



281st Assault Helicopter Company Association

**"INTRUDERS"**

NHA TRANG  
1965 - 1970

NEWSLETTER  
NUMBER 47

WINTER  
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**2 - 5 AUGUST 2012 ST LOUIS, MISSOURI**



The  
14<sup>th</sup>  
ANNUAL  
REUNION  
of the

**281<sup>st</sup> ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY  
ASSOCIATION**



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## ***Glorious Leader Speaks.....***

The Christmas and New Year's holidays have once again come and gone and it is my sincerest wish that all Intruder families had joyful holidays and have a blessed New Year.

While winter is the normal time for hibernation, your "Future Reunions Planning Committee" was hard at work deciphering the data from the survey we asked you to complete on your ideas for future Intruder Reunions. I want to thank the 100+ Intruders who took the time to respond thoughtfully to the survey and the Committee members for reconciling the divergent data to prepare and present a recommendation to the EB. While there may be some changes to form and format, Intruder Reunions will continue and they will be held annually.

The 2012 Reunion Committee came out of hibernation before the "Groundhog" and quickly and decisively completed their plan for this August's festivities in St. Louis. Jim Baker and his group have already begun executing that plan and you will be hearing the details in this and future newsletters, as well as the, "registration packets" you will be receiving. While the folks on the planning committee can do "everything humanly possible" to ensure a great Reunion (**and we've had some great ones**), that is only assured if **YOU** are there. So mark your calendars and make your plans. We need you there!

As I hope you are aware the **G Company Intruders** who took our "**Intruder Call Sign**" back into combat and who your Troop Support Committee supported during their recent deployment to Afghanistan have all returned safely to Fort Drum from a very successful deployment. The EB has extended an invitation to all the G Company Intruders to join us in St. Louis at our **2012 Intruder Reunion** in August. While "active duty" commitments and the natural aversion to socialize with "old folks" will keep the number attending down we still expect a good representation and welcome them home.

There are two additional concerns I have about the "health" of our Intruder Association. The first is getting members to commit to serve on the Executive Board. This continues to be a problem each year. Now that even our youngest members are beginning to retire we should be able get an injection of "new blood" into the EB. So when you

are asked to serve (or if you wish to volunteer) please decide to do so. It will make the life of the current Junior Member @ Large (Jim Christensen) a lot easier and I promise "It won't hurt too much".

The second concern I have is the on time payment of Annual Dues. We have set up the Reunion Registration form as a reminder to Annual Members but while it has greatly improved there is still a significant delinquency. While the "state of the economy" and "fixed incomes" can be a challenge for us all don't let memory lapse be the cause of late payment. We still need your dues to support the Mission of the 281<sup>st</sup> AHC Association.

Ed Haas  
President

## ***The Veep.....***

As Vice President for 2011 and 2012, my primary job is to Chair the Reunion Planning Committee. This year the committee is putting together a reunion that we think you will not want to miss. It is scheduled for August 1st - 4th in St. Louis, and in addition to the no charge hospitality suite and our other activities, there are two key features this reunion will be built around, as described below.

First, we are bringing in a professional entertainer for an after dinner show following our Friday night buffet. Tim Richison is a magician who also infuses a little comedy and audience participation into his act. He has performed all over the country at all types and sizes of events, including military reunions, and promises a special finale to his show. The good news is that this show will be at no charge to you and with no increase in the reunion registration fee from last year. It will be well worth coming to St. Louis to see.

Friday night will be fun, but we think Saturday evening will be the center of attention for the entire reunion. The closing banquet on Saturday is always the grand finale, and this year we have a guest speaker who will really make it special. He is Bill Robinson, who was a POW in North Viet Nam, but not just any POW - Bill was one of the very few enlisted men held in North Viet Nam. Most US prisoners there were officers, either jet pilots or rear seat riders. Bill, however, was a

crew chief on an Air Force HH 43, "Husky" helicopter. Shot down over North Viet Nam in September 1965, the crew was captured and held until 1973, thus making Bill the longest held enlisted POW in United States history. Upon being released, Bill was promoted to Captain by President Richard Nixon. He remained in the Air Force until his retirement, and today speaks at service schools and other events, and participates in many former POW related activities around the country. His will be a compelling story.

The weekend nights, therefore, are going to be great, but there are also other reunion activities. Thursday is arrival day for most, and for those interested, we'll go over to Harrah's Casino for dinner as a group at the famous Charlie Gitto's restaurant. Transportation will be provided, and the same fine Italian cuisine will be served as in the original Charlie's in downtown St. Louis. Harrah's has a large hotel and nine different restaurants in addition to the Casino. You don't have to gamble; you don't even have to go into the Casino, but strolling through after dinner and watching the action could be some interesting entertainment. Of course for those who want to try your luck, you can stay and gamble as long as you like. We don't have to return as a group; the Casino throughout the evening provides free transportation back to the hotel.

