



281st Assault Helicopter Company Association

**"INTRUDERS"**

NHA TRANG

1965 - 1970

NEWSLETTER  
NUMBER 38

Spring  
2009

**THE 281<sup>ST</sup> HOSTS THE FIRST REUNION OF THE  
10<sup>TH</sup> COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION  
AND SUBORDINATE UNITS**



**AT THE**

**ST LOUIS AIRPORT CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL**



**29 July - 2 August 2009**

## ***From the VP....***

I will turn 40 this year. Are you 40 also? When I was in college, I was not sure I would even make 40, and that sure sounded old back then. Now 40 seems like a pretty short time. Doesn't it?

It was November of 1969, 40 years ago, when I finished my one year with the 281st and went to Cam Rahn Bay for that great flight home. I think it was Joe Horwath who flew me over to 10th Battalion and waited all of 10 minutes for me to clear with them before he then took me over to the replacement detachment for the ride home. I was there early and was positive I was going to get home a day early, but that is another story. No flights that day, so I had to spend another night in a hooch filled with about 20 bunk beds and a whole lot of other guys who were very eager for the next plane.

Then early the next morning Dave Dolstein arrived for his trip home so we got to spend the time together on that long ride back to McCord Air Force Base and the Seattle area. We even shared the cab ride up to Sea-Tac Airport to catch a plane home. I think Dave was headed for Kansas City, or was it Denver?, and I was going home to St. Louis where my parents lived at the time.

How appropriate that on this year of my 40th anniversary we will have our reunion in St. Louis. I think everyone who is 40 this year should make an extra effort to be in St. Louis this summer. We are due a real celebration. In fact, Marilyn has suggested that we should all get together and plan on a trip to the Montelle Winery on Friday afternoon. It is the most scenic winery in Missouri and has a long history of producing some very fine wines. The winery is situated on a ridge 400 feet above the Missouri River and commands a magnificent view of the river valley, the village of Augusta and the surrounding farms and vineyards.

Of course all you over 40 and soon to be 40 could join our party. So, come on all you 40's; Dennis, Dave, Buck, Doug, Bill, Dave, Les, Wes, Gary, Jim, Bain, Don, Walt, Walt, Doug, Norm, Bob, Lee, Dave, Don, Jeff, Brian, Ken, Paul, and Joe. Who did I miss?

Take it from one who speaks from experience, get that room reservation made

today, before the deadline, or you might have to pay the regular rate. Please take advantage of this great hotel and the great reunion rate that they offer to the 281st AHC.

"Meet me in St. Louie, Louie!", and that goes for all you others also.

Jim "MOM" Torbert  
Vice-President

## ***Our long serving Secretary....***

### **WHY I COME TO REUNIONS, A MORBID REVIEW**

I went to a memorial service yesterday. It was very typical, with a preacher talking about someone he didn't know as well as he is trying to let on, lots of old people in suits, gray haired old ladies in moth-ball-smelling dresses and a smattering of grandkids running around unsupervised. It all reminded me of a family reunion where the family members don't really like each other and some outside visitors happened to show up who used to be friends of the guest of honor but because they were not family they were, well, outsiders, and the family really had no idea who they were or why they were there. I venture to say that the majority of the attendees had not talked to the guest of honor in probably years, if not many multiples of years. Kind of sad actually.

Most, if not all, of us are over 60. Most of us who show up with some semblance of regularity at the 281st reunions know each other, have some occasional interaction throughout the year, either via email or phone, perhaps a mini encounter or two, and try and keep in touch. The easy camaraderie that exists in St Louis is kind of comfortable, for lack of a better word. I don't consider reunions a vacation, instead I consider them more an obligation, a chance to hang around people who a long time ago made a decision to break form the norm of the 60's counter-culture and serve their country.

Whether drafted or joined, once in the service one can slide thru a 2-3 year obligation or one can actively participate, and while I spent 20 years participating I can honestly say that my time in the 281st was different from the other 19. We bonded. We got together after hours and bonded some more. We woke up together, we ate 3 meals a day together, we

hung around after work together, and we were more dependent upon each other for mission accomplishment and survival than any other place I ever served. And while there was a pecking order as there is in any organization, especially military organizations, the lines ran smoothly both up and down, enabling mission accomplishment in a way that transcended rank and individual job, everyone seemed to come together every day and everything got done. It all seemed routine.

