



281st Assault Helicopter Company Association

**"INTRUDERS"**

NHA TRANG  
1965 - 1970

NEWSLETTER  
NUMBER 51

Summer  
Edition  
2013



**St Louis Reunion 2013 AGAIN A RESOUNDING SUCCESS!**

The 2013 General Membership Speaks

**"NEXT YEAR IT'S BRANSON, MO."**

More information in this Newsletter



**FRONTIER  
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## ***Greetings from the new Prez.....***

**H**ello to all. Our reunion this year was a great one thanks to the outstanding work done by the reunion committee and hotel staff. As your new president I know next years will be will be even better.

Our new Executive Board this year will be:

President, Jim Christensen

Vice President, Frank Becker

Senior Member at Large, Don Budlong

Junior Member At Large, Will McCollum

Secretary, Jeff Murray

Treasurer, Jerry Beck

One of our attendee's was a very special person, Duane "Tubby" Brudvig. To those of you who don't know Tubby he was responsible for the first 281st reunion in 1986. In the days before the internet, email, Facebook, and etc., Tubby tracked down and brought together as many fellow Intruders as he could find for the first 281<sup>st</sup> reunion in 1986 at Scott AFB. A plaque of recognition as the initial founder of the 281st AHC reunions was awarded to him at the Saturday night banquet. Duane is battling cancer please keep him in your thoughts and prayers.

This year's guest speaker this year was Mara Wallis. Mara, who was from Australia, and is now a U.S. citizen living in San Francisco, was a non USO entertainer in Viet Nam. She told us of her experiences of entertaining, traveling about the country and showed a film she produced about the freelance entertainers in country. The film may be seen on the internet at: <http://www.cultureunplugged.com/play/10371>.

Our Intruder of the Year was awarded to Frank Becker for his outstanding contributions to the association in the finest traditions of the Association.

Next year's reunion will be held in Branson, Missouri in September. Our hotel will be the Camden. The dates are September 25 through 27. Branson has plenty of entertainment, shopping and other activities. It will be a great change from St. Louis.

Jim Christensen  
President

## ***The New VP say's.....***

**W**ell this past year has been quite interesting around Becker Land; sold our farm business to our son, trying to retire, Cheryl and I

have built a new house and are trying to get the rest of 40 years of stuff moved, done my small part in getting another reunion of the 281st. done in St Louis. But the biggest surprise of all came Sat. night at the reunion banquet.

I think we have all looked at Intruder of the year award and looked at the names on there and thought will I ever do what those people have done for the 281st.

I had only hoped after being reunion chairman next year that maybe I would be thought of even if I didn't get the award. It was never a thought that I might have done enough to even be in the running for the award this year. Again thanks for the Intruder of The Year and I hope I can live up to it in the year ahead.

That brings me to the main job of VP which is reunion chair. As you know after a 9 year run in St Louis we are moving to Branson Missouri next year. (Hey that is longer than we were in Viet Nam). We will be at the Camden Hotel. Fred Lewis and I checked it out last fall and think you will find it better than the tents when we were in the FOB,s.

I was told by one of the ladies they have already checked out the shopping and there is a mall about a block away. I told her it was a walk back up hill (if you haven't been to Branson everything is up or down the hill) to the hotel so they would have to limit what they bought, no problem they would just call someone to come pick them up. We will miss the busses the hotel had in St Louie but we are working on that. We checked and found that there are several flights to Branson airport, although the price I understand is higher. But if you live in the Southern US you might be closer than I am and I live in Missouri.

All in all I think the move will be a great new experience for the 281st as one of our own said, "We must be rigidly flexible", that is what made us the great unit those many years ago and keep us going today. More to come as the year goes on and plan on Branson in September of 2014.

Frank Becker  
Vice President

## ***The SM&L talks about Angel Fire.....***

**D**uring our recent Reunion in St. Louis, Jeff Murray posted an email to the HQ and CHAT nets about a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire, New Mexico. For those Association

members who are not on either of these email networks please take the time to read more about the memorial at their web site, [www.vietnamveteransmemorial.org](http://www.vietnamveteransmemorial.org).

