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2024

281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER
COMPANY ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

No. 86

IT'S THAT TIME by Jeff Murray, President

We seem to be having more than our share of funerals lately. That's not good but at our age it's something we'll see more of more often. Ideally any time an Intruder passes a bunch of Intruders need to show up. Practically however, that is not always possible. First, it's expensive, second, it often entails rearranging schedules that are hard to arrange in the first place. What is more important, your grandson's Little League game or Ralph's funeral? Travel for us old guys is often a roll of the dice. Some Intruders, and I'm going to point out Marshall Hawkins here, make it a point to go to as many funerals as they can. Others only go to those of friends who are in close proximity. At our age that is understandable. Take Beetle Bailey's service for example. He was one of my crew chiefs in Vietnam, I wanted to go but had 3 hard to schedule medical appointments and one granddaughter event she thought was important. But who showed up? The Riley's and the Baker's. Martha was happy. And 2 weeks after was Mom Torbert's service. I almost missed that one as well, medical stuff again, but this time I made it. Another 281st past president did not due to surgery. I also went to Gary Hall's, it was short, I didn't tell his daughter I was coming but when she spotted my 281st cap I was suddenly inundated with relatives. Funerals are for the living, those who are gone could not care less who attends their service.

So here is my advice...communicate with the living. Send a card or email to the spouse expressing regret. If you see the obituary add a paragraph to the remembrances. They don't need flowers, send a donation to the 281st Scholarship Fund in their name instead. We're all going to go, some sooner than later but we all will get there, and we all understand we can't attend them all. Especially the LAST INTRUDER STANDING, that guy will have nobody in a 281st cap to represent us. But that is OK, instead

of mourning those we lost, honor their memory by remembering what they did.

SCHOLARSHIP REPORT by Jim Baker, Chairman

Spring is here, and high school graduations will soon be coming up. Since last fall we have been contacted by the families of several prospective applicants inquiring about our scholarship program. The program is still active, and we will begin accepting and evaluating new applications soon. Thanks to several significant donations last year we have now grown to a total of 15 scholarship awardees. All have a relationship to someone who served in the 281st, which now means grandchildren, or great nieces and nephews. We plan to continue helping Intruder descendants each year, which of course is only possible with continued donations. All of your yearly donations go directly to scholarships, which means the number of applicants we can accept each year depends on how much money we have. The most common method of making donations was with the annual reunion registration form, which had a line designated for the Scholarship Fund. Starting this year your donation should be made payable to: **The 281st AHC Memorial Scholarship Fund**, and mailed to:

281st AHC Memorial Scholarship Fund
c/o Walter J. Pikul, MBA, CPA, CFP
PO Box 41035
Fayetteville, NC 28309

The above information can also be found at our website: 281st.com, under the "Scholarships" link. The Scholarship Committee will meet this summer to evaluate new applicants, and the results will be announced in the fall newsletter.

Our Scholarship Fund is one of the best things the Association has ever done; thanks again for your support.

Reunion Committee Chairperson: Bain Black

Happy Springtime Intruder Nation, It seems like just yesterday that we were writing about the Dayton, OH fall reunion. Now spring flowers are in bloom and pollen is in the air...at least in NC. Dayton was the last full-blown reunion, but get-togethers will continue for years to come. Seven Intruders and spouses/sig others met in Kennesaw, GA (north of Atlanta) to celebrate the life of Jim "MOM" Torbert. Services at the GA National Cemetery and at Jim and Marilyn's church were heartwarming and memorable. Their children and grandchildren participated in the services with great poise. We were all impressed! Jim would have been proud. Attending Intruders made the best of this opportunity to be together again. Jim Torbert loved good food and good drink; therefore, we honored his memory by eating at fine restaurants with good selections of alcohol! Jim would have approved, I'm sure. See the picture below taken between toasts to MOM. If you have several Intruder friends who would like to get together, let us know your plans and we will get the word out. You might be surprised how many will show up. Some suggested venues....St. Louis, Fort Worth/Mineral Wells, coastal Carolina, Gettysburg, and New Orleans. How about someplace further west? Anyway, speaking for myself, it is always great to spend time with old friends!



I've flown in both pilot seats. Can someone tell me why the other one is always occupied by an idiot? You have to make up your mind about growing up or becoming a pilot. You can't do both.

