

281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY "INTRUDERS"

NHA TRANG
1965-1970

Company Newsletter No. 28

Reunion Edition 2006

ST LOUIS

A FUN TIME WAS HAD BY ALL !! IF YOU WERE'NT THERE

YOU MISSED A GREAT REUNION !

... And guess what? We'll be back at the St Louis Plaza Hotel again next year ! ...



Jim Jacobelli

Paul Maledy

Ken Hamilton Ed Has

"The reunion was great. I want to say thanks to all those that worked so hard to put together such a remarkable gathering! Those that missed please plan on the 2007 reunion. I know you won't be disappointed!"

Ron Javins "Intruder" March 1970 - Nov 1970

From the President

Fellow Intruders, Ladies, & Honorary members. I appreciate the opportunity to serve you as the President of the 281st AHC Association. I am humbled by this experience, because I know that I have big shoes to fill from past Presidents. I want to ensure the fact that you feel a part of the Association as I do and that we enjoy the companionship and fellowship of each other. It has been a wonderful experience to get reacquainted with the comrades we served with and get to know those who served in the 281st before and after we were there. Most of all it is good to get to know the most important part of your lives... the ladies. I would hope that the ladies feel they are an important factor in the Association.

What a wonderful reunion. It gets better every year. The time and effort that Gary Stagman, Jack Mayhew, Kelly Mayhew, members of the reunion committee and all those who volunteer has made it possible. We owe a debt of gratitude to all these fine folks.

The Crowne Plaza has really gone out of their way to make this a memorable occasion for us. They have helped us keep the cost down, and still provide us with all the amenities we need to have a great time. I understand that we didn't go in the red for the reunion, which is great. You will get a final report from the committees.

We have been given some good ideas on future reunions. I would hope that all members give us their input. After all this is you the members organization. I the Executive Board and Committees are here to serve you, so we need all the help we can get from the membership.

Next years reunion will be held next year at the Crowne Plaza in St. Louis the same time in August. The room rates will remain the same. We have some great ideas to make it a wonderful reunion.

I would like to thank Gary Stagman for his commitment to the Association. He had to step in as President early, and as a result he had a number of hats to fill -- that of President, Vice President, Membership Chairman and

doing a lot of coordination on the ground for the reunion. We also owe a debt of gratitude to his good wife Nicki for her help and having to put up with Gary.

Thanks to all of you for being a part of our lives. This a a wonderful organization and I look forward to getting together with you every year.

I appreciate the counsel of the membership. It makes my job easier.

Darryl Stevens
President 2006-2007

A word from the VP

As V.P. I have been given the responsibility as the 2007 reunion chairman. We have received many suggestions and some volunteers. One of the first things I want to do is to get a person(s) as a state(s) precinct reunion committee person to keep reunion info flowing both ways, and help coordinate any mini reunion in their area. If all of the attendees return with just one guest it will be our largest gathering. We are planning more activities for spouses, children and grand children. Kelly and I are planning a trip to Nebraska with Fred Mentzer and Karen to look at the other PX alternatives. This will probably be in October as I am recovering from hip replacement surgery.

The reunion had 3 great speakers.... At the general membership meeting we had our own "*When EF Hutton Speaks*" and you could have heard a pin drop. Robin Hicks did a fabulous job discussing PTSD. Honored Guest Tom Ross, author of *Privileges of War* and who considers everyone in the 281st a hero, spoke at the Banquet. Tom had his book available which he personally autographed and offered at a reduced price. He also donated a case of signed books to the PX. Tom's talk was video recorded and I am told it can be posted, listened to and watched on our soon to be launched new website. It can also be purchased on DVD thru the PX. Save your money and check it out on the web when posted. Also the documentary, *Valley of The Tigers*, featuring Tom and A-502, is available

on DVD thru the PX. And then Capt. Mike Rush of P Troop, son of our own Jay Rush, had a slide presentation of his time in Iraq. He expressed his appreciation for the support of the 281st Assn to his unit while deployed.

Thank you for your confidence in electing me Vice President.