This memorial was constructed from 1968-1971, was the first major Vietnam memorial in the U.S. and helped inspire the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Memorial bricks in the name of Vietnam veterans are laid annually at Angel Fire and may be purchased for \$75.00 each.

One of our Association members, Richard Houston, was so moved during a visit to the memorial, that he thought it would be an excellent place to memorialize all of our fallen Intruders in one permanent location. Richard went ahead and purchased a brick in the name of each Intruder missing or killed in action so that the bricks could be placed during Angel Fire's annual ceremony on August 31, 2013. The bricks will be laid in a special area of the memorial and there will be a marker designating this area as men belonging to the 281st AHC.

Richard Houston conveyed to the Executive Board (EB) that he bought these bricks because of his love for the 281st and is not asking for reimbursement. He realizes that he may not be the only Intruder that feels this way and others may be inclined to donate bricks as well. If you are so moved as Richard was, the EB is extending an invitation to Association members to purchase memorial bricks. The cost is \$60.00 per brick (Richard obtained a volume discount). Please mail your checks made payable to the 281st AHC Association to me, Don Budlong, 711 Ashton Dr., Bath, NC 27808.

We look forward to hearing from any interested Intruders by September 16, 2013.

Thanks in advance for your interest in this very worthwhile tribute to our fallen brothers.

Don Budlong  
Senior Member @ Large

### ***The Secretary speaks of St Louis.....***

Reunion 2013 was, sadly, the last one we will probably ever have in that fair city. I guess it was time though, attendance was way down this year and we have run out of things to do that attract the attention of any traveler to this city. I will, however, always look fondly on my last trip to The Gateway City for a few reasons:

-Airport Proximity. If you don't think this was a plus then you aren't reading the Chat Net, it is

chock full of "How Am I Going To Get There?" emails, which rank right behind "How Do I Get from the Airport To The Hotel?" emails. An outsider reading the traffic on our net would presume we were some Marine grunt outfit from a long ago war.

-Cheap Hotel, Nice Hotel. It's flat out impossible to find a nicer hotel for the price we paid anywhere. In fact if you happened to be having an afternoon affair you couldn't get a room at a Motel 6 for what we paid the Crowne Plaza without having to drive to the hinterland. And everything you needed was contained inside, and what wasn't offered by the hotel (even spare toothpaste) could always be found in our hospitality room.

-Trader Joe's. If you haven't been, go. But if you're looking for one in Branson, keep on driving to St Louis.

-Kreiss. A lot of you have been there once or twice. Some more than that. I've been there a bunch and everyone sitting there wonders how I can eat that hunk of beef. Well, it's easy, with a knife and fork. Janie was stuck at home this reunion due to work, and the first thing she asked me when I got home was whether or not I had brought any of that prime rib home in my suitcase. Sorry dear. And they don't have an annex in Branson.

This was a good reunion for a couple of reasons. First, it was a reunion, and I kind of like hanging around most of you guys. 2<sup>nd</sup>, it was the first time since 1969 that all of us roommates were together, Dennis Crowe, Wes Schuster, Dave Dolstein and myself. We've all seen one another at various times, but never all at once. That was kind of neat. They've gotten older though.

Branson, I have no idea what it's going to be like but I'm betting we'll have a good time. It's a popular place, lots of old farts seem to go there a lot, I hear they put something in the water to keep you regular, the food is pounded with a mallet to a consistency of mush so we don't have to chew so hard and the beer and wine comes in plastic milk cartons so we won't have trouble opening them. Even the girls up on stage in the topless joints have the droops so you don't have to squint to get a good look. In other words it is Senior Friendly. If only I could figure out how to get to the hotel from the airport, assuming I can remember the name of the hotel in the first place.

Jeff Murray, Secretary

## Our Past Prez speaks.....

Our recently concluded annual reunion conducted important official business, and provided two great evenings of entertainment. In official business, the By-Laws were amended to create the position of "PX Committee Chairman", making it an additional appointed leadership position of the Association. Secondly, Ed Haas clarified the status of the previously approved plaque to be installed at Headquarters, Special Operations Command, Ft. Bragg. We are now waiting on approval from officials at Ft. Bragg. In other business, the EB voted to support a project presented by Association member Richard Houston to place a brick for each of our MIA/KIA together at a memorial for Vietnam veterans at Angel Fire, NM. The Association will cover any cost not paid for by individual contributions.

