



281st Assault Helicopter Company Association

**"INTRUDERS"**

NHA TRANG

1965 - 1970

NEWSLETTER  
NUMBER 52

Winter  
2014

# It's Reunion Time

BRANSON, MO

25 – 28 September 2014



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## All 281st. Personal and Others Who Part Of Our Family

2014 is under way and if it is like it's here in Missouri spring can't come soon enough! I know many of you are starting to make plans for travel this summer and fall. Last year it was decided to move our reunion to a different location and time. Branson, Missouri was the place to go it seemed and while we were at it Sept. 25 - 28 was the date that work.

Hope this can work into your plans. There is lots to do in Branson if you haven't been there. You ladies who like to shop; malls, craft shops, craft malls. (I call them junk shops), most call them antique shops. There is even a old time 5 & dime down town. Then there are the show; morning, noon, and night. About any kind you like. Then there is always the time we enjoy the most, that is with our old friends from long ago who have become our new friends.

If you have never made it to a reunion let 2014 be the year to come. Branson is in Missouri but closer to the southwest. In fact I live in Missouri, but several locations in Texas and Oklahoma lots closer than I am.

We thought when we started this those flying into Branson wouldn't have a problem. Well Southwest air is stopping service to Branson the summer. But in true 281st fashion one of our members has stepped up with a plan. As it looks now we will have a 15 passenger van to use to make run to the Springfield airport 45 miles north which is serviced by several flights and air lines, and also ladies for those shopping trips.

As you can see things are starting to come together. If you would like to be in on the planning of the reunion for Sept. several of us are going to be together April 2 at the Camden Hotel and Conference Center our location for the Sept. reunion, for a day meeting to get all the details for the Sept, reunion set. If you would like to be included just let me know and I will send you the Info . on rooms rates and where to call.

After the meeting we will be getting out more info on where to call for rooms, the rates will be \$80 for 2 queens, \$85 for a king. If you want to go for sometime before or after the rate will drop to \$73 & \$78 for three day before and after the 25 of Sept. and 28 Sept. This rate is also for a very nice breakfast and a ice cream, cobbler bar in the evening.

Be looking for more info soon in the meantime here are some web sites about the hotel and Branson in general you might look at:

<http://www.bransontourismcenter.com/> <http://www.branson.com/> <http://www.camdenhotelbranson.com/>

### Frank Becker

Chairman, Reunion Committee & Vice President

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### *From the Prez.....*

Let me start off by wishing you all a Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year. As this year starts off we have some exciting things going on. The first thing is the return of Jay Hay's aircraft ship 66-17113 UH-1H to the continental United States from Colombia. The Tampa chapter of the VHPA acquired ship 113 from the government after it had been declared surplus. The ship will be restored to museum display quality and put on display at the H.E.A.R.T.S. Veterans Museum in Huntsville, Texas. Fellow Intruder Ed Duke, Nov 66 to September 67, is heading the restoration. Ship 113 was the first H

model Huey assigned to the 281<sup>st</sup> in January of 1968. The EB passed a motion to donate monies to the project along with donations from the 281<sup>st</sup> Associations members. The plan is to replace the missing parts, repaint the ship in the original paint scheme it had while it was with the 281<sup>st</sup>. You may still donate to the museum at the following address. Please put ship 113 on the memo line of your check.

H.E.A.R.T.S.  
Veterans Museum  
463 State HWY 75N  
Huntsville, TX 77320

The second thing that is going to happen is the reunion this year will be held in Branson, MO. Branson has a lot going for it. Branson has a good reputation for making veterans very welcome visitors. There is plenty of nightly and afternoon entertainment with activities such as three fishing lakes, Silver Dollar City theme park, river cruises, shopping, and golf to name a few. Frank Becker and Fred Lewis are doing a fantastic job of organizing the reunion so it should be a good one. So, for those of you who have petty differences with other Intruders put them aside and make plans to attend in September 24 thru the 28<sup>th</sup>. Hope you all have a pleasant winter and don't have to shovel too much snow.

Jim Christensen  
President

### ***The Past Prez and the Reunion.....***

The big news in the Association today concerns our annual reunion. Big changes have been made this year. As has been previously noted, both the reunion site and dates have changed. After six years, we are moving to a new venue and getting away from the heat and humidity of August. This year we gather in Branson, Missouri from September 25 – 28.

Branson offers a variety of attractions with something for everyone, and is a community that respects and welcomes all veterans. Exploring, sightseeing, shopping or whatever, can be done in comfortable conditions. You will feel like actually getting out and going and doing if you want.

