



July
2022

281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER
COMPANY ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

No. 81

ATTENTION: THE PENALTY FEE FOR
LATE REGISTRATION HAS BEEN
DROPPED FOR THIS YEARS REUNION

Due to current events, the Executive Board has rescinded the late registration fee.

However, there is still a registration deadline due to the requirements of the hotel and museum, it is Sept. 11

FROM THE PREZ by Jeff Murray

We all know the reunion is almost upon us, everyone needs to realize this may be the last really organized reunion we have and it promises to be a great one.

The Higgins Hotel is right across the street from the WWII Museum which is arguably the finest museum of its type in the world. This alone is reason to show up. Also, we are getting older. Traveling for reunions is not easy, and sadly many of our members have left us, including a few with key positions that make the association function. For this reason future reunions may more likely resemble a "Hey You" call to show up in some city and shoot the bull around a few beers. So fill out the form and send it in, we all need to see each other.

Our PX has a stash of items we need to liquidate, including a lot of books. Everything is on sale, books are going at cost plus postage, order a bunch. Don't take this the wrong way but how cool would it be if at your funeral one of your grandkids could hand out books or caps or Intruder pins to people coming to say farewell. I'm personally buying 5 Wolf Pack pins to hand out to each of the people coming to my funeral. That may be too many but hey, I can't take it with me.

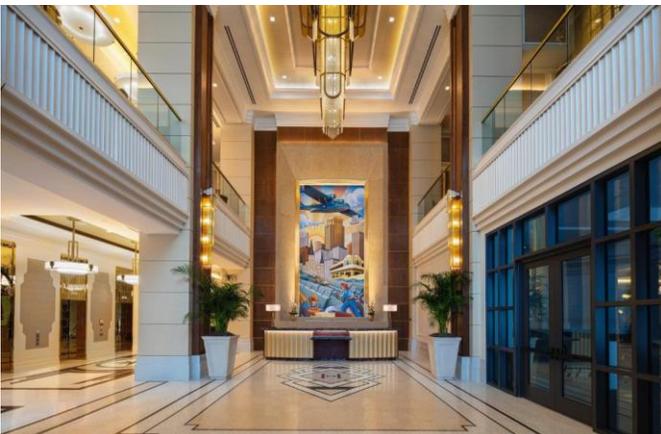
See You In New Orleans.



FORMAL REUNIONS? by Wes Schuster, Past Prez.

Now that I have caught your attention, I want to bring you up to date on our latest plans. When we had an Executive meeting in February, we discussed reunions in the future.

We have become painfully aware of our aging and shrinking membership. We have been losing good buddies and friends. It has affected our ability to staff our association, and it is beginning to limit our ability to run the organization and its various offices.



Back in 2019 we streamlined our organization as we had fewer volunteers. In that year our president, for health reasons, was not able to run our annual meeting at the reunion. In 2021 we lost “Mr. 281st“, Jay Hayes, the PX Grunt as he liked to call himself. We are struggling with the PX, and we will be eliminating it by the end of 2023. Recently we had a scare as our Treasurer and Membership Chairman, Fred Beck, had a stroke. Thank goodness Fred is on the mend. However, this event proved just how thin our resources are. How do you operate without a treasurer and membership chairman? This is especially true when one man, Fred Beck, is doing both jobs. Other important members have had health problems. Jim “Mom” Torbert had a bad fall and is working hard in rehab. Jim, a past president and past scholarship chairman, has always been involved in our planning and has contributed to the functioning of the association. Well, you get the picture, our ranks are thinning.



So, we have come to the conclusion that after our reunion in NOLA, we will have one more formal reunion in 2023 and that will be our last formal reunion. That means we will not be contracting hotels, banquets, collecting dues and registration money. We do want to continue our 281st camaraderie with less formal get togethers. Perhaps we'll gather at a ball game, a resort, or National Park. Any event that you think will keep our spirit and goodwill together will be in the offering. We will keep our web site and newsletter going as long as we have the capability.

We had a great time in NOLA in February planning for this September's reunion. It is a vibrant city with great restaurants and activities. So, if you want to experience one of our best reunions, make it a point to get together at NOLA and visit the WWII museum. By the way, our hotel, the new Higgins

Hotel, is probably the best we have ever booked. Since we contracted the hotel last year, we have an exceptional deal. Don't miss it.