The highlights of the reunion, however, were the Friday and Saturday evening programs. On Friday, Duane "Tubby" Brudvig was recognized, in a wonderful program led by Wes Schuster, for his idea back in the eighties to form an Association and for the work he did back then to locate as many former Intruders as he could. Tubby was presented with a plaque commemorating his efforts and recognizing his importance to the Association today. Saturday night was highlighted by a video presentation and comments from Mara Wallis telling the story of non-USO performers during the Vietnam War. Mara was an entertainer who spent two and a half years in Vietnam, and has produced an award winning video documenting that little known aspect of the War. It was a spellbinding video that ended with Eric Burden and the Animals singing "We Gotta Get Out of This Place", and it had many in the room singing along.

Next year we have a new EB in place with a new location and new dates for the reunion. I urge you to make your plans to come to Branson; you'll have a great time there I think.

Finally, I want to sincerely thank all of you for the thoughts and sympathies I received following the drowning death of my sister on the day following the reunion. Some of you met Laurel in 2011 when she attended the reunion, and I deeply appreciate your condolences.

Jim Baker  
Immediate Past President

## And now "Membership Man'n'n'n'n'n.....

With the dues being not included on the reunion registration form, due to reunion date changes, the dues year will remain as indicated below:

The current dues year is:

**1 August 2013 to 31 July 2014.**

A note of importance is that the election/installation of all new officers means that your dues must be current and up to date or you will be ineligible to be elected or hold office. This is very important, see below from the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC Association By-Laws:

***In accordance with Article I - MEMBERSHIP, Section 4: Membership and Dues Assessments: Paragraph C: Fees and dues that do not reach the Association by August 1<sup>st</sup> shall be considered delinquent. A member shall not be considered in good standing with the Association until the dues have been paid. Members that are not in good standing forfeit their rights and privileges to vote, hold elected or appointed office, serve on committees, or participate in general membership meetings.***

I want to thank everyone that sent me their new information to update the master roster which helps me process the reunion registration forms with changes and corrections. It saves postage and you get your newsletters faster. To up-date your information even faster, just send an email to me at: [Cooter@charter.net](mailto:Cooter@charter.net).

If for some reason that you do not receive your newsletter by email or snail mail, it probably means that your address or email address are not current, but you can go to [www.281st.com](http://www.281st.com) and click on newsletters and you can print it off. It also helps if you are a member and have your dues current.

Again thank you for your support and have a very Safe and wonderful Fall season. Be safe and of course "**WELCOME HOME!**"

Gary Stagman  
Membership Chairman



## ***From the Scholarship Fund Secretary***

The scholarship committee is pleased to announce that the following individuals were awarded scholarships for the 2013-2014 college year:

*John Robert Little, nephew of Jim Baker*

*Kelsey Jo Lang, niece of Ed Haas*

Both of these individuals achieved outstanding results in high school and will enter college this fall.

We are pleased to announce that Walt Pikul, CPA has agreed to take over the position of treasurer for the scholarship fund from Brian Paine, CPA who has done a great job for us over the past few years. Replacing Walt as Chairman is Jim (Mom) Torbert who has been a contributing member of the scholarship board since its inception. We thank Walt and Brian for their outstanding support of the program.

Thanks to your generous contributions the scholarship program continues to be one of the best among military organizations. If you have a member of your family who is planning on entering college or an approved technical school please contact Dr. Karen Heintz-Forch at [kforcht@elon.edu](mailto:kforcht@elon.edu) for assistance and applications. A good place to start this process is the 281<sup>st</sup> Association web site at <http://281st.com>.