Jay Hays
Vice President

And now the Membership Chairman

Below is part of the first article I had ever written for the Intruder Newsletter. My how time flies when you're having fun !!! At this time I was Member #051. I'm not sure how many members there were in July 2000.....

My name is Gary L. Stagman, elected as Senior Member At Large and appointed as Membership Chairman for the 281st Assault Helicopter Association during the Unit Reunion/Business Meeting of July 2000.

I first came to the 281st in Jan 66, at Fort Benning, Georgia and arrived in VietNam with the unit in Nha Trang. I was with the unit from Jan 66 to Dec 68. During this timeframe I flew as Crew Chief in Wolf Pack, Rat Pack & Bandits flight platoons. In Oct 68 when I was promoted to SSG, I was then moved to Maintenance. I again returned to the 281st in Jan 70 and served as Maintenance Platoon Sgt till unit deactivation in Dec 70. I probably am the unit's longest serving member.

So, in 6 years we have gone on to member # 333 !!! During the 2006 reunion in St Louis, I had one conversion from Annual to Life, one new Life member and three new Annual members... You can see it worked out very well, plus we were able to collect a lot of the 2007 dues with the reunion Registrations.

This will make Ken Smith very happy. Just in case I hadn't passed this information on, Ken Smith will be the collector of the Annual/Renewal dues only. Only NEW applications for membership will still come to me at the address on the membership form. So send your renewal dues to: Kenneth D. Smith, 3939 Fair Hill Road, Fair Oaks, CA 95628.

So if you know of anyone that we don't have listed, pass their information on so I can get a letter off to them. I do have a positive side on

all this is, that in talking to guys, I am getting some directions on which way to head when they mention names in our conversations...

I still am begging for more information that is contained in old orders, rosters, etc. I have received some information (since the last newsletter) on guys in the 1969 timeframe... That is the only year that I have almost no information to research for guys. But, I will take any information that I can get to keep the searches going on.

The next thing I want to discuss is that in order for us to keep in touch with you, we must have current personal information, so we can get the information passed on to you guys. I'm finding that a lot of folks are moving, changing E-mail address and telephone numbers, which make contact of any sort just about out of the question. PLEASE keep your information on the master roster up to date.

Thank you for your continuing support to the 281st AHC Association!!

Gary Stagman
Immediate Past President &
Membership Chairman

The SM@L Speaks...

What a great time of fellowship and remembrance we all had at the Reunion. As always the Remembrance Ceremony is very special to all.

Each year that I attend I am more impressed with the relationship between former officers and enlisted. There is no rank anymore, only men that shared a common experience and now wish to honor those that gave all.

The phrase "**Bring a Friend Next Year**" was created this year. I ask each of you to accept this challenge and commit to contact at least one Intruder that either has never been to a reunion or hasn't attended in a while.

I will always cherish the memories and friendships I have developed with each of you through our reunions. Let us share this special bond we have with all Intruders.

Frank Little
Senior Member at Large

The JM@L talks "Election"....

Well, we will need nominations for the following offices within the Association at our next election; Junior Member at Large, Vice President, Treasurer, & Secretary. I don't think there are any specific qualifications for any office other than the will to serve the association. I encourage you to "step forward" and offer your services to our association. You will hear more from me concerning the election in future newsletters.

Lastly, I want you to know that I feel honored to serve such a distinguished group of men.

Earl Broussard
Junior Member at Large

The Chaplains Corner.....

Well, the 2006 281st AHC Assn. Reunion is past for another year and it was good to see everyone there and sad to see that some were not there. I always look forward to seeing everyone. I appreciate renewing old friendships and meeting and forming new friendships with those I had not met before.

As we talk in groups and to individuals we find that many of our numbers are suffering from physical and mental ailments that have left scars that are not visible to the eye. As chaplain it leaves me feeling inadequate to help soothe the wounds and remove the scars. I have seen healing in some of the folks that I have been around. It may not be complete and total healing but many have made great strides in dealing with the legacy that our experiences in Vietnam have left behind.

This year was no different and if you missed the reunion start planning on coming next year. I believe you will be truly blessed by the camaraderie that you will discover in the presence of this diverse group of men and women.