REUNION REPORT by Bain Black, Chairman

Intruders, Family and Friends. The days are quickly passing, and we'll soon be in the fun city of New Orleans, LA!!! At the time I'm writing this submittal for the newsletter, we are below our commitment to the hotel and the WWII Museum for the number of 200 room-nights and 75 for the luncheon buffet respectively. I fully expect that we will surpass the minimums, but we need for you to sign up for the reunion and make your hotel reservations ASAP. During this time of supply chain issues, we want to help the hotel and museum by providing them with headcounts that are as accurate as possible and as soon as possible. This will be one of our very best reunions!!

To Register: Print the form at the end of this newsletter, fill out, make a check, and mail to Fred Beck.

For Higgins Hotel: Contact info is at the top of the registration form. Two queen beds come up automatically. If you prefer a king bed or need help with reservations, call **504-528-1941 and ask for the Group Code AHCCI.**

Handicapped accessibility: Hotel and Museum meet ADA requirements. Museum has 30 wheelchairs for use by attendees. If you are interested in rental of a motorized chair (scooter), go to www.mrwheelchair.com or call 504-834-2810.

I'll close by again asking that everyone send in your completed registration form and make your hotel reservations as soon as you possibly can. Don't miss out on a great reunion at a great venue!!

INCIDENTS I REMEMBER -Working out of An Hoa FOB in November 68, we were putting in a Roadrunner Team at dusk into the mountains to our west. The LZ was literally a golf cup hole in the jungle when viewed from above. We hovered down with just minimum main rotor clearance to the trees at the edge of the clearing, with the crew giving the pilot directions all the way to the ground. On my side, the jungle was a green wall that I could not see through. But on the crew chiefs side, the area was open under the trees and looked like a park under the triple canopy. The team unloaded on his side and started into the jungle, but suddenly stopped and started back. The CE immediately said on the intercom, “the team is coming back and there are little campfires everywhere in there”. We had apparently set down right in the middle of a North Vietnamese Army encampment, and they were in the process of cooking dinner. As the team raced back, the CE opened up with his M60, so I opened up with mine too, even though I couldn’t see anything to shoot at. I just sprayed the edge of the opening from the nose of the aircraft to the tail at ground to waist elevation. Once the team was onboard, we started going up, which was a slow, work your way up with crew directions endeavor, the reverse of what got us down. All this time, both the CE and I were firing the guns continuously along with the Roadrunner team shooting out the left door, and when we got clear of the trees, we made a pedal turn about 90 degrees right and headed away. That gave me a clear line of fire to the jungle hole, so I continued to fire in and at it until we were far enough away that incoming fire wasn’t a threat anymore. When I



looked down at my minigun can of ammo, I only had about 100 rounds left. This was one of the two times on

this Delta that I fired 1900 rounds with one pull of the trigger. We picked up no rounds in the ship, something I’ve always considered amazing. However on reflection, I suspect that we didn’t get any accurate return fire due to our passengers, who all looked like NVA troops. I think that the bad guys

were relaxed and fixing dinner, with their guns against trees somewhere, when they heard and then saw the chopper descending with NVA troops sitting in the doorway, and probably thought “Oh wow, now we have helicopters too”, and even when the Roadrunners started unloading and walking towards them, the NVA weren’t alerted, as it all seemed normal (a little strange, but normal due to the look of the Roadrunners as NVA troops) and they probably weren’t alerted until the Roadrunners ran back to the ship and we started firing. In order to shoot back, they would have had to low crawl to wherever their weapons were stacked, get them and then get to a point where they could fire at us. By that time we were up and gone. So we got away unscathed due to pure luck and lots of outgoing fire. Sometimes it’s better to be lucky than good!