### **Scholarship News**

The committee met at the Reunion in August, 2013 in St. Louis with Walt Pikul, Chair, presiding. Thanks to the generous contributions by the 281st AHC members, we were able to award and continue scholarships to the following students:

#### Renewals:

Sheena Ariel Riley, Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama

Jessica Barker, Concordia University – Wisconsin, Graduate School of Pharmacy

#### Students graduated in Spring, 2013

Grace Becker, NW Missouri State University, MS/Agriculture

Elena Casey, Messiah College, Grantham, Pennsylvania

Sarah Hager, George Mason University, School of Nursing

#### New Approvals:

John Robert Little, Catawba Valley Community College (NC)

Kelsey Jo Lang, West Virginia University

All of these students have shown excellent academic achievements that make all of the 281st AHC very proud and will do well in their chosen professions. Thanks to your generous contributions to help make their achievements possible.

Karen Heintz Forcht  
Secretary

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### **Notes & Comments**

**From:** John (Jack) Mayhew

**Sent:** Monday, August 05, 2013

**Subject:** Intruder Reunion

Jim, Jim & the Reunion Team;

Congratulations on another great Intruder reunion. Needless to say I missed all of you especially when I started to get feedback that this was one of the best yet. We have tried for years to show our appreciation to Tubby and to recognize his efforts, which we built on, and you guys did it. From all of us who were not there, THANK YOU! Job well done. I must tell you that I have heard from several folks but especially from two individuals who are generally on the opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes describing an event and in this case they both agreed that it was a super event and one of them who is normally a strong food critic even liked the food, (for the most part). Frank Becker certainly deserved the "Intruder of The Year" award for all his hard work. Now that he is retired to "Gentleman Farmer" status we can expect him to double his contribution of time and work. Everything I hear makes me even prouder to be a member of our association and convinces me that not only did we have the best helicopter company in Vietnam but thanks to all the hard

work each of you contributes each year, we now have the best military association in existence today. Let's all get behind the new VP, Frank Becker and make next year in Branson the largest reunion yet by each person bringing one new Intruder. Thanks again, JM

***The following from Capt Derek Martin, ROTC Training Officer written to Don Budlong...***

From: Martin, Derek <[derek.martin@WUSTL.EDU](mailto:derek.martin@WUSTL.EDU)>  
To: Don Budlong <[dbudlong@aol.com](mailto:dbudlong@aol.com)>  
Subject: Color Guard

Don, I'm glad it went well and you all were pleased with the cadets. The cadets and I really enjoyed the opportunity to meet and interact with true American heroes. I believe it is so important for our future leaders to meet and interact with the those have gone before them. All of the cadets came away with a great appreciation for the camaraderie and kinship involved within our line of work, particularly those with good unit cohesion. I assure you that the 48 guide-ons on the wall were not lost on them, and they were both reverent and amazed at the harrowing feats of your compatriots. Splitting them up was a great idea, they enjoyed it. Thank you for this opportunity, it was our honor. Good luck and enjoy Banson next year.

Respectfully,

DEREK C. MARTIN, CPT, IN  
Washington University ROTC  
Gateway Battalion St Louis, MO

***Next are remarks from Wes Schuster given at the presentation in honor of Tubby Brudvig at the Reunion Banquet....***



Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> I landed in Vietnam. It was the luckiest day of my life. My assignment was to the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC. Little did I know I was joining an elite organization that supported some of the bravest soldiers in the US Army. I was to fly in one of the most skilled and professional army aviation units. We flew together as a team: aircraft commander, pilot, crew chief and door-gunner. Our lives and the success of every mission depended upon the coordination of these men on each and every ship.

I had the good fortune to fly with the Bandit platoon for three months. Then I joined the Wolf Pack. We flew Project Delta missions in Hue Phu Bai, An Hoa, Mia Loc and later the battle of Bu Prang.

It was in the Wolf Pack that I served with Duane "Tubby" Brudvig. It was critical that our ship was in top condition and our armament in flawless working order. I soon learned that Tubby was both a hard worker and a very competent door-gunner. When I flew with Tubby I knew the guns would always be operational. When in combat, he and his buddy Daryl "Angie" Evangelho kept a keen eye for enemy fire and identified teams on the ground for extraction. They gave those of us in the cockpit crisp accurate input from their vantage points on the sides and aft of the ship. Coming out of the valley just below the DMZ, I can still remember them calling out 50 cal. fire coming from the right, 50 cal. fire coming from the left. It was a good thing we kept the doors open all the time.