Norm Kaufman – Chaplain

Remembrance Committee

We are pleased to announce that that our Chaplain Norm Kaufman has volunteered to co-chair the Remembrance

committee and give it some new life. Please send him a note of thanks.

Norm and I will now try to get the remembrance books back on the front burner and work toward expanding the annual remembrance ceremony. If you will take a moment and visit the web site you will see that we have come a long way, but there is still work to be done. We still have several of our MIA/KIA's with only have the basic information listed and in most cases we have not been able to make contact with the families of these men. So once again we are asking for help. Darryl Stevens, our new president has stepped up to the plate with genealogy research resources and is available to assist anyone who is willing to take on the task of researching one of our lost brothers and or contacting his family members. You may contact Darryl at: dstevens12@hotmail.com. If you have the time and will help please contact Norm or I and we will get you started.

Jack Mayhew

The Reunion Chairman

I have been a member of the EB for two years and the majority EB has always worked to keep the reunion costs down. The more involved I get the more important this is as each year more of us are on fixed incomes. Keep the cost in mind as you read on.

In the fall of '06 the plan was the '07 reunion would be in Chicago. At the March '06 reunion meeting we were presented with room rates of \$125, more than double St. Louis. Also we would have had to pay for hospitality room, and any food or beverage would have had to be purchased through the hotel at a considerable markup. All in all the additional charges for our functions would have resulted in costs far in excess of what we have to pay the St Louis Plaza Hotel.

The '08 reunion was to be in Nashville but our man on the ground who was going to chair it has issues with his business (partner's health) that are preventing him from chairing the '08 reunion.

When Darryl Stevens and I sat with the St. Louis convention people to sign the '07

reunion contract, I asked if they would freeze our rates for the next five to ten years if we would agree to stay, or make St. Louis our permanent reunion home. After manager choked and nearly fell off her chair she regained composure and said she would have to talk with the complex manager. As I went upstairs I passed the complex manager and told her what her convention people would be asking her for, on behalf of the 281st. Figured I might as well get them all off balance at the same time. She was shocked, so that looked good to me. She immediately set up two tables, gathered her people and literally in two minutes we were in negotiations.

At this point one of our problems was where to store all the 281st stuff. Last year Gary Stagman let us use half of his storage unit but it would not be available to us this year. A lot of the PX stuff had been in Texas. We have many signs, banners, coolers on legs and casters, and our 50 guideon's. A small climate controlled self storage unit is a minimum of \$30 a month or \$360 a year. So in negotiations the hotel agreed to store everything for us at no charge. Fred Lewis built a hinged box. Casters were donated and the box is labeled "281st". Thanks not only to Fred but Don Torini and Gary Stagman.

The hotel has committed to keep our \$59 rate thru 2008 then \$2 additional each year thru 2012. The association has not committed beyond 2007. So I invite anyone who wants to see the reunion move geographically to find competitive rates or a source of funding to keep member costs down. You will need troops on the ground for planning. If anyone feels they have competitive rates contact me and I will send them a reunion checklist.

The reunion profit/loss was placed on the HQ and may be included with this newsletter. I don't know of another hotel facility that will allow us to bring in the food and beverage as we do here. Anheuser-Busch again donated the beer but amazingly we went thru as much water as we did beer. -

Jay Hays
Reunion Chairman

Notes and Comments

Following is a very special open letter to the membership written by Robin Hicks. During the General Memership meeting at the Reunion Robin requested to speak. And speak he did! For upwards of thirty minutes..... You could have heard a pin drop!! - Fred

I want to thank everyone who attended this last reunion for allowing me to speak during the General Membership Meeting. I was not on the agenda and was not planning on participating. I was there to simply listen and get current with what was going on.

I heard some comments during the discussions that bothered me and as I stood there and thought about those things I realized that I had to say something. I knew that if I did not say something, that I would obsess about it later, that I would experience feelings of anxiety, anger at myself, disappointment with myself, loss of self esteem for not being able to do what I thought should be done, depression, guilt, and more. I also knew these feelings would stay with me, not just for a few days or weeks but for years. They would never completely go away. I would remember that day and regret that I was not able to do something that I felt was so important. I would feel guilty at not being able to provide you with information that I felt would be of value, both to each of you personally and to our Organization as a whole.