So now I am north of 60, I think we all are, I've gone thru a bout of cancer, as many have, I've lost all of my grandparents and in-laws and my mom finds her time rapidly running out and one begins to feel mortal once more. I have no idea who is going to go first, me or you, but I don't want to go to my grave with the words "281st Assault Helicopter Company" in my obituary and have the members of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company wondering who I was, and having my family read letters from members of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company whom they don't know.

Yeah, you guys are fun (well, most of you) and while I say I would do anything for you guys when it comes down to it, what does that mean? To me it means interacting while still able to interact. I move a heckuva lot slower than I used to, have to think a heckuva lot more before I speak than I used to, and have to sneak more peeks at more nametags before remembering who some of you are, heck, I even glance at mine from time to time.

So consider this my "feeling mortal" lesson for the day. That memorial service I attended yesterday made me wonder why more people don't attend our little annual gatherings. There is not a lot of time left, heck, I could be here 2 weeks or 20 years, but I intend to gather with you guys at least once a year while I still can. Keeping the Faith, so to speak. I just haven't figured out why so few do.

Jeff Murray  
Secretary



† **Larry R. Salzman** †  
Wolf Pack 34 1968-69  
**4 March 2009**

*There was no like 'im, 'Orse or Foot,  
Nor any o' the Guns I knew;  
An' because it was so, why, o' course 'e went an' died,  
Which is just what the best men do.  
R. Kipling*

†



† **Mrs. Eileen Ware** †  
Mother of MIA John Ware  
**20 February 2009**

## ***The Chaplains Corner.....***

### *Interesting Interpretations*

**F**rom San Francisco: When I was a child, I learned this prayer as "Our Father, who are in Heaven, Howard be thy name." I always thought that was God's real name.

Grand Junction, CO: When I was younger, I believed the line was "Lead a snot into temptation." I thought I was praying for my little sister to get into trouble.

Missoula, MT: My son, who is in nursery school, said, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, how did'ja know my name?"

Uniontown, OH: I remember thinking this prayer was "Give us this day our jelly bread."

Covina, CA: I recall reading something years ago about the Pledge of Allegiance. Some child thought it began, "I led the pigeons to the flag."

Cleveland, OH: When I was little, I often wondered who Richard Stands was. You know: "I pledge allegiance to the flag. And to the republic for Richard Stands."

Schenectady, NY: I once knew a child whose favorite Sunday school song was "Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear."

I know some of these are amusing and I suppose that now as these children have grown up they also think about these and are amused themselves. As a pastor I am constantly reminded by people that, "That is just your interpretation." That is certainly true but I have also found this next statement to be true also. This was seen on another church's bulletin board. "The trouble with half-truths is you don't know which half to believe."

Norm Kaufman  
281st AHC Assn Chaplain

### ***From Our Past Prez....***

**A**s I write this it is Easter evening and I am also blessed and thankful for the purpose of this holiday, my family, and the members of the 281st AHC & Association.

The Commo Committee has done a tremendous job over the years with our website and now Ken Hamilton has also stepped up to help. As many of you might know Ken was the member who designed our Challenge Coin. Like my self and many other Dec 67 to Nov 68 ERA 281st Veterans, Ken was infused from another 10th Battalion unit (61st AHC).

Gary Stagman and Jack Mayhew have done a good job contacting other units of the 10th BN for this year's reunion. Reunion Chairman Jim "Mom" Torbert and his Reunion Committee under the watchful eye of our Association President have been diligently working to bring the 10th BN Vagabonds together with our 281st for a great reunion. We currently have over 40 paid registrants, and as I have, I'm sure many of you will be sending in registrations in the coming days. Don't forget to make your hotel reservations soon.

Thanks to our registration chairman Don Torrini for all his efforts. We also have a couple new items for the PX.

Our Junior Member at Large, Ed Hass, has been working to get a slate of candidates for

the election. Our officers and the entire EB have worked in harmony for the benefit of the members. I am thankful to so many of you especially our membership chairman, present and past officers, and committee chairmen.

Many have donated time, talent and resources to get our association and the scholarship fund where it is today. And let us not forget our editor and current year IOYA recipient Fred Mentzer.

Looking forward to seeing you at LZ St. Louis.

Jay Hays  
Immediate Past President

### ***And now the trusty JML....***

**O**nce again it is time to begin the annual process to elect officers to the Association's Executive Board (EB). As is done every year we will again be electing a Vice President (VP) and a Junior Member at Large (JM@L).

The VP will be elected to a consecutive three (3) year term on the EB. The first year he will serve as VP and then succeed to President and Immediate Past President in the following two years of his term. The VP's primary responsibility is to "Chair" the Annual Reunion Committee.

