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281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER
COMPANY ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

No. 89

OUR 281st EXHIBIT by Bain Black, Pilot 68-69

As most of you know, our exhibit documenting Intruder history includes an interactive kiosk with the 281st website downloaded, and a memorial to the 53 brave men who died or are missing. The Airborne and Special Ops Museum (ASOM) was the perfect place for our display to remain in perpetuity.

Afterall, we have a memorial stone in front of the museum stating we were the first Special Ops Helicopter Company. Plus, when the stone was dedicated in 2009, the museum suggested that in the future we would be welcomed as part of the museum. By August 2024 our exhibit was completed and stood in the main ASOM reception area. In December it was placed in storage to make room for their annual Christmas decorations which are visited extensively during the holiday season.

Following the season, we met with the Museum curator to discuss the future of our exhibit. Specifically, we asked if they intended to make it permanent. Their response was that the 281st exhibit was well attended, and the interactive kiosk was popular; however, there were other considerations. Since our memorial stone was dedicated, museum ownership had moved from a Ross Perot foundation to the US Army Museum Enterprises. Museum management now reports into Fort Belvoir as part of the national Army museum system totaling approximately 21 museums. Army Museum Enterprises has a list of requirements and restrictions for any "artifacts" applying for display. The biggest issue, but certainly not the only one, is prohibition of memorials or plaques. A significant part of our exhibit is a plaque and 53 guidons as a memorial to our fallen Intruders. As a side note, there are only two units with dedicated displays in the museum,

both from WWII. Although disappointed, we were not surprised. We left with no hard feelings. The museum was cordial and expressed regret that they no longer have freedoms they had in previous years. Our exhibit is now in Mooresville at the firm that built the three beautiful cases. They are preparing it for transport to Mineral Wells, TX where it will become part of The National Vietnam War Museum. This is the museum our own John Hyatt has played a significant part to bring to reality. John is a past president and currently on the board of directors at the museum. (www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org)

The Intruder exhibit will be shipped soon and several of us will make the trip to Mineral Wells to set it up.

This has been an arduous journey. It started when Murray, Baker and Black traveled to Lordstown, PA to inspect items collected by Jay Hays, RIP. We spent an entire day going through the collectables, segregating them into several groups. One group was to be the core of an exhibit dedicated to the history of the 281st AHC. It's nice to know that our exhibit will now have a permanent home that will be visited long after we all have departed. Also, in front of a new building at the Mineral Wells Museum, there will be a UH-1H to be painted with Intruder markings! Again, John Hyatt deserves thanks for this memorial to the 281st.

Here is an idea for a mini reunion. Once the exhibit is in place, it would be a good focal point for a get-together. Many of us know Mineral Wells from our primary helicopter training. I think it is a charming town that reflects a bit of the old west. The Crazy Horse Hotel has been completely renovated. Jeff Murray and Linda have been there and they say it is beautiful.

DELTA AT BOUN BLECH by Lou Lerda, Pilot 66

Boun Blech was just one nasty experience after another, not because of the enemy, but because of Mother Nature. She was relentless with the rain, overcast and unexpected fog and low ceilings. The conditions made life miserable and trying to repair the aircraft was a complete challenge. Gary Stagman (crewchief/mechanic) got to experience his first real, live, autorotation. One of the gunships had a fiery engine failure about one hundred fifty feet above the trees with very minimal visibility. He was blessed that his up-front crew consisted of Ron Palascak and Gary O'Connor. Ron was one cool pilot, his radio transmission of the incident started with "Three Two, Three Five's going down at this time." Classic Ron, matter of fact with a somewhat laconic tone of voice. Never mind that he had to execute a one hundred eighty-degree autorotation from "dead man's curve altitude", on fire, into a marshy area in no-man's land. It took the crew of helicopter "Three Two" a few moments to realize what the heck was happening. They got turned in time to witness the last ninety degrees of the autorotation, flames spewing from the tailpipe as they flared into the muck. Ron always did things perfectly and no one got hurt. After the crew of "Three Five" were picked up, our maintenance officer (Lou Lerda) contacted the Chinook unit from Pleiku to come pick the bird up and "drop it" at our FOB (Forward Operating Base). And "drop it" they did, right next to one of our water trailers. Moaning and using expletives galore, we all watched the whole mess unfold as the Huey dislodged the water trailer sending it tumbling and bouncing down the side of a hill near the flight line. Fortunately, the helicopter suffered only minor sheet metal damage and we were able to salvage the bird. Gary Stagman got the opportunity to help maintenance change the number three and four bearing packs, as well as the oil cooler in the hell hole, enduring all the mud and slop in the process.

