about the status of anything in our association, send me an email.

It does cost us money to run our association. We request you keep your membership in good standing and support the association by paying your annual dues as soon as you can.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES, May 11, 2020

The Zoom meeting was opened by President Wes Schuster at 11:00 EDT.

The 2019 minutes were approved.

Financial: Fred Beck reported that the reunion lost \$4,634. For the year the association show a Net Income of \$91.00. The Association has \$9,087 in cash and a \$21,169 CD. The PX inventory has been updated to show a corrected inventory value.

VP: Jeff Murray announced two new members to the Reunion Committee. They are Neil Sprague and Jay Hendrix. Unless something changes, there will be no elections this year.

Reunion: Bain Black stated that the 2020 reunion for New Orleans has been cancelled. The Association did not incur any cancellation liability. The next reunions will be in Savannah, GA in 2021 and in New Orleans in 2022.

Scholarship: Jim Baker reported that we currently have four students on scholarship. We did lose one student due to poor academic performance. We currently have two new applications and are waiting on one more application. We have 17 semesters of obligation remaining for a total of \$21,250 and the Scholarship Fund is in sound financial shape.

Remembrance: Jack Mayhew said that we have lost one member, James E Kerns, 483rd/281st 4/66-7/67, since the last reunion. Jack is arranging an honor guard for Jim's funeral and will present a flag case to his family. Frank Becker is still handling the flag cases.

PX: Jay Hays said that we had \$7,455 in sales at the San Antonio reunion. The cost of the t-shirts for that reunion was \$2,900, which were donated to the Association. He also had sales of \$390 at a Special Ops meeting. There was \$3,357 of in-house sales last year.

Membership: Fred Beck reported 406 members that included 89 DAT. We had 9 new members last year.

Website: Brent Gourley has been making some minor changes to the web page. He did say that the web page is secured.

Newsletter: Dean Roesner is wanting to put pictures of PX items in the next newsletter. Jay Hays said that there are pictures of items on our website.

New Business: Wes is concerned we have not received membership renewals this year. We have ongoing expenses to operate the association and we depend on membership dues to defer those expenses. There will be an article in the next newsletter concerning the collection of annual dues. Meeting was adjourned at 11:40 EDT by Wes Schuster.

Respectfully, Dave Mitchell, Secretary

INTRUDER OF THE YEAR, by Wes Schuster

We are open for nominations for the Intruder Of The Year Award. This award is given to an Association member who sets himself apart from his peers by demonstrating actions that best exemplify the ideals and traditions of the stated goals of the Association. All Association members in "good standing" (hint, have you paid your dues?) shall be eligible for the

IOYA. Members shall submit their nominees name in writing to the Awards Committee Chairman, Frank Becker, along with appropriate justification as to why the nominee deserves the award. Frank can be contacted at febeck2002@yahoo.com or 14115 Pike 9143 Bowling Green, MO 63334.

So please give it some thought now and let Frank know your nominee. Then the awards committee will review your nominations and prepare the traveling plaque for this year's winner. We will announce the award recipient this fall.

FLYIN HIGH IN MY CHOPPER, by Ken Boling

Flyin high in my chopper,
 There were no bullets that could stop her.
 Flyin high in the sky,
 You could laugh while you watch Chuck die.
 Streaming tracers from my gun,
 Put ole Chuck on the run.
 Dusting off Sandsharks was good practice for me,
 It made sinking sampans as easy as one, two, three.
 Flyin high in my chopper,
 Was like nothing could stop her.
 They shot out flak you see,
 Killing my fellow zoomie.
 Now this ain't right,
 Neither by day or by night,
 We still had to fight.
 Flyin high in my chopper,
 Chuck shot my gunner and my chopper you see
 I did my best to save the rest.
 For that high flyin DFC,
 That never was awarded,
 To my high flyin chopper,
 Just me.



FINAL PLANNING by Jeff Murray

As someone with a bit of experience in losing a spouse let me offer some tips. None of us men expect to outlive our spouse, it's the manly thing to go first and leave her the house to sell and your 147 t-shirts to dispose of, but it rarely works that way. So here are some pre-loss-of-spouse tips for your perusal:

Make a will. You may think everything goes to someone but a will is essential. For example, I had to give a copy of my probated will papers to my county in order to re-title our house into my name, and my car too. It's hard to sell a car in two names with only one person around to sign.