This was the first time that I was able to stand before a group and say the things I said. Previously, I could only talk about these things in therapy groups where everyone there had been diagnosed with PTSD, or to individuals who were experiencing symptoms and were looking for answers. These individuals are at the top of my priority list because I know about the hurt and pain they suffer through, it is literally unbearable at times, I have felt it for years and continue to feel it almost every day. You will not see it in me because I will not let it be visible. I have had to hide this in order to fit in and survive in this "REAL WORLD" of ours for the last 38 years.

I was emotionally overwhelmed at the attention you gave me, the amount of time that you allowed me to talk and to the response I received when I finally had to stop. When I walked away from the podium, I got choked up and had tears in my eyes before I reached the back wall where I stood and tried to hide. I have tears in my eyes right now just thinking about it.

AGAIN THANK YOU - Robin

Jack Mayhew sends via the 281st YahooGroups Net.....

To: Robin Hicks
From: HQ_281AHC@yahoogroups.com (Jack Mayhew)
Sent: Saturday, August 12, 2006
Subject: PTSD

Robin you have done more for us than we for you. Come back next year and run a workshop with the Vet Center Rep. You have a lot to say and have walked the path. Welcome Home. JM

The Sargeant Major sends...

Aug 9, 2006

Once again, the reunion was a great success due to all the planners' and doers' work! On to next year! Our trip to KY to see the grandkids was just as good and a real pleasure for us. Thanks for all you do! Now, our age is showing up! - Bob & Bonnie Ohmes



“An Observation” by Karen Voss, former Army Brat, guest of and significant other to Fred Mentzer...

As a first-time attendee at the Reunion, I was overwhelmed by the down-to-earth love and camaraderie. It was one of the most real, heartwarming experiences I've had in a long, long time. The extreme high points were:

- Sharing breakfast with whoever was in the dining area at the time, getting to know people up-front and personal.
- The wonderful Hospitality Room that was open for everyone to share in food, drink, laughter (the BEST medicine), music, historical information and shopping in the PX portion of the room. I am a people-watcher and enjoyed just sitting, observing and listening; getting to *know* everyone.
- The Memorial Service is so poignant and meaningful. It was a time to remember those who made the extreme sacrifice. How special to gather together to honor and remember them. I wasn't certain I would be able to sit through the service, but found that the atmosphere to be reverent but up-beat.
- The Banquet on Saturday night found my cheeks trailed with tears as **Tom Ross** and **Captain Mike Rush** kept us spellbound as featured speakers. **Tom** was a Special Forces officer in Viet Nam. The 281st AHC are his “heroes,” and he reviewed 3-1/2 actual experiences from his book, *Privileges of War* (a must-read, by the way), when the 281st came to his aid in very stressful and extreme circumstances. **Mike** ran a slide show of pictures from the area in which his unit was billeted in Iraq while telling the *real story* of serving there. He expressed his appreciation for the support of the 281st Association to his Troop in Iraq. “There is no way that I would not have been here to share this time with you and thank you for the care packages that meant so much to each of us.”

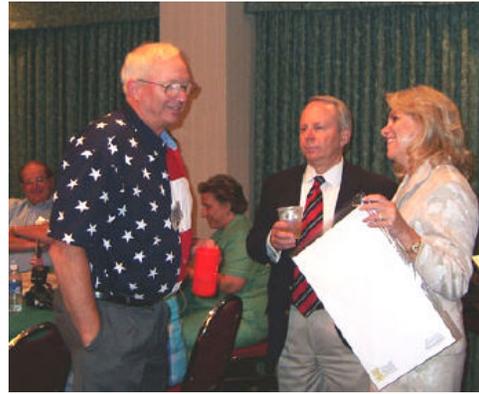
The *Missing Man* table in its pristine splendor was spotlighted in remembrance of those to whom the free world owes its highest respect and honor. It brought back such huge feelings and emotions for me personally, and it is forever in my heart, as are each of you.