MEMORIES FROM A RAT PACKER by Ron Turner, Pilot, 1970

22 July 1970. The WOPWOP sounds of Hueys filled the air as the flight line and revetments began to fill up when the rest of the Intruders began arriving at Nha Trang. Pilots and crews poured out onto the tarmac with hoots and hollers as they slung their weapons over their shoulders and headed to the quarters to shower up and either crash or head to the club. Over the next day or two, introductions were made on the flight line and in the club. A bunch of the guys who left for the 281st before me were all there to say Hi, and besides them and a few of the other pilots, Hardeman and I were treated like newbies...low-lifes...Friendly New Guys... people that hadn’t seen or survived combat. One of the crew chiefs actually gave us the low down on who was who in the pilot ranks, and we were told to watch out for Frank Welch and David Dean...good guys, great pilots but could get a little testy or crazy at times. After coming back from dinner and a fairly long session in the bar one night, we were sitting in our bunks getting ready for the next day’s adventures when we heard a bunch of commotion, yelling and screaming coming down the hallway. “Where are the newbies? Where are those effin’ Newbs?”

The next thing I remember seeing is an ax head splintering our door and in walks CW2 Dean! He walked up to Hardeman and me, smiles and says, “Newb, you try to kill me out there flying and you ain’t coming back! I’m too short for any effin’ newbie crap!”

Well now. That was an introduction anyone wouldn't forget. After meeting Dean I met this guy from Boston named Frank Welch and we seemed to hit it off pretty well. Frank's from Southie and said he pulled my name from Ops after learning I was from MA. We were scheduled to fly a basic resupply and pickup mission at a base near Cambodia called Duc Lap, so he let me fly as soon as we got outside of the Nha Trang airspace. I listened intently as he went through the who's who and dos & don'ts within the Company while flying. We were almost at Duc Lap when an alert for an emergency extraction call came up on guard. Frank let everyone know where we were. Someone identifying themselves as local airspace controller and said we were the closest aircraft in the air, so he would be vectoring us in to see if we could help. He said a gunship team was being scrambled to join up with us. Frank had taken control of the A/C again and as we approached the vector point, we saw smoke rising from the downed helicopter in a small clearing and were told the crew was in the tree line on the south end of the LZ. The gunships pulled up about the same time we did and made a daisy wheel pattern over the LZ as we made a steep left hand turn to final. Frank told me to remain calm, sit low in the seat, monitor the gauges, and keep my hands 'almost' on the controls so I'd be ready to take control if he got shot. What? Frank, that wasn't too comforting.

Within minutes, the gunner and crew chief started firing their 60s and Frank yells over to sit lower in the armored seat and not to get scared if I started hearing pings and whizzing sounds. Casually Frank says, "Intruder 22 taking fire, taking fire".

Pinging or whizzing doesn't describe the sound of a bullet piercing the helicopter's thin skin. We got into the LZ with both the gunner and crew chief blasting away with their machine guns, momentarily touched ground as the other crew ran out of the woods and jumped into our helo. Frank pushed the nose over and took off low level just over the tops of the trees. After checking with the crew to make sure they were all OK and talking to control, Frank lit up a cigarette and said, "Looks like we're all still in one piece. You've got it, Newb. Fly us home."

While I was surprised I hadn't pissed my pants during the recovery, I sure needed to hit the head. When we got back to Nha Trang, Frank and SP5 Carter, our crew chief, post-flighted the A/C, smiled and casually said, "Welcome to Nam magnet ass.

You took 27 rounds on your first mission. Not bad. Might be a record." I only faintly heard their voices in the background and didn't really care if what they said was true or not. I'm sure it probably wasn't but I'll never know. I was totally focused on the bullet holes in my door ...right behind my seat. I really had to go find a bathroom.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT NEWSLETTER

499 SIGNAL DETACHMENT AVIONICS by Wayne Sellers 68-69 My assignment to the 499th Signal Detachment became known to me while I was still stationed in Germany, with The Equipment Maintenance Group. When I received my orders notification, I was very apprehensive because I had never worked with airborne avionics before. I called my Department of the Army point of contact, CW4 Bill Draper, and asked if I was to be scheduled for Avionics school located at Ft. Rucker, AL or Ft. Gordon, Ga.

Mr. Draper told me that I didn't need any schooling because of my experience with managing eight Communications and Electronics repair facilities and two Ground Avionics Equipment teams which supported the Ground Avionics equipment located in 44 US Army airfields in and around Germany supporting the US Army aviation mission in Europe. His reassurance didn't make me feel any better because I was going to Vietnam.