Of course, the closest call Tubby had was Thanksgiving Day 1969, when his ship 004 "Death Merchant" was shot down near Bu Prang. A 50 cal. nailed the crew of Ken Miller, Jim Brown, Angie and Tubby. As soon as they hit the ground Ken and Jim depended on Tubby and Angie. If ever their lives depended on two skilled guys who could fire M-60 machine guns free hand it was then, on the ground, with the enemy surrounding them, it was there that Tubby and Angie held the enemy at bay. The two pilots, Ken and Jim became the ammo bearers ... feeding rounds to Tubby and Angie to fire. For that Tubby was awarded the Bronze Star for heroism. To this day, I don't think it was a high enough award for bravery.

I always enjoyed going to the flight line and chatting with Tubby. Tubby's lasting quality is his easy way of being friendly. That quality has endured for years. We exchanged Christmas cards over the years with brief notes of how our families, work and lives were evolving. Once I had the good fortune to be in Minneapolis on business and we had dinner together. We had a good chat and again caught up on things.

Then in 1986, Tubby called and told me about the decommissioning of the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC at Scott AFB in St Louis. With the passage of time, some 16 years, I had lost touch where the unit was located but, Tubby had not. In fact, Tubby told me about guys he had contacted and informed them about the retirement of the colors of the 281<sup>st</sup>. Now mind you, all these contacts were years before personal computers, Google and emails.

Tubby did it the old fashioned way, by writing and talking to everyone he could locate. I can't imagine the hours, days and months that went into locating so many people. At Scott AFB we drank beer, told war stories ...mostly funny ones, and got out onto the flight line. The first reunion was a real success.

Afterwards, we said we needed to do it again. It was at this point, that I thought it would be a good idea to write a newsletter in hopes that it would work like a chain letter and get passed along to guys we hadn't located. In kicking it around with Tubby we thought we wanted to include family and friends. Joe Blitzkie suggested San Francisco and said he would work on all the arrangements. Tubby was in charge of finding more people. By the second reunion in 1988, Tubby had located some 222 people and amassed addresses and phone numbers, all by personal, friendly contact.

This past winter Tubby's concern and interest in others was further exemplified. He called to say that he was going to Corpus Christi to a Memorial Service for a door gunner he had trained. To this day, Ricardo "Rich" Garcia is still MIA. To be honest, I never met Rich nor did I know of his tragic loss. However, if Tubby was going to a memorial service for his buddy, that was good enough for me, I was going too. I'm glad I went. It will be one of the most memorable weekends of my life. We saw old friends, met new friends and attended one of the most emotional memorial services I have ever witnessed.

These great events, reunions, the formation of the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC Association, and mini-reunions all have had their impetus because Tubby took the time and interest in the 281<sup>st</sup>. Thank you, Tubby. It is an honor to know you and to have flown with you.

Wes Schuster  
Wolf Pack 30

#### ***A note from the Editor.....***

That concludes the Summer/Fall newsletter. As always, this is YOUR newsletter. If you have comments, criticism's or articles you'd like to see published; contact me at: [mentzer@comcast.net](mailto:mentzer@comcast.net).

***Sure the LZ is secure, I'm whispering because I have a cold. Trust me."***

**281ST AHC ASSOCIATION, INC.**

Established 4 July 1999



#### **EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**President**  
Jim Christensen  
**Vice President**  
Frank Becker  
**Secretary**  
Jeff Murray  
**Treasurer**  
Jerry (Fred) Beck  
**Senior Member@Large**  
Don Budlong  
**Junior Member@Large**  
Will McCollum  
**Immediate Past President**  
Jim Baker

#### **APPOINTED OFFICERS**

**Awards Chairman** - Fred Lewis  
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**Chaplain** - Norm Kaufman  
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**Historical Memorabilia Chairman** - Fred Lewis  
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