If you have never attended the 281st AHC Association Reunion, you owe it to yourself to do so. You will be among some of the most wonderful people and fellowship one could ever ask for or expect—trust me. We are all just people who have common ties to a time that, when shared with one another today, can become a myriad of friendships, camaraderie, fun, laughter and forgiveness. I can hardly wait until August 2007. - Karen



Capt Mike Rush - with Dad - Jay Rush



Jay Hays

Tom and Mrs Ross

A "Reunion 2006 Note of Thanks" from Jack Mayhew

I would like to take a moment to thank all of the Intruders and their families that helped make the 2006 reunion a success. We had several old timers and lots of new blood in the mix and it worked well. The hotel came through again and it looks like this will be our new home away from home. If they get any more accommodating I may consider retiring there. Our goal was to have the best reunion possible on a break even basis and we did just that with a small profit of about \$500 for the association. We also learned some lessons that will make future reunions more "wife or significant other" friendly and therefore more enjoyable for all.

As you mat know the reunion torch was passed from the "old guys" to the new guys" and there is every reason to believe that they will make future reunions even better. I would like to especially thank Jay Hays for all he has contributed over the past few years. You may not know it but when the reunion was over Jay went straight to the hospital for hip replacement to be followed by knee replacement. Jay was involved in so many areas that it is hard to name one of his many contributions but he did make a commitment on PX stock and sales and he made his goal plus. My other side kick for the current round of reunions is stepping down but certainly not leaving us. Brian Paine has been involved in all of our recent reunions and without his knowledge, attention to detail and ability to keep us in line with our budget we would have been lost. Again you may not have known it but Brian was also operating with serious physical challenges and is about to undergo major surgery. Gary, as always was there to pitch in and be our "big boots on the ground". His relationship with the Plaza Hotel staff and willingness to do anything asked makes he and Nicki our Mr. & Ms. Saint Louis Reunion Team. It has been a pleasure to work with Brian, Jay, Gary, Bob, Norm, Earl, Fred, Don, Kelly and anyone else I may have missed over the past few years and an honor to serve each and every Intruder. **If you were there this year come back next year and bring a buddy.** See you in Saint Louis in 2007. - JM

And how about this.... The 281st AHC Assn IWLC (Intruder Weight Loss Club) !! Inspired by Barc Boyd, promoted by Jack Mayhew and managed by Norm Kaufman. If you wanna participate contact Norm at nckmmk@msn.com. He'll add you to the list and a monthly progress report will be posted through the CHAT Net, and hopefully on our new website. - Fred

From: Jack Mayhew
August 9, 2006

Our beloved Wolf Pack 36 and weight loss Idol, Barc Boyd has suggested that those of us who would like to be in a better state of health and shed a few pounds form a club and set next years reunion as a target date for us all to be to be in a more healthy state of being. Here is a proposal for those that would like to sign on (we will also accept wives in the program).

1. Sign in and give your present weight and your weight on the 1st day of each month thereafter.
2. The IWLC (Intruder Weight Loss Club) secretary (to be elected) will post the weights on the second day of each month. (I nominate Norm K. for this position.)
3. Encourage your fellow intruders in the program to keep it up.
4. The IWLC will meet in Saint Louis on Thursday, Aug 2, 2007 for a formal weigh in.
5. The two Intruders who loose the most weight will be treated to dinner of their choice by the other members of the club.

If you are up to the challenge and want to be in a more healthy state of being all you need to do is respond to this email. (If anyone is shy about disclosing their weight once a month we can use member numbers)

Chart as of 25Aug06

Name	Start Wgt	Aug
Brian Paine	233	
Earl Broussard	265	
Jack Mayhew	235	
Darryl Stevens	250	
Barc Boyd	238	
Jim Torbert	251	
Norm Kaufman	225	
Lee Brewer	214	
Will Clark	266.7	
Jeff Murray	234	
Frank Little	230	

Our trusty Treasurer Brain Paine sends the "financials"