I was 27 years old with a German born wife and four very young boys. I dropped my family off with her sister's family at Lawton, Ok and reported to Travis AFB, Ca with air transportation to Tan Son Nut then to Cam Ranh Bay. Upon arrival at Cam Ranh Bay, I reported into the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion and finally to the 281st Assault Helicopter Company located in Nha Trang. This was in March 1968. I returned home March 1969 exactly one year to the date. I make the note because soldiers in other units were able to return early.

My first few days found that I was the Detachment Commander designate. I also found that as a Chief Warrant Officer (CW2), I was the most senior warrant in the Company. Everyone else must have just graduated from Flight School because they all were basic Warrant Officer, (W1). Administratively, I was the Det. Cmdr. for the first six months and then the next six months of my tour of duty, I was the Avionics Section Chief under the 281 AHC, Maintenance Section.

I never met my predecessor or my replacement if there ever was one. SSG Engbretson, the Detachment NCOIC provided me an in briefing. I also received an in briefing with the 281 AHC Company, Commander Major Ruskauff. I remember Sp5 Frank Becker, now that I have contacted the 281 AHC Association but none of the other Avionic repairmen's names come to mind until I have found pictures and faces with their names on the back of the pictures which identified all concerned. Every once in a while, faces mentally appear but not their names. Becker was either at the work bench repairing equipment, operating our tactical switchboard or flying gunner with the Slick Ship Platoons. I accepted his role, because it made our support mission much more meaningful. The other avionic technicians spent a great deal of time between equipment repair in the shop or on the flight line with the helicopter crews. My management style was to allow personnel to do their jobs with only minimum guidance. If they did their job, I let them alone, recognized exceptional work and rewarded it. I had superior enlisted technical personnel and never had to provide direction other than minor guidance. They all knew their jobs and knew the importance of the work needed to support the 281 AHC combat mission and the 5th Special Forces Delta Detachment. To the best of my knowledge, Avionic support contributed a 100% avionic availability. I never knew of a helicopter not able to fly because of an avionic or communications issue. I heard a great deal about Tet of 1968 because it all happened just before my arrival at the 281 AHC. I was told that the Gunship Platoon flew flight after flight on a continuous basis to stop the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietcong attacks as they tried to drive through to Nha Trang via the big Buddha and capture the city and the US Airforce airbase. Everyone who wasn't flying was on the flight line revetments and as the gunships would land, these extra personnel would hot refuel the aircraft and reload the machineguns and the rocket pods so the helicopters would only need minimal time on the ground and then return to the NVA/Vietcong attacking fight. Needless to say, the good guys won but only after killing a great deal of the enemy.

While I was assigned to the 281 AHC there were three different commanders; Major Donald Ruskauff, Major Andrew Miller and Major Ellie Lynn. I was more familiar with Major Miller and Major Lynn

than Major Ruskauff, because the first few months in country were nothing more than a blur.

[TO BE CONTINUED NEXT NEWSLETTER](#)

[SCHOLARSHIP REPORT by Jim Baker,](#) [Chairman](#)

When started, the Scholarship Fund was designed to support those children of members planning to attend college. Our circle of potential applicants, however, has now widened to include grandchildren, and nieces and nephews.

Now, for the first time since I have been involved with the Scholarship Fund, we have arrived at a dilemma . . . , we have received more new applications than we can support. Financially, the Fund is in as good a position as it has ever been, but we have been overwhelmed this year by the number of new applications, and there is simply not enough money available to award a scholarship grant to each new applicant. Therefore, we are going to have to limit the number of awards made, or the amount of each, or both. Unfortunately, this means some will be left out through no fault of their own.

All of the applicants appear to be well qualified; deciding who to choose will be a difficult task. There are eight voting members of the Scholarship Committee who decide which students are selected (the Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer do not vote). These people are either members of the Association or wives of members; there are four ladies and four men. The only thing the committee has to go on in evaluating applicants is the application package submitted by each student. Committee members do not know who the students are or who in the Association they are related to. Students are rated based on their achievements, grade point average, and potential for success in higher education as stated on our website.