The JM@L will be elected to a consecutive two (2) year term on the EB. The first year will be served as JM@L and the second year as the Senior Member at Large. The JM@L's primary responsibility is to "Chair" the Nominations and Elections Committee which conducts the annual election of Association Officers.

Additionally, this year we will be electing a Secretary to a two (2) consecutive year term to the EB. The Secretary's primary responsibility is to record the Minutes of all EB meetings and the General Membership Meeting (GMM) and to act as custodian of the meeting minutes of all committees established by the Association By-Laws and EB.

No special qualifications are needed for a member to be elected to any of these positions **(although a "thick skin" and a "deaf ear" come in handy and most of us, if not all, must have both by now)** except the desire and willingness to serve the Association and

your fellow Intruders. Election to the EB is open to all Regular and Life Association Members in "good standing". **(For Regular Members that means their Annual Dues are paid and for Life Members it means they are still breathing.)**

The Timeline for the election process is determined by the date of the annual General Membership Meeting which will be held at the 2009 Intruder Reunion in St. Louis on Saturday August 1, 2009. The following are the key election cutoff dates for the 2009 elections:

- Last Day for Nominations & Declarations  
1 May 2009
- Ballots Received by Members  
1 June 2009
- Completed Ballots Returned  
1 July 2009
- GMM – Election Results Announced  
1 August 2009

With that said it is time to announce the "official" start of the Nominations & Declarations process. Remember any member wishing to nominate a fellow member or declare himself for any of the three (3) positions (VP, JM@L, or Secretary) to be filled this year should submit that member's name to me either by e-mail, snail mail, or phone. My contact information is:

Ed Haas  
39 Farmington Chase  
Farmington, CT 06032  
(860) 677-0748 (h) (860) 306-4124 (c)  
Email: [haased@ix.netcom.com](mailto:haased@ix.netcom.com)

The Nominations and Elections Committee will verify each nominee/declarant's eligibility and willingness to serve before placing his name on the ballot. "Here's Hoping to Hear from You" by the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. But if not, I'll definitely **"See Ya on R & R in Australia"** at the 2009 Intruder Reunion in St. Louis July 30<sup>th</sup>.

Ed Haas  
Junior Member at Large



## The Bean Counter....

Just a few words to let you know that our Association is on sound footing despite the economy, and that we didn't need any bailout funds from the government. Our balance sheet as of December 31, 2008 was presented to the Executive Board on January 8, 2009 and is shown below. Our only significant expenditure incurred since the beginning of the year was for the monument at the Airborne & Special Operations Museum (\$3,750).

	<u>Dec 31, 08</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
<b>Checking/Savings</b>	
CD Wells Fargo - #7062	8,600.43
CD Wells Fargo - #7054	20,000.00
Checking Wells Fargo - #794	<u>10,258.81</u>
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<u>38,859.24</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>38,859.24</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u><u>38,859.24</u></u>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
<b>Equity</b>	
Retained Earnings	34,394.42
Net Income	<u>4,464.82</u>
<b>Total Equity</b>	<u>38,859.24</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<u><u>38,859.24</u></u>

Jerry "Fred" Beck  
Treasurer

## And now the SML....

"Intruder of the Year Award"

In accordance with the 281st By Laws the IOYA Committee consisting of the Chairman, Ken Smith, Senior Member at Large; our current President, Frank Little; and the 2008 IOYA recipient, Fred Mentzer; are requesting nominations from the Executive Board for the 2009 IOYA. Nominations must be submitted in writing in accordance with the By Laws. Nominations must be sent to Ken Smith, email

ksmith9146@sbcglobal.net, no later than 15 June 2009. The winner will be announced and presented with the IOYA Plaque at the 2009 Reunion Awards Ceremony.

With regard to the Monument Project at Fayetteville, SC I have it from Paul Galloway, Executive Director Airborne & Special Operations Museum Foundation, that the stone has been cut and is waiting for graphics. Progress is positive but moving cautiously. I will endeavor to keep the membership informed in order to allow time to plan for attending a dedication ceremony.

See you in St Louis.

Ken Smith  
Senior Member at Large

#### **.... NOTES AND COMMENTS ....**

##### ***The following from the Scholarship Fund Board.....***

##### Scholarship Update

The deadline for requesting scholarship applications has passed and we received three requests. Based on the information we have to date it looks like we will have two applicants for the 2009 school year both of whom are Intruder grandchildren.