Daytime activities that can be selected on Friday will be either the local winery tour or a tour of Busch Stadium, the home of the World Series champion St. Louis Cardinals baseball team. If neither of those interest you, St. Louis offers many sights and activities that can be done either individually or in a small group. Help will be available to make arrangements and set up transportation for any of those activities.

Finally, for this year there is the prospect of having some members of the G Company Intruders with us at the reunion. It's not confirmed yet, but these are men from the 2-10 AVN BN, 10th CAB, 10th Mountain Division, our namesake Company, who were deployed to Afghanistan last year. If some are able join us, they should give us an interesting perspective on what is happening over there, and maybe give us some good new war stories to boot.

All in all it's going to be a great reunion this year. Save the date reminders were sent out earlier this month, and I hope you were able to make space on your calendar to attend. Your

registration packet containing the registration form and full reunion details will come out around April 1st. The packets will be distributed via email this year rather than by regular mail as in the past. Please check your email carefully in early April and don't delete the registration information as just another piece of spam or junk mail. If we do not have an email address for you, your packet will be sent via the postal service as always.

The reunion committee is working hard, but remember the thing that really makes the reunion a success is all of you – just everyone being there and reuniting once again. All the other stuff is good, but getting together to celebrate who we were, what we did, how we did it, and to remember those we lost and have lost since is what it is all about. Let's do it again.

Jim Baker  
Vice President

### ***The Jr. Member@Large.....***

The time for the election is getting closer. We need a slate of candidates for the following offices:

Vice President & Junior Member at Large

***A Vice President shall be elected to a consecutive 3-year term on the Executive Board. The first year he shall be the Vice President. The second year he shall be the President. The third year he shall be the Immediate Past President.***

***The Junior Member at Large shall be elected to a consecutive 2-year term on the Executive Board. The first year he shall be the Junior Member at Large. The second year he shall be the Senior Member at Large.***

If you are interested or know of someone who might be interested in either of these offices please submit their names to me with a short biography of their time in the 281st.

The number of ballots cast in last year's election was dismally small. When you receive your ballot please fill it out in a timely manner and return it. Be sure your dues are up to date in order for your vote to be counted. If your membership has expired, please renew. You've heard it before but I'll say it again, this is your organization please support it by at least voting in the election.

The Reunion Committee meeting January was a good one. They have some events that should be exciting and fun. Put it on your calendar.

Jim Christensen  
Jounior Member@Large

## † *The Chaplains Corner* †

It's been a while since I've written a piece for the newsletter. As I start to write and check my files I realize it has been a year since I wrote. Isn't it amazing how fast time seems to go the older we get and the more health problems our spouses and we have. I told Jeff Murray the other day that "More water has gone under the bridge than will in the future." It has been 44 years since I returned from Vietnam. It has been even longer for some of you but less for others. Yet we remember that day like it was yesterday.

It amazes me the lifelong friendships that were made in that far away country. We are all proud of our service and appreciate it when someone thanks us for a job well done. In the same way we are waiting to hear God say, "Well done good and faithful servant!" I for one know that I will be satisfied to hear, "You didn't always get it right but my Son says you're okay so come on in." He is the best Comrade in Arms we can have in this struggle we call life.

Norm Kaufman  
Chaplain

## *The Scribe speaks of Reunions.....*

It's October of 1968 and I was a newly winged US Army Aviator and I knew exactly what to do, how to do it, and where I wanted to go, which was Vietnam and singlehandedly win the war. 2 weeks after graduation I arrived, and the 281<sup>st</sup> was so happy to see me that I sat in Dong Ba Thin for 3 days waiting on transportation. When they finally sent an aircraft the AC (Buck Yancey) tried to make us duck so we wouldn't get shot by some sniper firing .50 calibers at traveling Hueys.

After a day or so of checking in the pilots began making their way back from the Delta operation they were on and we began the process of meeting people in charge and getting our final assignments. And it came to pass that I met MAJ Miller, the CO. Lots of people have had lots to say about MAJ Miller but I never had a problem

with him over there, he brought me into his office and told me what to expect, what he wanted me to do and even who to watch out for. He never mentioned any names but he did say there were a few pilots who tended to, shall we say, bend the rules a bit including one with a propensity for stressing the airframe limits, and sure enough on my first flight this guy tried to make me slide my strapped-in-butt right out of the seat demonstrating an approach and I said to myself "This must be the guy." But even then I realized that he knew tons more than I did, and he had made it through the year so perhaps I needed to pay attention. Then I flew with this short, round guy who talked a blue streak and demonstrated to me that I had a long way to go. That guy is still talking today by the way, I think he was born to be a preacher.