DNR papers. If you don't think these are important then wait until a doc asks you what you want to do and your kids all have a conflicting opinion.

Burial or Cremation. Decide and put it in your will because kids will argue with the executor.

Public cemetery or government cemetery. Janie's family has a big plot in Weatherford, she told me to keep her out of that thing and our kids to save her a spot in the DFW Nat'l Cemetery next to me. Talk to your kids and tell them what you want. Public cemeteries may get neglected, national cemeteries not so much. Arlington is filling up.

Know your VA rights and entitlements. Contact your local funeral home and tell them you're a vet. All you have to pay for is the actual preparation, i.e. cremation. Call an 800 # and the VA sets everything up for you. The funeral home can do it all for you as well with a copy of your DD-214. You get a headstone/columbarium marker when either of you go, and they have rules about what goes on there but you may want to fill yours and hers out before you have to. We had a long discussion about Janie's and the VA doesn't budge on their rules.

Finally, make yourself a booklet like Jack emailed out. Write down who you want notified along with the names of your insurance companies, give your kids something easy to do once you're gone. The last thing they need is for you to keel over on a Sunday morning and on Monday your kids are asking each other which funeral home to call, what do we tell the funeral home when we do call, where did dad bank, stuff like that. Stick a DD-214 in your I'm Dead book along with your will and DNR papers. Your kids will appreciate you more if you plan a bit ahead.

LOBO, THE SLICK GUNSHIP

Pilots from an unknown unit parked a D model UH-1 on the 281st ramp and left to never be heard from. The aircraft sat on the ramp for some time before Sgt. Bittle and company took ownership. Once in their possession they proceeded to mount a hand cranked 40 MM grenade launcher and a .50 caliber machine gun. They test fired the systems and committed the aircraft to the next Delta operation where it received a baptism in combat. However, during the next PE (100 hour inspection) it was determined that there were major cracks in the frame caused by the new armament. At that point Lobo went for a swim. The maintenance team rigged the helicopter for transport to the depot and sling loaded it under a Chinook, which took it north over the South China Sea. A few miles out the rigging mysteriously gave way and Lobo went into the sea. What happened? Who Knows? It had nothing to do with the fact that in the U.S. Army, nothing can be turned into a depot (or anywhere else) without the proper paperwork, and an unauthorized and unaccounted for helicopter with no official log book could only result in lots of questions and inquiries that a combat unit would not want to deal with. Ergo, no helicopter, no problems!



Lobo outfitted in all its glory, 40mm Grenade Launcher and .50 cal Ma Deuce machine gun

MY TIME IN THE 281st, by Lee Brewer

Formerly Special Forces and then to Flight School in Jan 67 with graduating class 67-15 in September of 67. I was then assigned to a newly formed Calvary unit at Ft Hood, Texas with further assignment to 4th Inf Div., in Vietnam in July 68. In October 68, Fred Funk and I left the Cav unit for assignment to 281st AHC. Fred and I left the Cav unit under less than desired circumstances as the Commander there was not very wise. (He was relieved of command less

than 2 weeks after we left). Fortunately, I knew the Deputy Commander of 5th Group in Nha Trang and arranged for us to be transferred to the 281st in Oct 68. It took all of 3 days from phone call to orders received for Fred and I to be gone from the 4th Inf Div and assignment to the 281st. Never hurts to have friends in high places. I flew guns (Wolf Pack) and Fred flew lift ships (Rat Pack). I cherish my time with the 281st which set me up for some great assignments for the rest of my military career. I am thankful for the lasting friendships made in the 281st as that was a very special unit with special people serving special people (Special Forces).