A day later, we had to abort a Delta mission flight because we went from marginal flight conditions to total instrument flight conditions in the blink of an eye. Of the eight Huey's in formation, only four pilots of the sixteen had any instrument flight experience, so we were all blind. The command-and-control aircraft issued the following command, "break up the formation and head back, every A/C is in charge of their own aircraft." How we escaped a total midair disaster on that one is only known to the Almighty.

We did manage to return to Boun Blech, each crew member was the only person with the knowledge of the degree of fear that existed inside of himself. The collective fear factor in each individual helicopter and each crew member had to be monumental. We all thought that each of these missions, and this particular operation was one of our nastiest, but a few weeks later we had a double header mission at Song Be and Tay Ninh, and things definitely got worse, much, much worse. But somehow we survived with more "war stories" to tell.



FOND WOC MEMORIES *Editors Note: The following comments are from pilots reminiscing about their "fond" memories of Warrant Officer Training on the Chat Net. This started by the posting of the training manual handed out to all Warrant Officer Candidates (WOC's) when they first arrive and contains all the rules and regulations, in all their petty glory. After skimming through the manual, the following comments were posted to the Chat Net for the 281st. I have removed the names involved to protect the guilty!*

Wow, I forgot the level of detail we adhered to.

And returning to our rooms at the end of the business day, compliments of our inspecting TAC officer, we'd find our blankets pulled from the mattress and our drawers pulled out and overturned, with everything on the floor. We'd restore everything again and then begin studying for classes the following day. Wasn't that a happy time?

Ok, I'll confess, that overhead cupboard was s'posed to be private; but even when padlocked, our TAC (66-15) knew he could use a straightened coat hanger to fish out your unwashed unders and other contraband. Note: I once stood orange notebook inspection with my copy of Playboy in its back pocket; it was safer there. I'm the guy who hitched a ride to a downtown hardware store and cleaned them out of hook-and-eye fasteners; a device known to some of us as screen door hooks. Enough for the entire platoon. With one door fastened to the shelf with the new hardware; and the padlock installed, the coat hanger trick failed.

Since none of you have mentioned this, I must assume the TACs were busy unscrewing things after we left for Ft. Rucker.

We were the first huge company, the entire class before us was the size of our one platoon. I was a holdover at Ft. Wolters; Ft. Rucker could not handle the entire class at once.

At Ft. Rucker, in 66-17, our platoon's TAC left for OCS at Ft. Benning a couple of weeks after our arrival. The friendly E-6 who served as TAC for the platoon next door assumed our TAC duties but mostly stayed out of our way. Consequently, the top 10 scoring of class 66-17 were all in our platoon. I was #3. #1 was the class leader, #2 was his roommate. I could have been #1 if I was not in Dothan every night with new found girlfriend; that's a story better left untold (not my current gf!).

I'll never forget this guy named Sprunger in 67/17. He was kind of a goof off & not liked by the TAC's. They decided to make him open the big cabinet that we were allowed to stash non military & personal items up above the lockers that were supposed to be regulation. Well the TAC officer opened his big stash locker and it was like Fibber McGee's closet. Stuff came tumbling out since it was stuffed full, and it burst open on to the TAC & knocked his helmet liner off his head. Sprunger was confined to quarters the rest of his days at Ft. Wolters.