Last year we had an interesting situation when Mr. Arthur Ohmes, grandson of Bob and Bonnie Ohmes was awarded an Intruder scholarship and started his first year of college but was forced to drop out due to illness. Arthur insisted on returning the funds he received and did so shortly after leaving school. He will return to college this fall and will pick up his scholarship support at that time. There are still some great young folks out there and Arthur is certainly one of them.

It's that time again and much like public television we need your help. As you know we have three great young folks receiving scholarship funds and all three are on the honor rolls of their respective colleges. We could possibly add up to three more this year. To do that we will need your help so if you can contribute any amount to the fund, no matter how small, it will be greatly appreciated. Please send your contributions to the fund treasurer or you may include them with your reunion registration form.

If you made an annual pledge to the scholarship fund we would appreciate it if you would send your pledge to the treasurer so that the board can start the budget process for 2009/10. Please send your contributions to:

Robert M. 'Buck' Sorem  
Co/Chairman and Treasurer  
281<sup>st</sup> Scholarship Fund  
In care of: The Strategic Planning Group  
One World Trade Center, Suite 2340  
Long Beach, California 90831-2340

Buck Sorem and Marshall Hawkins  
Co-Chairmen

##### ***Tributes to Mrs Eileen Ware, Honorary Member and mother of MIA John Ware....***

*Jack Mayhew 3 March 2009*

Flight,

It is with great sadness that I tell you that Ms. Aileen Ware, Mother of John Ware, one of our 10 MIAs passed away on February 20, 2009. For those of us who knew her Ms. Ware was the "Intruder Mother of the century". For those of us who worked with her she was one of the most remarkable ladies that one could ever meet. She was a tireless pursuer of information and action required to find and bring home our MIAs yet she was a realist.

When we started to identify and connect with the families of our MIA & KIAs she was one of our first contacts and she made us all feel like we were members of her family. We grew to respect and love this wonderful lady and each visit with her, in person or by phone, was an uplifting experience. I did not have the honor of serving with John but over the years I have heard several individuals talk about the great



attitude and work ethic that John displayed in his job as a crew chief and after my first meeting with Ms. Ware I quickly saw where his great qualities came from. I am sad to hear of her passing but I am even more distraught to know that we will not be by her side when and if John's remains are found and returned.

It is a sad day for the Intruder family. Please visit John's pages on the web site to see a picture of Ms. Ware and to read of her pain in dealing with the uncertainty of John's status. General Patton once said. "It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died; rather we should thank God that such men lived." I am sure that I speak for all of us who had the honor and pleasure of knowing Ms. Ware when I ask each of you to thank God that such a great lady, mother and friend lived and was part of our lives.

May she rest in peace with her son John. - Jack Mayhew

*Jeff Murray 19 March 2009*

That's really sad, and if the stars are aligned up there where she's headed they should be telling each other 281st stores at this very moment. Of course a lot of us are headed in the other direction so we'll never know. Good night Mrs. Ware, it was a pleasure to know you and an honor to serve with your son. - Jeff Murray

***Chat-Net email from Don Budlong (Maintenance 1969-70) 14 March 2009....***

My daughter, Cpt. Jennifer Williams and her husband, Cpt. Nate Williams are back in Iraq again. Actually they have been there since October. Some of you may have met them in St. Louis at the reunion last August where they had a great time meeting the 281st.

This tour of Iraq is with the 1st Infantry Division from Ft. Riley, Kansas. Jennie is the CO of a military intel company in the 2/1 Special Troops Battalion. She is based in Baghdad at Camp Liberty in almost the exact same location she was in 05-06 with the 10th Mt. Div. Nate is the CO of Alpha Company of the 1-18 Infantry Regiment. His company is responsible for the joint security of a city called Hurriyah, size about 100,000 northeast of Baghdad. They live with the locals and work along side and train the Iraqi security forces. He works closely with their equivalent of a city counsel and has said what a difference a few years makes. The people now welcome Americans with open arms and are very happy to have them there to help.

In the near future they are looking forward to an R&R in Austrailia and New Zealand. Long term they are looking to click their (tar)heels together and be back in Kansas the end of next September. I am looking forward to that as well.

Keep them in your prayers.

***On the Web....***

Paul Greiner, Avionics & Bandits 1968, has put together an outstanding video tribute to the 281<sup>st</sup> and published it on UTube. It can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3F4WNqmlPI>.

Our sincerest condolences to Paul and his family on the tragic death of his oldest son in February of this year. May he rest in peace.