I am one of the older wolf packers as I had a year with 5th Group in VN in 64/65 with Det A312 in the Phuoc Vinh area (Bo Mui Hi) and during my 3rd month began a stint with Project Delta (B-52) out of Nha Trang. Mind you I did not occupy an operational slot but was Liaison to MACV for Project Delta in Saigon. Had my own office and reported daily to the Commander of Project Delta whose commander at that time was Major Arthur Strange with SMAJ McGuire as his senior EM. Great group to work for. I later became 5th Group Intelligence Sergeant (last 2 months of my tour) in Nha Trang prior to my stateside assignment to 6th SF Group. I was 32 years of age when I graduated from flight school so got in the game a bit late but probably a bit more mature than my earlier years. It was all a process and learning curve for the first 12 years of my career and the learning extended to my 25th year prior to retirement. I was blessed many times over, perhaps undeserving but thankful for the blessings. Working with 281st members made it all worthwhile. To those of you that I flew with and served with in the 281st, thanks for the memories, you taught me more than you know.

Just a few items that may not be known by Intruders: Fred and I had the same date of rank as Sergeant First Class (E7-s) with Special Forces prior to our entry into flight school. Fred had a total of some 6 years in Vietnam, most of it from 6 month stints from the 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa. Fred was a medic and a very good one as I can personally attest to as I still have a scar from where Fred sewed up a cut on the left side of my face. This was after we were Warrant Officers. Fred and I were roommates both in the 4th Inf Div and 281st AHC. Entering flight school there were 9 of us ex special forces and/or airborne guys that gathered together downtown in

Mineral Wells prior to signing in to the orderly room at 5th WOC. We striped all insignia and decorations from our uniforms prior to signing in and I double timed the group to 5th WOC and we signed in. The cadre were shall I say awe struck as they didn't say anything, just looked sort of befuddled. Fred was the Battalion Commander the first 2 weeks of training, i.e., they caught up with him as being a senior ranking member of the flight group. My command came later in the cycle. The class had one E-8 that entered and promptly quit as he was not able to stand the harassment from the cadre. Phred Sherrill (Special Forces SSG-E6) was in the group that day and graduated with us in September 67. Fast forward to the 1st day of March 1969 when I attempted to put 2.75 inch rockets into an enemy dug in position close to Quin Nhon. It didn't work out too well as I not only didn't get the job done flying the C-Model Hog/Frog but took a AK47 round through the battery compartment that went through my right thigh among other things but nothing critical except the main rotor blade. After spending 8 days in the hospital under the watchful eyes of SMAJ McGuire (the father of the Special Forces McGuire Rig) I was released to return to Nha Trang. Fred came up that afternoon and we, along with SMAJ McGuire, closed the club about 4 the next morning. Early departure got us about 10 miles South before the UH1H engine QUIT. Fred set the aircraft down on a rice paddy dike like a crow lighting on a limb, didn't even get the tail stinger wet. Amazing how quiet it gets when you are sitting in the back seat of a helicopter and the engine quits. Someone brought us another helicopter and retrieved the rice paddy helicopter with a CH47. I was offered an immediate trip home but declined, as I wanted to complete my current tour, and did just that at the end of June 69. Rules were a little loose on returning to flight status and I began flying before the stitches were removed from my thigh. I was in charge of the armament part (weaponry) for the Wolf Pack and wanted to ensure it functioned properly. I think I achieved that. I finally returned to battle ready flight with medical approval before the end of March. An Hoa was next on my list and most of you know that operation. It was my last operation in VN prior to returning to the States.

Another funny one: While Fred Funk and I were with the 4th Inf Div, we made arrangements with the Special Forces "C" Detachment in Pleiku to get a parachute jump on a Saturday. We were stationed at

An Key so it was a relatively short drive for a 3 quarter ton pickup. Six of us went over the night before the early morning jump. The fun part of this is we took a Lieutenant with us that was not airborne qualified. We managed to train him pretty well the night before the jump with PLF;s (Parachute Landing Falls) from the top of the bar. We tail gated a C-130 so a real easy jump. Lt. Petry the guinea pig was pretty quiet during the chute-up, flight to the drop zone and sandwiched between Fred and I for the jump. The jump master asked Pete if he wanted to take one of the sky diving chutes on board and use it after the regular jump. In a pretty squeaky voice he declined the option. Well we made the jump and Lt Petry landed safely and began running around yelling he was "airborne" until the unit commander got hold of him and found out what had happened. Needless to say Fred and I were summoned to the CO's office. After a short but direct a-- chewing we were directed to the door and told to never visit his company again. BTW, that was my last military parachute jump. Quite a memory.