My story is boring but in Dec 1967 we were snowbirds waiting in our Ft. Wolters barracks, they're still standing and occupied BTW, someone lives there but it looks horrible. Anyway our Super Seniors were rarely there so the Super Seniors in the next barracks decided to harass us. We had a rare 2+ days off, Friday evening to Sunday night and our SS's inspected us Friday morning, declared us as being lower than whale poop at the bottom of the ocean and restricted us to the barracks. Having been a veteran of a fish year at Texas A&M and the son of a career USAF officer currently serving as the ROTC Prof at UVA, I gathered everyone together and hatched a plan. I said if we all left together and all returned together we could have our weekend and they'd probably not kick all of us out. So at 4 O'clock Friday afternoon every one of us ran out the door with a bag, got in formation, I hollered "dismissed" and we all beat feet for a car. And we all showed up before 5 on Sunday. As we were leaving, our fake SS's we're yelling at us, you could tell they were mad but

confused. When we returned our real SS's were there, we told them what we did and they started laughing, telling us not to worry about those other SS's. Side note, one of the fake SS's ended up in the 281st.

SCHOLARSHIP REPORT by Jim Baker, Chair

The Scholarship Fund is going to have a full plate for a few years. We currently have 14 students on scholarship at various schools around the country. One, Max Schuster, the grandson of Wes Schuster, will graduate this Spring from Embry Riddle University with an outstanding academic record. Five of the 14 were added last fall; they are: [Asia Thurber](#), great niece of **Harry Wetmore**, [Trevor Hendrix](#), nephew of **Jay Hendrix**, [Spencer Heintz](#), great nephew of **Ned Heintz**, [Connor Goepfort](#), grandson of **David Dolstein**, and [Joaquin Houston](#), grandson of **Richard Houston**. All of our awardees continue to perform at a very high level in the classroom; they and their families are to be congratulated.

The funds needed to support each student's award through their graduation are in the bank, so each is completely covered. The number of new Scholarship awards we can offer each year will, of course, depend how much we receive in donations and contributions. We should shortly start to see new applications as high school seniors reach graduation in May/June. The Scholarship Committee will meet again this summer to review our finances and any new applications. I hope to be able to announce the names of new awardees to you next Fall. Please keep all of this in mind as you consider your donation. Not sure about how or where to donate, please email me at bakerjw@icloud.com, or call **336-337-6254**. **From the Committee and for all the kids, Thank You.**

WEATHER & INSTRUMENTS by Brent Gourley,

Pilot 66-67 Carrying the Korean General back to Nha Trang from somewhere up north, but maybe he was not the passenger. Memories over 50 yrs old cannot be trusted. But it was one of those wet season days along the coast. It's pouring down rain, we're flying southbound trying to maintain altitude passing Tuy Hoa AFB. Right seat is on the instruments, I'm watching the ground thru the chin bubble. Enough is enough. Find the old IFR supplement in the book box. Tuy Hoa approach says there's no one else around. Do you remember that target rock that looked like King Kong sitting on the mountain top south of the airbase? After you pass it, you turn right along the beach for the next checkpoint sort-of, Ninh Hoa, or there

abouts? That rock is on my mind, I suspect we're lower than it. So, I take the controls, apply max power and start up thru the crud looking for that clear spot on top. Much to my concern, and maybe to the passengers, the attitude indicator on my side is merely another window into the internal workings of the inverters or whatever else is back there. But the one on the other side works well. I had already been watching that one. We climb. And climb. We break out about 11,000 feet in between two cells that continue upward, I still reckon, to probably 20,000. It's not very long before Nha Trang appeared below. Good thing, I don't think we had an approach book on board. Well, GCA if needed, I guess. This one probably prompts my reluctance in later years, to avoid Alabama thunderstorms with students in the other seat of the jet ranger, aka TH-67. Onward.

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.

A GOOD NEIGHBOR by Jeff Murray, Pilot 68-69 Bain Black has a Vietnam vet for a neighbor, Bill Brooks. I've met him, he's a good guy. When he heard the 281st was in the process of setting up an exhibit at the National Vietnam War Museum he handed Bain an extremely generous check to help with the cost. It's good to have friends.

WORKING WITH THE ROK'S by Tom Lundrigan, Pilot 68-69 I don't know how everyone feels about the ROKs, but I always felt they were hardcore. These three stories I've titled "A ROK and a hard place". It always seemed like they were always on the top of some remote hill living a hard existence.