GATHERING OF INTRUDERS AT JIM "MOM" TORBERT'S FUNERAL



WARRANT OFFICER GROUND POUNDER
by Thomas Lundrigan, Pilot 68-69

Shortly after the Tet offensive, I was given orders to proceed to Long Binh for special training. A Special Forces Sgt. and I would receive training in the use of a Decca manpack. Decca is a low frequency navigation device that was used in aircraft for years. The Decca manpack was about the size of a PRC 25 radio (backpack size) and was for navigation on the ground. The Army was testing it to see if it was worth making it part of its inventory. The SF Sgt. was to do the ground testing with an A-team in Dong Tre and I would fly as a co-pilot in a Huey equipped with Decca navigation. The SF Sgt. was to navigate around the jungle and on a daily basis he would send Decca coordinates on his location and the helicopter would fly to the same location. After training was completed, we returned to our units. When it came

time to do the actual field testing, I found out the SF Sgt. had finished his tour and was back in the states. Guess who went to Dong Tre to do the field testing? I spent three weeks with the A-team. What was a Warrant Officer helicopter pilot doing "humping around the jungle"? We lost one soldier to a booby trap. We got into firefights with the VC. The picture below came from an Army publication. It's me calling in gunships using the Decca manpack. In reality, it wasn't gunships I called in, it was artillery. I guess visually the picture of me and explosions might be confusing. So, they took a little poetic license and added gunships. At the end of the three weeks I returned to my unit in Nha Trang (281st AHC), and the next day I went out to the flight line, strapped a Huey to my back, and flew a mission.



The Decca Navigator System provides accurate and reliable navigation and position fixing equipment for every military and naval vehicle including . . .

A RECEIVER FOR MEN ON FOOT.



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This Decca Receiver is in field trial in Viet Nam now. The common navigation system reference will permit complete co-location of land elements with cooperating air and sea units.

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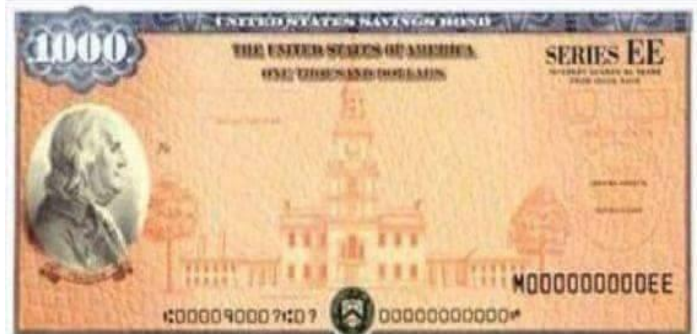
MAJOR LITTLE by Jack Interstein, Ops 68-70

I arrived several days before Major Little at the 281st in July of 69. Shortly thereafter followed my first of several change of command ceremonies in RVN at both the 281st as well as 10th CAB thru Sep 71. Several weeks or months later, we experienced a night time mortar attack. I don't remember the details, but I ended up in Intruder Operations with various officers and operations personnel including Major Little. Should we put up an aircraft, or two, was the question at hand. There came a time when Major Little walked up to me and asked me to drive him to the flight line. I had to shyly tell him that I couldn't drive a 4 speed Jeep. I wasn't sure if he was annoyed or amused. He then walked me over to SFC Bast, operations NCOIC. He gave SFC Bast a loud "teach that man how to drive ASAP" order. SFC Bast saluted and said, yes sir!

Next Day, SFC Bast tried to get SGT Marino, who I would be shortly replacing as Operations nightman, orders to teach me how to drive a jeep! He refused with the timely excuse that, "He was too short to take on such a dangerous assignment." In any event, SFC Bast assigned the project to Spec 4 Bumbalough, just back from the field (Mai Loc?). It took a few days, but I got my license. Wish he had shown me how to downshift, but that's another story. When I got back to the states permanently, my first several cars were 5 speeds, despite driving in the NYC traffic.

A SELF EVALUATION OF A PILOT?

What is the difference between a helicopter pilot and a savings bond?



Eventually the savings bond will mature and earn money.

AN INTERESTING STORY by Jack Mayhew, CO

Early on, Delta Operations were supported by the Second Platoon, the Bandits, and the First Platoon, the Rat Pack, provided aviation support to the Recondo School, known as the most dangerous military school in existence in that they trained in areas used extensively by the NVA Forces, and Rat Pack also supported the other elements of the SF Group (A & B Teams). We decided to train and commit the 1st Platoon to Delta on a rotating basis. We started off by inserting experienced 1st Platoon Pilots into Delta with the 2nd Platoon. Don Torrini was one of the first pilots selected. We started them by assigning them recovery duties. After a few days, Don requested an assignment with more action. We explained the importance of the recovery crews, and that day he recovered two crews that were shot down. No more discussion. He became a key go-to Aircraft Commander, was recommended for the Medal of Honor, but it was downgraded and he was awarded the Silver Star for performing an almost impossible recovery of a recon team being chased by a superior NVA force. See story on pages 120-122 in the book "Above The Best".

A SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT THANK YOU

Dear 281st AHC, I hope all is well. My mother and I have just received your postcard letting us know that my application has been approved for the 281st AHC Memorial Scholarship. I wanted to express my deepest gratitude and thanks for providing me with this scholarship. I am proud of the service my Grandfather (Doyle Creed) offered and proud that I have been recognized by his former service members. Thank you so much, Emmett Olson

DRIVING MISS MARTHA RAYE by Thomas Lundrigan. Pilot 68-69

Those of you who aren't very old may not know who Martha Raye was. Google it. Most everyone knows Bob Hope and how he entertained the troops in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. Don't take this the wrong way, I'm not bad mouthing him in any way. What he did was great. The good that he did was to entertain thousands of G.I.'s. I heard the shows were great. On the flip side of this is, he entertained thousands of G.I.'s at a time, while the ordinary grunt in the boonies never saw a show. I never did. (Again, I'm not bad mouthing him). Martha Raye was an entertainer from the 40's to the 60's. She did many shows with Bob Hope.

She was made a Lt. Col. in the S.F. due to the fact that she visited so many S.F. locations. I flew her around for two days. I picked her up at Ban Me Thuot and flew her to several A-team locations. She didn't have a show, but would sit, talk, drink coffee, and take pictures. It was enough that she was there, it showed she cared. Later, every time I was at an A-team location, I would notice that there would be pictures of Martha Raye with the team members. At the end of the day, I had to take her back to a secure S.F. location. She liked to play cards, and drink vodka. Martha Raye is buried at Fort Bragg, N.C., the home of the S.F. She will always be remembered.

SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENTS 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.** Contact Walt Pikul or Jim Baker with any questions.

COMING AND GOING by Intruders

I only have one going home story though I went home from RVN on three occasions. Didn't realize on first trip home I would have to pee first for my ticket. Unknowingly for some reason, I took a pee first before I realized would have to do it again immediately for the record. Missed my first freedom bird home! Don't remember exactly, but don't think I waited too long before the next flight. At the time of course, it was a major, time wasting disappointment!
Jack Interstein

I have a going home story as well. A little different though. I had just gotten off guard duty and was sleeping. Johnny Martin woke me up and said you're going home. Your dad had a heart attack. Grab your stuff and get to the flight line. I and some Special Forces guy were going to fly to Dong Ba Thin to catch a flight out of Cam Ranh Bay for home. Wouldn't you know that the damn helicopter wouldn't start. The ignition exciter was bad. The SF guy found a truck and someone drove us to DBT. After seeing my dad who lived another 25 years. I reported to Ft. Dix, NJ which was the return processing post for

those returning from Germany. So here I am with a company of clean shaven guys that had to get white sidewall haircuts before leaving Germany. I stuck out like a sore thumb. At the first company formation inspection, this 2nd Lt. looked at me and gave me 30 minutes to get a haircut & shave off my mustache. I wandered around until I found someone, an NCO I could talk to about it, and he took me to out processing. I was on my way home in an hour.

Don Budlong

Norm Kaufman and Joe Bilitzke after "borrowing" a Huey from the 281st flight line. We got a freedom bird out of Cam Ranh Bay on January 13. The last time I saw the "hot" Huey was in a revetment at Dong Ba Thin. The rest of the trip might have been payback. Braniff Airlines had a contract dispute with the government and we were stuck in Yokota, Japan for 10 hours, long story there. When we got to Fort Lewis we had 45 minutes to make a 1-hour drive to SeaTac Airport to catch a flight to Chicago. You offered the cab driver \$50.00 if he got us to the airport on time. He earned his money but we literally ran through the airport to make the flight. We parted ways at O'Hare and didn't see each other again until the VHPA reunion in DC in 2000. **Norm Kaufman**

A memory like an elephant. I can't believe you remember all those details. The only thing I remember was being in Yokota. I bumped into my Senior Drill Sergeant from basic training – Drill Sergeant Fujikawa. He too was passing through Yokota air base. Some things are never forgotten. But you must hold the record on details. Thanks for stirring the memory pot. **Joe Bilitzke**

You guys had trouble going home. Mine was getting back from extension leave. My flight from St Louis to SeaTac went well and I got to Ft Lewis, WA about 1 AM. I was told I needed a haircut before I could check in. I did not know they had a 24hr barber. Then I was assigned to a barracks. I went down and finally found it but it was full. Tried another one, same thing. I finally found an empty one. Next morning I went to eat and the mess hall had some of the worst food I had in the Army. Later that day a couple of more guys showed up and they were coming back from leave. One was a gunship CE from the 129th. He was from Huston and all he could talk about was how wealthy the family was. Before long