After a year which included many Recondo missions, a move to Wolf Pack and 5 Delta deployments sandwiched around a way too short trip to Australia it was time to come home. The 281<sup>st</sup> sent us home the same we arrived, by telling us we could wait for an aircraft which may or may not get us there in time or we could ride in a truck. We took the truck and looking back that was the scariest ride of the entire year, but we got there early and my truck buddy was the same guy who had convinced me 12 months earlier to come to the 281<sup>st</sup> instead of the 155<sup>th</sup> (don't ask), the same guy who knew the manifest officer at Cam Ranh Bay and got us on the freedom bird a day early, the same guy who was a groomsman in my wedding but doesn't remember (I think we got him drunk).

A year later we and everyone else I knew went our separate ways, never to meet again I thought. But...Reunions, who would have thought 35 years later or so we'd be having reunions, so now most of us meet at least once a year. We keep losing intruders every year, that is not good, but that is one thing that keeps me coming back to St. Louis.

We have a Reunion Committee now, they have been working hard, at their own expense, so give them your support, they've come up with a plan based on your input. We owe them at least a pat on the back. And remember, our bank account is pretty full and the last man standing gets the residual, but not if you don't show up.

Jeff Murray  
Secretary

## **“Mom”, our very own Philosopher.....**

Jeff Murray and I share many things together. One thing that we share is that we both had a birthday this week. There is nothing like turning another year older that makes one feel very reflective about past things. I am thankful for my birthday and Jeff told me he felt the same about his. I hope and pray that we all will have many more birthdays'. At the same time, do not waste a day or a minute that we cannot get back. To help us I quote from the good Dr. Seuss on aging.

*“The fine-toothed comb of time, marches on, through the scalp of life.”*

*“I can still climb Mount Everest just as often as I used to. I can still play ball just as often as I used to. But to walk down the corner with the dog I find a little more difficult.”*

*“You’re in pretty good shape for the shape you are in!”*

Thank You Dr. Seuss. May we all continue with many more Birthdays' to come.

Jim “Mom” Torbert  
Past President (2009-2010)

## **The Membership Maaaaaaan.....**

This year's dues have come in very slow (I say this probably every time in the newsletter, I keep hoping that it will be a reminder to send them in.) The current dues year is: **I August 2011 to 31 July 2012**. With the dues being included on the reunion registration form has helped immensely! It could also be better too. But then again I have others that have paid ahead. Also as another thought, according to the By-Laws that if your dues/membership is not up-to-date, you will not have your vote counted in any of the elections. Thanks to those who make sure they are current!!!! In the past 3 months I have gained 3 new Life memberships and 1 new Annual membership. There is another working on a conversion from Annual to Life. I appreciate it!

I want to thank everyone that has been sending me their **new information to update the Master Roster**, this saves postage and you get your newsletters faster and to up-date your information faster, just send an email to me at: [Cooter@charter.net](mailto:Cooter@charter.net). If for some reason you do

not receive your newsletter by email or snail mail, that probably means your address is not current. You can go to [www.281st.com](http://www.281st.com) and click on Commo, Newsletters, and print it out.

Here is a comment that after talking to this person for almost 2 hours. He said;

Gary,

*Thanks so much for your true kindness. And for the records. As we all look back over the years, YOU have truly dedicated your life to the 281st. I so respect that! Again, thanks!  
David C. Gow, Bandit DG(69-70) Tail # 923*

This is just another reason that I just haven't given up on membership.

Again thank you for your support and have a very safe and wonderful Spring and Summer season. Be safe and of course **“WELCOME HOME”!!**

Gary Stagman  
Membership Chairman

## **SCHOLARSHIP**

The application deadline is almost here. If you have an aspiring scholar member of your Intruder family please encourage them to visit the association web site at [www.281st.com](http://www.281st.com) where our Webmaster has added a link on the home page for the scholarship program.

The details and application forms are all there. We currently have four students in the program and have opening for your children. However the deadline for submitting applications for next year is April 15 of this year.