Story 1. I was doing a resupply to a location on the top of a hill. There was no flat location to land, just an open section on the side of a steep hill. It was too steep to sit the Huey down, but you could hover with one skid on the ground while they offloaded the

supplies. They would crouch way down and go between the rotor blades and the ground to get to the aircraft. It was a little dangerous because I was basically hovering and the tip path plane was going up and down. After we left, I explained to the onboard Korean to tell the soldiers the next time we come in, to have them go down in front of the aircraft and take the supplies from the high side of the aircraft. The crew chief and gunner would hand the supplies down. Sure enough, the next time we come in, everyone comes down in front of the aircraft to the high side as requested. But, I guess one guy didn't get the message, he started down the hill as before, down between the blades and the ground. Before he gets too far, an officer grabs him by the collar, pulls him back and proceeds to beat the living s..t out of him with his swagger stick. I think it would have been kinder to let him walk into the rotor blades.

Story 2. It was another resupply to a different location, but again to the top of a hill. This location didn't even have a place you could put down a skid. It was all sling loads. We would sling in the supplies and then when we left, we would sling out the empty Jerry Cans they used for their water supply. Enroute, at altitude, heading back to the ROK base, the aircraft attitude suddenly shifted. I asked the crew chief to see if we still had the sling load. He said "No we'd lost it". I told the onboard Korean that evidently the load wasn't hooked properly and we'd lost the load. He said we had to go back and find it. I said no, at that altitude the cans would be flattened and the net shredded. He said it didn't matter, he was responsible for the load and even if it was destroyed, he had to return it. We argued for a while, but I could see he was serious and somewhat afraid, so we went back. I really didn't expect to find it, but after a while, there it was in the middle of a little village. We landed at the edge of the village, I gave him my M1 carbine and he goes charging at high port into the village. We got airborne to give him some aircover. No one was hurt in the village. He drags what's left of the cargo out of the village. We land and pick him and the cargo up and head back to the ROK base. After lunch, we continue the resupply with the same onboard Korean soldier that we'd been working with. The reason I'm making this state is because it is pertinent to the next story.

Story 3. Again, another Korean resupply. This time it's to a team that has been out in the jungle for a while and needed supplies. We are going to sling load the supplies to them in the jungle, then hovering over

them and dropping the load down through the trees. We fly to their general location. The Korean onboard asks them to pop smoke. He points to some smoke off to the side and has us fly over to it and once over it we come to a hover above the trees. He does some talking on the radio and looks directly below us and says to drop the load. I punch off the load and as we are leaving, we see some other smoke. He gets back on the radio and sure enough, we just resupplied the VC. The Korean did not look happy. When we got back to the ROK base, the Korean went away and we wound up with a different Korean. I often wondered what happened to him.

A GOOD PLAN by Paul Maledy, CE 67-68-69

Not all of the missions that the 281st was on turned out to be good. This is one of them. In 1968 my ship went into maintenance for a routine 100 hr inspection which takes a few days. At the same time Richard Alvey, CE of 151, went on R&R. I was told to be the Crew Chief of 151 until my ship came out of maintenance. For the first mission the next day in 151, we left at daybreak and headed NW of Nha Trang for a few valleys as we were working for the White Horse Division of the ROK Army (Republic of Korea). They had a sizable force out there somewhere in the jungle. We picked up a full Colonel, a Lt. Colonel and a Major, if my reading of the insignia on their collars was right. Of course, none of them spoke English but the Major had a map and was pointing for us to go NE. We took off and headed in the direction he was pointing and not long afterwards we arrived in a valley that had a small hill in the floor of the valley. The major pointed at it and then at my M60 machine gun and made shaking movements with his hands like he was shooting and pointed at the hill again. I understood that I was to shoot at the top of the hill, so I gave him a thumbs up and pulled the trigger. The bolt slammed forward and nothing happened. I immediately had a bad feeling that I knew what was wrong but I cycled the bolt back and pulled the trigger to try it one more time. Same results. At that point, I then knew the firing pin was installed wrong. I told the pilot to turn so the gunner, who was Dale Dunbar, could fire while I started tearing the 60 down to put the firing pin in correctly. They got the ship turned so Dale could shoot at the hill and then I heard the same thing from his gun. By this time, it's safe to say, that if looks from these ROK officers could kill, we would have been dead men. I got my gun back into action,

but they were so pissed, they gestured to take them back to their base. We found out later that the bad guys were on the top of the hill cooking breakfast and the ROK's had the hill surrounded. What we were supposed to do is fire and drive the bad guys off the hill and into the waiting ROKs. So much for a good plan. I am sure if we were a ROK flight crew we might not be here today.