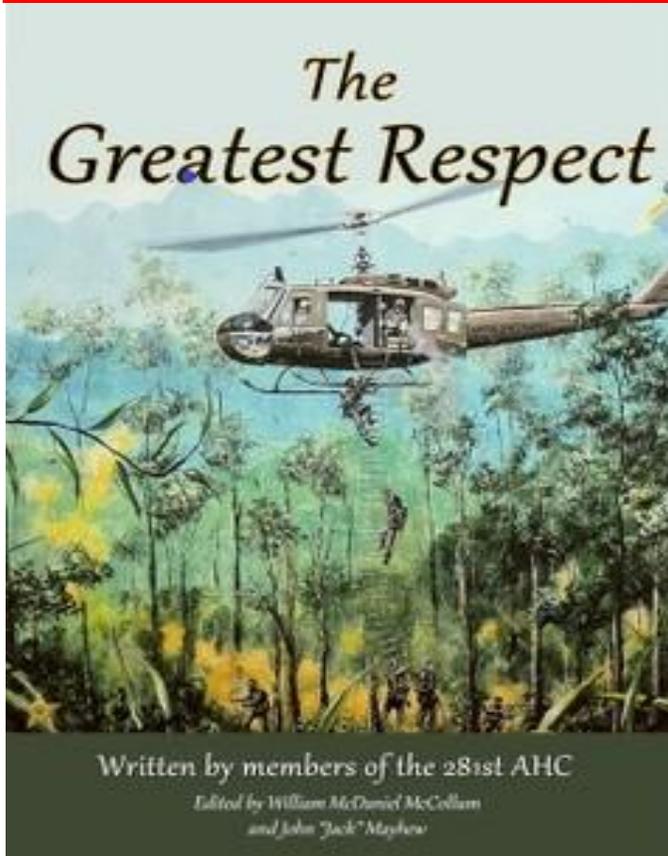
Our Scholarship Committee meeting will be held in August. Each applicant will then be notified of the results, and the names of the new awardees will be announced at the reunion in September.





Where's that crewchief who told me this ship was in flyable condition?

The newest 281st book is now available from the 281st PX at \$20 including shipping



Hays Enterprises.
ATTN: DONNA BALL
1901 BAILEY ROAD
LORDSTOWN, OH 44481

The PX

As most of you know reunions are about to go away. And we have a makeshift PX committee and a "civilian" in charge of mailing and money collecting. In that light we need to empty out the PX inventory ASAP. Get on the web page and order before we shut it down. We will not be able to transport all of our inventory to NOLA, first there is no place to park the trailer and 2nd Doris does not need the hassle. Donna Ball is handling things now, she is a trooper and does great work but she has a regular job. We will bring the stuff that can easily be carried to NOLA...pins, patches, hats maybe...stuff like books are really difficult to move. Order now or forever hold your peace.

Reunion Agenda

Sunday, Sep 18

1:00-10:00PM, Early Bird Regis. Hospitality Room

Monday, Sep 19

9:00-12:00, Reunion Regis. Hospitality Room

2:00-10:00PM, Reunion Regis. Hospitality Room

Tuesday, Sep 20

9:00-9:45, Movie, Beyond All Boundaries, Victory Theater, WWII Museum

9:45-11:30, Free time to visit Museum

11:30-1:00, Lunch-Sandwich Buffet, Stage Door Canteen, WWII Museum

1:00-3:00, Intruder Memorial Service, Stage Door Canteen, WWII Museum

3:00-5:00, Free time to visit Museum
 Hospitality Room open until 11:00 PM

Cash Bar: Beer and Wine

Wednesday, Sep 21

9:00-10:00, EB Meeting

10:00-11:00, Scholarship Meeting

11:00-12:00, General Membership Meeting

Afternoon on your own

Hospitality Suite Closes at 3:00PM

6:00-6:45, Cash Bar Open

6:45-9:30, Buffet Dinner

Thursday, Sep 22, Hotel Checkout

Note: There is no formal Ladies' Brunch on Wednesday, but there is plenty of room in the restaurant for you to gather as a group for breakfast ordered off the menu. We will ask for an area that will accommodate 25-30 at 9:00. Ladies, let them know at the 281st registration desk if you want to join the group for breakfast.