**281st Assault Helicopter Assoc. Inc.
Profit & Loss (UNAUDITED)
January 1 through August 17, 2006**

Income	
Annual Members (renewal)	1,903.00
Donations	831.00
Life Membership Dues	1,300.00
Memorabilia	2,848.00
Reunion Fees	11,300.00
Reunion Tour	930.00
Total Income	<u>19,112.00</u>
Expenses	
2006 Reunion	
Caricatures	340.00
Door Prizes	295.00
Flowers	14.90
Friday Music	550.00
Hospitality Ste Supplies	1,109.28
Hotel	8,230.39
MC Travel	702.00
Members Giveaways	562.12
Memorial Service	95.00
Nametags	104.81
Photography	136.00
Postage	357.09
PX Items	1,238.00
Shipping	200.00
Supplies	162.19
Tour	1,050.00
Total 2006 Reunion	<u>15,146.78</u>
Donation Expenses	500.00
Postage and Delivery	177.53
Printing	828.15
Research	127.45
Telephone	126.13
Total Expenses	<u>16,906.04</u>
Net Income	<u>2,205.96</u>

**281st Assault Helicopter Assoc. Inc.
Balance Sheet (UNAUDITED)
As of August 19, 2006**

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking Savings	
Checking – Bank of America	0.46
Checking – Wells Fargo	16,879.05
Memorial Fund	171.55
Wells Fargo CD	15,000.00
Total Checking/Savings	32,051.06
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>32,051.06</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
Memorial Fund	196.55
Total Other Current Liabilities	196.55
Total Current Liabilities	196.55
Total Liabilities	196.55
Equity	
Retained Earnings	29,648.55
Net Income	2,205.96
Total Equity	31,854.51
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>32,051.06</u>

Editors Note: Brian Paine, our Treasurer since 2003 is resigning. Over the years Brain has devoted uncounted hours and no small amount of personal treasure to the job. Now he feels that it is time to "pass the torch".

Many thanks Brian, from all of us. And in particular from this old Wolf Pack 36...

You done good !!

"Once an Intruder, Always an Intruder"

KIA/MIA MEMORIAL AWARD

"Intruder of the Year"

W. Jay Hays
2006

Presented for meritorious service to the Association in achieving it's goal of keeping the memory and sacrafices of all intruders.

281st Assault Helicopter Company Association, Inc.

President



Awards Committee



Here lies the VP and "Intruder of the Year" Jay Hays after hip surgery. Norm Kaufman showed up to provide some morale support.

Jay was totally surprised when presented with the Intruder of the Year plaque at the Banquet.

Congratulations Jay, you richly deserve it !

To conclude this Newsletter here is another message from Robin Hicks. Robin is very knowledgeable about Agent Orange as well as PTSD. His article is a "must read" for any Viet Nam veteran. - Fred



I was asked a couple of questions about Agent Orange at the reunion and would like to provide some information regarding Agent Orange exposure.

Presumptive Service-connection: Any veteran who served in Viet Nam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 is presumed to have been exposed to herbicides (Agent Orange), if you were there, no further proof is required that you were exposed. This information was extracted from Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991. You do not have to provide any proof that you were exposed if you were in country during those dates.

All Viet Nam vets who served in Vietnam are also eligible to receive an Agent Orange Registry health examination. Contact the nearest VA medical center to request an examination. If you have any problems at a VA medical center go to the Patient Advocate at that center and have a talk with him. I have gone to the patient advocate twice when I was about to give up on something because I kept getting the runaround....in both cases I was contacted the next day by people who were taking action to get my concerns resolved. In one case I got a personal call from supervisor of one of the doctors I was having a problem with. You can also go to a web site for more detailed information, I took their exam and have been receiving a newsletter about Agent Orange every month. Go to www.VA.gov/AgentOrange.

If all else fails go to a Vet Center and they will help you! www.vetcenter.va.gov/ will tell you where to find them.

Vet Centers can provide you with some of the best help and assistance available. The Vet Center program was designed specifically to treat veterans and their families for trauma-related emotional difficulties. They specialize in PTSD, but are there to help you with any kind of emotional difficulties you may be experiencing, no matter what the cause. Post Traumatic Stress effects everyone, the vet centers treat a large number of Vets where the trauma was a result of things experienced in combat.

The symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress have been recognized throughout time. The Roman Soldiers had to deal with it, as did the American Indians. These societies accepted it and dealt with it and helped those exhibiting the symptoms, helping them integrate back into their societies. In the 1860's this emotional response was called "**railroad Spine**" (workers had been exposed to life threatening accidents and were reluctant to return to work), during the Civil War it was called "**soldiers heart**" (it occurred as a result of combat), World War I called it "**shell shock**", during World War II it became "**battle Fatigue**", the Korean War used the term "**gross stress reaction**", Viet Nam was different because there were so few battlefield emotional casualties. The military had done studies based on surveys and information they had obtained during World War I and II. They discovered that it normally took over 13 months of exposure before someone exposed to the trauma would start developing visible symptoms. Does anyone want to guess what was the determining factor in the length of our tours? What did happen was that they discovered that the symptoms did start showing up later, after the one year tour was completed. They called this "**delayed stress reaction**" or "**post-Vietnam syndrome**". In the late 1970s other terms started to be used to describe the same emotional responses in civilians exposed to other types of trauma like "**rape trauma**", "**battered woman syndrome**", "**police officers shooting trauma**" and "**abused child syndrome**".

In the late 1970s the Disabled American Veterans (**DAV**) sponsored psychological research into the emotional aftermath of battle on Vietnam veterans. The research was called the **Forgotten Warrior Project**. As a result of that research the DAV opened centers in 70 cities around the country to help the vets with counseling, help in getting veterans benefits and providing assistance in other areas where help was needed.

In the early 1980s the Veterans Administration (VA) started their Vet Center program. This was in response to the success the DAV had in developing treatment techniques and in providing much needed help to veterans. The Vet Center program was designed specifically to treat veterans for trauma-related emotional difficulties.

Post Traumatic Stress has been recognized throughout history, **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** has only officially been recognized since 1980 when the American Psychiatric Association included it in their official

diagnostic manual. The current diagnostic manual is used worldwide as the bible of mental difficulties. Everyone will likely experience post traumatic stress in their lifetime, some of us will be diagnosed with the disorder, a disorder that is extremely serious and impacts our lives and how we are able to interact with others. **The criteria for being diagnosed with PTSD is extensive and the negative impact it must have on your life is extreme.** I have the diagnostic criteria and can provide it to those who may be interested. I will do this at a later date if the interest is there.

I want to give you 2 definitions of PTSD.

- PTSD is a set of symptoms that surface after a very dangerous, frightening, and uncontrollable traumatic event.
- **PTSD is the normal reaction of a normal person to abnormal circumstances.**

We are not crazy or mentally ill, we are not weak minded, defective, deficient or loose cannons that are so dangerous that we should be locked away somewhere. We are just like you, but for some reason have not been able to get past experiencing the symptoms of post traumatic stress. It continues to control us, we see this and we fight it, but are unable to stop it, this causes frustration, confusion and feelings of being helpless. We do not like ourselves because we do things, that we realize later, hurt people close to us. We want help but are either in denial or are afraid to seek help because of the negative stigma that many people associate with PTSD.

I put the above paragraph in to emphasize what I said at the Meeting in St. Louis. Please do not give up on us. We need your help but are afraid to ask you for it. We are afraid of contact, we need and desperately want that contact but are afraid that if we do make contact we might do something that will offend or drive you away forever.

If we hide, we think we can still keep some kind of connection with you, if we drive you away we lose you forever! Learn more about us so you can understand how we feel and accept us as we are. Let us know that you care and that we will be welcome, and that we will not lose you due to something we might say or do that we had no control over at that time. this is hard to express because I am talking about things that might be so insignificant to you that you would not even notice them, but to us they grow huge and we attach things..did I say that wrong...could he have misunderstood and thought....should I have said that or used that word...why did I just do that...is he going to think ? now. It is kind of like being paranoid about everything!

If anyone wants to e-mail me direct with any questions or comments, I will keep who you are or what you say in strict confidence! You can talk to me and what you say will never be repeated. I know how it is, I have been there, I am still going through it and I am fighting it with everything I have. - Robin rkicks@mindspring.com

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

281ST AHC ASSOCIATION, INC.
Established 4 July 1999



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