## **† Passings in 2011 †**

Thomas P. Buckley	11-Apr-11
Frederick G. Funk	16-May-11
Harvey L. Hiner	8-Jun-11
Paul J. Leonard	28-Apr-11
Theodore J. (Ted) Nilssen	26-Apr-11
William S. "Bill" Perren	12-May-11
Joe B. Thurston, Jr	9-Dec-11
Kenneth F. Wilson	11-Apr-11

**An Intruder Is Not Dead Until He Is Forgotten**

**“May They Rest in Peace”**

## ***From the Senior Member@Large .....***

Just a quick note as the news letter is getting maxed out. One of my duties as the SM is to get a name for the Intruder of the Year. I have received a couple already (good ones I might add) but would be open to more. If you know of any Intruder out there who goes out of his way to make this group what it is just contact one of the Executive Board officers with the name and a short bio on why you think this person should be I.O.Y.

As has been said, there are many things to do in St Louie and like the time we spent in Jan. at the planning meeting. The time spent with brothers from long ago went much to fast. If you haven't made it to a reunion yet come on down or up. Bring your other half, the women have as much fun as we do, and make new friends. I still wonder how a bunch like us could find such a great bunch of women.

Frank Becker

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## **NOTES & COMMENTS**

*From Jack Mayhew.... "Memorial Day at the Wall in DC"*

Recently Frankie Esquilin reminded us that he and a troop on New York warriors visit the wall each Memorial Day and for several years we organized a meeting of Intruders on the same day. If there is an interest we will do that again this year and join with Frankie, Joe and their buddies to remember the 45 individuals Intruders that are on the wall. In past years we laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington and if we have enough interest we can try to schedule that event again. If you would like to participate please contact me ASAP. [Intruder06@comcast.net](mailto:Intruder06@comcast.net) or 410-451-4087. JM

*From Jack Mayhew again....*

## **REUNION HELP**

Jim Baker this year's reunion chairman has ask me to assist him in setting up a phone chain for the purpose of contacting all our former Intruders and informing them of the upcoming reunion and encouraging them to attend and bring a buddy. We have done this successfully in the past but to do it right we need your help!! So please give it some thought and if you have some spare time please contact me and we will get going on having the largest turnout yet. [Intruder06@comcast.net](mailto:Intruder06@comcast.net) or 410-451-4087. Thanks, JM

*From the PX Honcho....*

We had a couple requests for Intruder ball caps with the caption "Project Delta" instead of "Hell from Above". They have arrived and can be ordered by emailing me at [jhays@haysenterprises.com](mailto:jhays@haysenterprises.com) or calling my office at 800-344-2278 or my cell 330-770-2278.



I have had several orders from children of 281st AHC members who gave them to their fathers as a surprise for Christmas and birthdays. Father's day is coming and there are many other items available in the PX for selection.

Regarding our memorabilia supplier Awards Unlimited (AU), some initial rough spots in the road have been smoothed out and as time goes by more and more items will become available thru the online PX at AU. So

check it out when you're surfing the Internet. AW is a good supplier of our PX items and their memorabilia is made in the USA.

Since the Reunion 2012 Planning Committee meeting I have had PX items here and will ship as needed. The only item temporarily not available are Tee shirts which will be available at the 2012 Reunion.

*Rotor on to St. Louis*  
**Jay Hays PX Grunt**

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*From the Editor....* Every two years or thereabouts I republish an excerpt from the December 1998 Newsletter #3 explaining "where we came from". The full text can be read in the website Newsletter archive.

*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 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 Zoooom!). 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!*

**And that's how it all came about. We've come a long way, Intruders. Hoorah!**

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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**  
Ed Hass  
**Vice President**  
Jim Baker  
**Secretary**  
Jeff Murray  
**Treasurer**  
Jerry (Fred) Beck  
**Senior Member@Large**  
Frank Becker  
**Junior Member@Large**  
Jim Christensen  
**Immediate Past President**  
Ken Smith

**APPOINTED OFFICERS**

**Awards Chairman** - Fred Lewis  
**Book Committee Chairman** - Bob Mitchell  
**Chaplain** - Norm Kaufman  
**Commo Committee Chairman** - Fred Mentzer  
**Historian** - Bob Mitchell  
**Historical Memorabilia Chairman** - Fred Lewis  
**Internet Groups Administrator** - Brent Gourley  
**Membership Committee Chairman** - Gary Stagman  
**Memorabilia Sales Committee Chairman** - Jay Hays  
**Newsletter-Public Relations Chairman** - Fred Mentzer  
**Remembrance Committee Chairman** - Jack Mayhew  
**Reunion Committee Chairman** - Jim Baker  
**Survivor Assistance Team Chairman** - Marshall Hawkins