The aircraft limits are only there in case there is another flight by that particular aircraft. If subsequent flights do not appear likely, there are no limits.

OBITUARIES

Walt Stobe

Served in 3rd Platoon (Wolf Pack) as a Pilot 4-69 to 3-70



12-9-47 to 5-28-22

Bill Helpingstein

Served in Maintenance as a Team Leader 1-68 to 3-69



11-6-45 to 5-25-22

Harry Downs

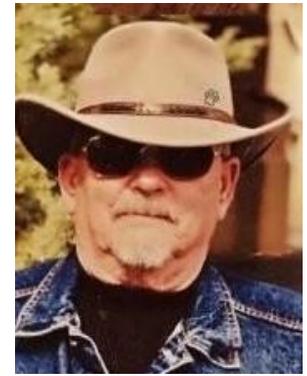
Served in Maintenance as a Team Leader 12-67 to 11-68



5-12-44 to 5-15-22

Robert Heh

Served in 2nd Platoon (Bandits) as a Pilot 12-67 to 12-68



7-14-47 to 5-14-22

James Ghezzi, Jr.

Served in Hdqtrs. Platoon as a Finance Clerk 1-68 to 10-68



11-19-43 to 8-11-15

Denise Ghezzi, wife of James Ghezzi, Headquarters 1970, died on 1/9/19.

281st AHC Association Contact Information

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD (Elected)

Jeff Murray, President Tamu73@sbcglobal.net
 George Dossett, V Pres. georgedossett@att.net
 Dave Mitchell, Secretary djmitch0470@gmail.com
 Fred Beck, Treasurer Fred281st@outlook.com
 Bain Black, Reunion Chair kbainblack@gmail.com

APPOINTED OFFICERS (Abbreviated list)

Fred Beck, Membership Committee Chairman fred281st@outlook.com
 Brent Gourley, Internet Groups Administrator bgrlyy@gmail.com
 Will McCollum, Assoc. Resident Author willdanmac@yahoo.com
 Jim Baker, Scholarship Committee Chairman Bakerjw@icloud.com
 PX Store Donna@haysenterprises.com
 Jack Mayhew, Remembrance Committee Chairman intruder06@me.com
 Dean Roesner, Newsletter deanroesner@aol.com



Registration Form

281st AHC Association 2022 Reunion

The Higgins Hotel, New Orleans, LA

Call: 504-528-1941 (Ref Code AHCCI)

or <https://group.curiocollection.com/yaw4xi>

September 18-22, 2022

The hotel will honor our \$149.00 + tax, nightly rate, from Sept. 18 thru 21

Group rate honored for reservations made until August 19

Valet parking will cost \$40.00/night.

Self-Parking will be \$32.00/night

Member#	Last Name:	First Name:
Street Address:	City:	State: Zip
Phone#	Unit/Plt:	Dates in country:
Your email address:	I will arrive on:	
Name for Nametag:	Nickname or Callsign:	
Guest name for Nametag		Guest name for Nametag

REGISTRATION FEES:

281 ST AHC Annual Membership dues	Annual Fee \$25.00=\$
Membership Reunion Registration	Member@ \$150.00=\$
Guests (16 yrs old and up)	# guests X \$150.00=\$
Children under 16 yrs old	# guests X \$ 25.00=\$
SCHOLARSHIP FUND DONATION	2022 TAX DEDUCTABLE=\$
TOTAL CHECK OR MO=\$	

PAYMENTS: make check or money order payable to: 281ST AHC ASSOCIATION

Mail payment AND registration form no later than June 15, 2022 to:

281st AHC Association
 c/o Fred Beck
 205 Carey Ct.
 Neenah, WI 54956-9208
 Tel: 920-558-4127 / email: Fred281st@outlook.com

Please bring your photos, CD's, books, maps and other memorabilia for sharing and/or display

VOLUNTEER: Registration.....PX.....Hospitality Room.....As Needed.....

THERE WILL BE NO LATE FEE FOR PAYMENTS MAILED AFTER JUNE 15, 2022

If you want to spend a second day at the museum tickets will be only \$7.00 Paid at the Museum!