The rest of the day was spent re-supplying and moving people around and also avoiding those officers. Dale felt so bad about putting those firing pins in backwards, but I told him I never understood why the manufacturer would make a pin that would go in either way but would only work one way. Fast forward to 2001 and the reunion at Las Vegas. Bonny and I ran into Dale, and his wife Ginger, in front of the hotel. After the handshakes, hugs, and wife introductions, Dale said to me, kind of laughing, please don't bring up that day the firing pins were in backwards.

A little side story about Dale. He could fly all day in bumpy weather or rough flying with the doors open with no problem. But close the doors even in smooth air and in no time he would be up chucking. He carried his steel pot at all times to do it in. A better easy-going guy you will never meet. Other stories are left to that table with a few drinks.

NOT IN KANSAS by Jerry Bahre, Pilot 1970

In early January, 1970, I had been in the First Platoon (Rat Pack) of the 281st for one week. I had flown 2 orientation/ash and trash missions as a newly minted peter pilot. The previous night, a VC tax collecting force had attempted to enter a village south of us near Dong Ba Thin. They were successfully repulsed, or ambushed, by the local Regional Defense Force, aided by SF advisors. The 5th SF group wanted to send a small delegation down to congratulate them. I don't remember who my AC was, but when the village was in sight, he pointed out the LZ and said "You can take it in now". Which I did. When we landed and dismounted, I saw six bodies lying on the ground. They were laid out exactly as we used to lay out our trophy deer in deer camp up in Vermont. Now, up to this point, I think I had seen a total of 3 deceased human bodies. All 3 had been powdered, sleeping peacefully in coffins. These young men didn't look like that. They all displayed the ghastly, ugly results of losing an intense firefight. While the award ceremony was going on, I noticed a Vietnamese girl

crouched nearby, crying quietly. I asked the SF sergeant next to me what that was about. He said **“One of them was her brother.”**

When the ceremony was over, we all boarded our ship. The AC said “All right, you can take us back.” I lit it up, picked up to a hover, and turned into the prevailing wind. It was at this point that what I had just seen completely erased all concept of how I had gotten where I was now and where I was supposed to go next. This wouldn’t have been a big deal to admit to the AC or the gunners, they knew I’d just gotten in. What bothered me was that the SF major in charge had just plugged into our intercom, and was placidly staring ahead, over my shoulder, anticipating his tourist class ride home. I really didn’t want him to know I was such a FNG. Well, I took off and flew at about 300feet. We were above the tree line, and there, straight ahead, was the South China Sea. AHA! I turned left, north, and followed the coastline back to Nha Trang. I supposed the AC had sensed my temporary panic and confusion, but that major never had a clue. As Dorothy said in “The wizard of Oz”, “We’re not in Kansas anymore, Toto”

OBITUARIES

Ellie E Lynn Served as **Commanding Officer Intruder 6**
2-69 to 8-69



4-1-37 to 2-13-25

Hershel Crosby Served in 1st Platoon (Rat Pack) & 3rd Platoon (Wolf Pack) as a **Crew Chief**
1-66 to 5-67



12-24-47 to 8-30-22

Darlene Broussard, wife of Earl Broussard, died on 1-5-25 after a long illness.

Earl Broussard
Served in Maintance, Slicks, & 3rd Platoon (Wolf Pack) as a **Crew Chief**
1-67 to 1-68



1-24-48 to 12-11-24

Paul Maledy
Served in 1st Platoon (Rat Pack) as a **Crew Chief**
12-67 to 7-69



9-10-47 to 12-22-24

Roger Barnes
Served in 3rd Platoon (Wolf Pack) as a **Pilot**
11-66 to 8-67



10-11-39 to 5-10-24

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