***There were two mini reunions in March....***



Harry & Carole Downs    Niki & Gary Stagman

*Granite City,  
Illinois*



Harry Downs – Gary Stagman – Bill Helpingstine

Salem, Oregon  
Kim Huong Vietnamese Restaurant



Ken & LaRie Hamilton – Ken Smith – Karen & Fred Mentzer – Sandra & Don Ruskauf

**From the Editor....**

As a member of the Reunion Committee I'd like to report on the progress of this year's gathering. As you know, the 281<sup>st</sup> is hosting the first ever reunion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion and subordinate company's. Jack Mayhew and Gary Stagman are the main coordinators for the combined event and report the interest shown thus far indicates that the attendance, including the 281<sup>st</sup>, could well exceed three hundred folks. If so, that would double the numbers compared to our past reunions. Hey, the more the merrier! The 92<sup>nd</sup> AHC in particular has shown enthusiastic support.

This year's Friday night theme is "R&R Australia" so practice up on your Aussie slang and whet your appetite for some "barbie". And, if you haven't done so already, get your hotel reservation and reunion registration in asap.

To conclude, every two years or so I include in the Newsletter a "How We Started" article that was first published in Newsletter # 3 in order to let folks know how our Association came about.

*Intruders,*

*The formation of a 281st Association has caught fire, to the point where there appears to be more and more folks that are unaware of the initial efforts and intent. I'd like to take this opportunity to give a little history of how the most recent effort came about.*

*At the 1998 Ft Worth annual reunion of the Viet Nam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) about 18 former 281st pilots got together for a little mini reunion. At that gathering we decided to attempt to put together an association. There were volunteers for temp positions and the hat was passed for initial operating costs. I ended up the "Secretary Pro-Tem" and also "Editor" of the newsletter. It was emphasized from the very first that the association would be "FOR ALL FORMER PERSONNEL OF THE 281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY AND SUPPORT ELEMENTS", and that's the way it will be. It was the general consensus that the initial organizing would be at VHPA gatherings as the most convenient and appropriate way to get things started (I don't think any of us anticipated how quickly and with what enthusiasm the project would "take-off", I mean Zooom! Just take a look at our email list, and that's not considering what's likely happening in snail mail land). And, we decided that the VHPA 1999 Reunion at Nashville would be the time and the place to constitute the association, vote for officers, charter and what-all. Although the reunion at Nashville is a pilot affair, nothing that I know of precludes ANYONE from coming to the mini-reunion or to the reunion in general. Of course the program events and functions are VHPA only.*

*So, the 281st Mini-Reunion at the Renaissance Hotel, at 1100hrs on the 4th of July, is OPEN TO ALL 281st!*

*In order to try to harness the enthusiasm and keep a modicum of control we've formed a Organizing Committee, the purpose of which is to put together a program for the Nashville meeting where we'll formally organize and constitute the 281st Association. The committee follows:*

*Fred Mentzer, Joe Biltzke, Jack Green, Brent H. Gourley, Jack Mayhew, Bob Mitchell, Jerry Montoya, Robert L. Williams, and Corky Corcoran.*

*I don't want anyone to feel left out of the organizing of our association. If you want to nominate someone for an officer position, suggest by-laws, offer constructive (or otherwise) suggestions, let one of the committee guys know, or better yet, come to Nashville (one thought I've had is write-in votes for those who won't be there) I'll be putting more on the above in the next newsletter.*



So guys, that's it for now. Spread the word about the association and send info about any new found 281st'ers to myself and Steve Matthews. – Fred Mentzer, Secretary Pro Tem



OK, that's it for this newsletter. Start your reunion planning now! - Fred Mentzer, Editor



**SEE YOU IN ST LOUIS!!**

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*"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**  
Frank Little  
**Vice President**  
Jim "MOM" Torbert  
**Secretary**  
Jeff Murray  
**Treasurer**  
Jerry (Fred) Beck  
**Senior Member@Large**  
Ken Smith  
**Junior Member@Large**  
Ed Haas  
**Immediate Past President**  
Jay Hays

#### **APPOINTED OFFICERS**

**Awards** – Ken Smith  
**Membership Committee Chairman** - Gary Stagman  
**Remembrance Committee Chairman** - Jack Mayhew  
**Historian** - Bob Mitchell  
**Historical Memorabilia Chairman** – Fred Lewis  
**Internet Groups Administrator** - Brent Gourley  
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**Memorabilia Sales Committee Chairman** – Jay Hays  
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**Newsletter Editor/Public Relations**  
Fred Mentzer