Wes Schuster left, and Lee Brewer 3rd from left, lending their knowledge, advise, and expertise, to the hardworking crew replacing damaged blades.

Addendum by Wes Schuster

My first mission in Wolf Pack was with Lee in the A Shau valley. It was hot and heavy. We ran out of ammo but stayed on station mainly to draw fire and keep close to the ship in the hole. At one point, all we had was my 45 with solid tracers. So what the hell, I stuck it out the window and fired the tracers to make it look like we were firing something. By the way, the hole ship had a wounded SF screaming on the radio that he was hit multiple times and that he was going to die. He was successfully extracted. I tip my hat to whoever was flying that ship.

Addendum by Lee Brewer

Wes, I remember that mission quiet vividly as we were the 2nd aircraft in a 2 aircraft mission. The lead helicopter ran out of ammo and departed the area. At this late date it serves no useful purpose to disclose who the lead aircraft was piloted by. I chose to stay and the door gunners and you provided gun cover for the mission as I simply was not going to leave the hole ship without cover of any kind. In other words, we kind of faked it but it worked. The Hole ship was piloted by Lt. Dave Mitchell who has thanked me more than once for saving his life by staying and doing what we did. You were a serious part of that and I thank you for being with me on that date. BTW that was a 5 man team on the ground of which 3 were killed, one was badly wounded and the other was able to get him on the McGuire rig along with himself and Dave brought them home. Tough day, tough decisions, but worked out. Glad you were with me.



HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

While we are not having a reunion this year, the association continues to have expenses. We still publish a newsletter three times a year, we have member condolences during the year and flag cases we present to the family of members, an annual corporate report we file and PX supplies we purchase to name a few.

Your dues keep the 281st Association whole and viable. Most of us pay our dues with our registration form for the reunion. However, we are asking you to pay your 2020 dues now in lieu of the reunion.

Your continued membership is important and we hope you remain a “**member in good standing**”. Please forward your check for \$25 to:

J. Fred Beck, Membership Chairman
281st AHC Association, Inc.
205 Carey Court
Neenah, WI 54956

PX MERCHANDISE FOR SALE, by Jay Hays

The following items are available through Jay Hays at Jhays@haysenterprises.com. See the website for prices or send an email to Jay to find out prices and availability. Patches, pins, decals, shirts and hats.



WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN, by John Gachich
A LETTER TO BAIN BLACK BY JOHN GACHICH

My name is John Gachich and I was one of the door gunners who served with you in the 281st in '68 and '69. I read your article in the latest newsletter (**Almost the worst day of my life**) and it brought back memories of what might have been, not my worst day, but my last day, and yours. That moment was very, very short, but it was etched in my memory instantly and remains there now.

I was part of your crew on many missions and we always came back in one piece, which is something I, and I'm sure the rest of the guys, appreciate immensely and are very thankful for. And we also made it back in one piece. That also was a good thing.

Back to the reason, I'm writing this. It was late at night, I'm pretty sure most of us were sleeping when the other guys decided we weren't really welcome in their country and decided to lob a few mortars into our base. I do not remember the time of year, but I do recall that one of my crew chiefs, Jerry Kroeck was hit by some of the shrapnel that night. A call went out for flight crews to assemble at their ships and you and I wound up in the same one. You were in the left seat and for whatever reason, I was behind you, not my customary spot, as gunners always sat on the right. I don't remember who the copilot was, nor do I remember if we had a crew chief or not. Everything was in double time mode. You guys fired up the engine and it all seemed fine until you started the takeoff. As the ship came up, you started to move left, a split. The skid caught the edge of the parking pad plank and we tipped left. In a microsecond, you caught it, straightened it out, and we were on our way. There was no time for fear to set in, no time for questions, and no time for pronouncements about someone's parents' marital status.

It was quicker than a blink of an eye, yet it has been seared in my memory all these years. Every so often I get a reminder. We flew many missions, we had some close calls, most of which I don't remember, or choose not to, but this one I'll never forget. Had you not done what you did, I would not be writing this and you would not be receiving it. I guess it just wasn't our time.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN, by Bain Black
A LETTER BACK TO JOHN BY BAIN

John, I have told that story many times. We were receiving heavy incoming mortar fire and our job was to get airborne ASAP to spot the mortars and destroy

the same. We had not even buckled in or put our helmets on. Cranked it and as soon as we reached 6600 RPM started to move...we could get dressed once airborne! Ha!