some senior enlisted guys started showing up, E7's and above. A Sgt. Major got the bunk below me. After a while I figured out the whole barracks was filled with NCO's that had never been to VN yet. You never knew when you would be called to leave. One morning just after 5, the lights came on and a CQ corporal came in banging on a trash can lid with a broom handle. He was yelling for everyone to line up outside. It was dimly lit outside and the corporal started chewing the group out because someone did not show up for KP duty. He was going to pick a few for duty. That is about the time everyone sensed that this was not a notice that we were leaving. Several NCO's started for him but the SMG by me beat everyone. There was, let's say, a lot of bad language used and the corporal left in a hurry never to be seen again. It took me 5 days to get out of Ft. Lewis and get to VN. Flash ahead a few weeks. Three Rat Pack ships had to go to An Son where the 61st was. They had pulled out and gone to LZ English. We had to do some of their missions for a week or 10 days. There was nothing left but the buildings. The only food to eat was to walk over the hill to the 129th. The first morning we got up early and did that. When we walked into their mess hall I got a tray and walked up to the food line. And there manning the grill fixing eggs was...you guessed it, the gunship CE from Lewis. He did not think I would ever see him again. He said the mess Sgt. was on R&R so he was filling in for him. I told him we do that a lot down in the 281st too. Got to watch those war stories. A lot more went on in those 5 days in Lewis. Best told over a couple of drinks at the table. **Paul Malady**

Well hello, I have a going home story too. Dave Mitchell and I were scheduled to depart for Cam Ranh Bay about the same time, so we were waiting in a helicopter but no, out came this jeep with some NCO driving. Talk about your average scary ride in the back of a Jeep carrying an M-16 with no ammo. When we got there, it turned out that Mitch was a fraternity brother of the scheduling officer, so we got bumped up to the head of the line. I was over served in the club waiting on our flight (imagine that) and after we left supply, where some of our stuff was checked for customs, I left my helmet on the counter. I figured it out when we landed in Japan (and could think clearer by then). Once we got back on the airplane, we taxied about 10' and stopped, we had a flat tire. At least they didn't make us deplane

while they changed it. When we got off the airplane in Seattle, a flight school bud was called to come pick me up, and while waiting, some MP told me my flight jacket was not authorized over my khaki's. Welcome home. I got home 36 hours later after bumming around Seattle with my bud and his girlfriend who was a student at TWU and determined to fix me up with one of her friends once I got back to Texas. She failed. **Jeff Murray**

BOOK REVIEW by Jeff Murray, President

THE WOMEN by KRISTEN HANNAH - This book currently sits atop the NY Times best seller list, it is a fictional account of a US Army nurse in Vietnam and after, who becomes involved with a Marine helicopter pilot. The plot is extremely obvious to anyone who served in Vietnam but has a few holes in it. First off the pilot is flying in a Marine Dustoff outfit using the call sign of a Marine UH-1B gunship outfit (the Marines did not have a dedicated Dustoff company). And she is given about 2 hours advance notice to go on R&R to Hawaii where she ends up on Kauai Island where her pilot "boyfriend" mysteriously arrives, 2 events that weren't normal. But I still read the book in about 3 days, it was an easy read, not that farfetched, and since the overwhelming majority of us are retired (and the rest should be) reading a book is a good way to spend some free time. In other words it was a good book for a chick book. One more thing, that Marine pilot is a jerk, so even if the author got the narrative wrong I'm glad he was a Marine because everyone knows Army helicopter crews have class.

HELP NEEDED FOR A NEW BOOK

Will McCollum and Jack Mayhew are working on a remembrance book for Jim Bailey and Jim Torbert and they need your HELP!! If you served with either of these Jims, please contact Will or Jack as they need stories for both. Like where did they get their nicknames? What Platoons were they in? When Bailey was a WP CE, did they strip his ship for a rescue? Please tell them stories about these men as they were not there, but they want you to be there in the book. If you cannot help with stories, please refer names they may have served with. Please Call or Email:

Will McCollum

WillDanMac@yahoo.com

(319) 239-5529

Jack Mayhew

intruder06@me.com

(410) 562-6791

OBITUARIES

Barbara Baldwin, wife of Joe Baldwin, Maintenance 67-68, died on 1-23-24.

James "Mom" Torbert

Served as a Pilot in 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Platoons, & Maintenance & Flight Operations

11-68 to 11-69

Served in the 281st AHC Reunion Association as President, Vice Pres., Reunion Chairman, Chaplin, Secretary, & on Scholarship Committee



2-16-44 to 2-17-24

Larry Ellis

Served in Maintenance

1-69 to 12-70



7-24-48 to 1-24-24

Gary Hall

Served in 3rd Platoon

"Wolfpack" as a Gunner

10-66 to 10-67



1-12-47 to 12-2-23

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First Company Sigs - Nha Trang, 66 - 67



PFC Lissa PFC Broussard PFC Rainbow



Schwerdfeger (Alphabets) & Ada in field - 66