You are so correct...the right skid caught on the sandbag used to aim the mini-guns into while in the revetments. John, it was dark and I was a bit disoriented when the aircraft snapped. I'm not sure how the blade missed the ground. The aircraft had gone past the point of no return...it took all my strength and a lot of adrenalin to bring it back upright. As it started to go level, I instinctively slammed down the collective in a slightly nose up and still a couple of degrees rolled right. M-60 and ammo cans went tumbling out the door. Not sure if someone...crew chief maybe?...went tumbling out. We collected ourselves, cleaned out our pants, checked that all the flight controls seemed okay (meaning it was just pilot error...mine...that almost crashed us in the revetment. John, if we had not been killed, we would have had very serious injuries. If you recall, the tip of the right skid pointed up at a 45 degree angle when we landed. That was from me slamming down the collective so hard. Damn, those Hueys would take a beatin' and keep on tickin'! We completed the mission and have a tale to tell our grandkids!

One time we did the same thing...run to the flight line to make a quick take-off. Ted Dolloff was in the aircraft just in front of me. He was starting an aircraft that had no tail rotor!! Seriously! Our crew chief ran to tell him and he shut it down before pulling pitch...when of course he would have spun in circles in the revetment.

John, thanks for the memories. I will look at the Christmas picture and hope to see you again. Have you attended reunions? If not, try to come to Gettysburg.

I wrote about Rick Galer in Above the Best. He performed beautifully when the aircraft he was flying caught on fire while hot refueling. Did you witness that by any chance?

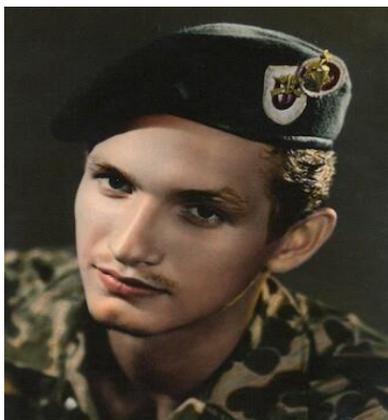
I would love to talk with you, perhaps with the Christmas picture in front of us. I'm ashamed that I cannot recall all the names in the picture. These were my guys and I should never have forgotten the names. They were all heroes on different days. Take care and thanks for reminding me of that night when I could have killed us all with one little mistake. Whew....safe again!

SITTING IN THE BACK, by Bain Black

One day I decided that I wanted to experience shooting the M-60 from the back of a gunship. After all, most crew chiefs and door gunners got to fly up front and get some stick time, so I wanted to experience shooting from the back. Uh, it wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. Flying straight and level and holding the MG out the side was a piece of cake, but that wasn't when fire was most needed. When the gunship made a break from a gun run, that is when we were most vulnerable, and suppressive fire was needed under the aircraft. Well, the M-60, chicken plate, and my skinny frame (50 years ago) were no problem until the end of the gun run; that is when the extra g-forces came into effect. Everything got damn heavy real fast. I now had what I asked for.....the experience. I also had a new appreciation for the work the crew did from the back. Oh, and I was a bit nauseous when we got back. I was glad to get back into the cockpit!

**OBITUARIES****Johnnie Gilreath**

Served as the 1st Platoon (Rat Pack) Commander.
5/69 to 5/70



6/20/43-6/1/20

Jim Kerns

Served in the 483rd Maintenance and as a door gunner.
4/66 to 7/67



8/6/44-3/22/20

William "Bill" Bauer

Served as Flight Operations Officer
8/69 to 4/70



1/17/45-7/10/08

281st AHC Association Contact Information**THE EXECUTIVE BOARD (Elected)**

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TAIL ROTORS

are instinctively drawn toward trees, stumps, rocks, and other solid inanimate objects. While it **may** be possible to ward off this event some of the time, **it cannot**, despite the best efforts of the crew, always be prevented. **It's just what they do!**