The EB and reunion committee believe you will really enjoy Branson, and the reunion committee is working diligently to pull everything together. Southwest Airlines, unfortunately, threw us a curve by announcing recently they were discontinuing service to Branson starting this spring. However, plans are being developed to provide economical shuttle service from nearby Springfield, Mo. for those who are flying in.

Details regarding hotel accommodations, what to do in Branson, and etc. will be forthcoming by late April, which will give you plenty of time to make your travel plans. So, we will have a new look and feel this year, and that coupled with being able to get together with everyone again

will make this reunion even better. Hope to see you all in September.

Jim Baker  
Past President

### ***The Senior Member@Large.....***

This year started out and continues to be cold and snowy, especially on the east coast and in the mid-west. Neither cold nor snow will stop the 281<sup>st</sup>.

A few years back, Tom Ross wrote a book entitled *Privileges of War* about his experiences with Special Forces Detachment A-502. Many of you supported A-502 while you were with the 281<sup>st</sup> and are referenced in his book. More particularly, A/C 17113 and its crew played a major role on an operation in Ross's 1968 accounting of the war around Nha Trang.

Good news, A/C 17113 has been located in Florida and considering its age, is in very good condition. The aircraft has been purchased for restoration by the H.E.A.R.T.S. Museum (Helping Every American Remember Through Serving) in Huntsville, TX. One of our Association members, Ed Duke is spearheading the restoration project. I encourage you to visit the museum at their website [www.heartsmuseum.com](http://www.heartsmuseum.com) to view other restoration projects they've completed and see what they are doing for veterans

Don Budlong  
SM&L

### ***This from our Bean Counter.....***

While typing this I keep glancing out my window and see about 3 feet of snow. On top of that it is about 1 degree with 25 mph winds. I think I'm getting too old for shoveling snow. Sometimes I envy you guys that live in the tropics. Anyway, being shut in gives me time to prepare the Association's year-end financial statements that are presented to the Executive Board and the General Membership meetings at the reunion. But as usual in some prior years I'll probably procrastinate and do it the week before the reunion when I could be on the golf course.

Moving the reunion to Branson this year will be an exciting change for me and hopefully it will draw in more of the members that have never been to a reunion or have not been to one recently. I've never been to Branson but have

numerous friends and acquaintances that have recommended it. I understand that there are many activities and that they are reasonably close to the hotel. There is a new visitor's guide and other info on <http://www.bransontourismcenter.com>. We will be having our planning meeting in April. If anyone has been to Branson and has any suggestions for activities please emails Frank Becker.

And speaking again about the weather, it should nice in late September in Branson, unlike August in St Louis or, of course, here where I am now (Wisconsin).

Fred Beck  
Treasurer

### ***The Membership guy.....***

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**, but of course welcome **New Life Members**, Donald Elliff and Darryl Stevens!!

A note of very 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 has been sending me their **new information to update the master roster**, and (if you don't see a change send it again as I have had a computer crash, the biggest loss to me was my emails) with me processing the reunion registration forms will mean a lot of changes and corrections will have been taken care of, which

saves postage and you get your newsletters faster.

To up-date your information 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, which probably means that your Address or Email Address are both not current, 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 and upcoming Spring season. Be safe and of course:

**"WELCOME HOME"!!**

Gary Stagman  
Chairman, Membership

### ***The Sec'y gasses.....***

Most of you know we moved to Weatherford last April. Anyone who went through flight school remembers Weatherford, it was that city we drove through on weekends on our way to Fort Worth to hit the local cultural spots like The Cellar and Green Valley Raceway. No one stopped in Weatherford unless it was to buy a Corvette from Jerry's Chevrolet and that didn't include any WOC's I knew. All I really remember about Weatherford was that the highway from Mineral Wells was brick and there was a town square, something I had never seen before having essentially grown up in Germany. Even after spending a year in College Station, Texas wasting my dad's money by not going to class I don't remember seeing a courthouse in a town square.

Upon returning from Vietnam I did settle into an apartment on South Main, rooming with Dave Dolstein. I stumbled through my IP checkride and was assigned to Dempsey AHP, and that was a fair drive for someone having to be at work at 0500 every other month (I did get to see Fat Albert every now and then) but it was close to Fort Worth, the Mecca for women and things to do. But man was it boring; there was nothing to do in Weatherford.

I was dating some girl in Fort Worth, she was kind of like Weatherford, nice to look at but boring as heck, when someone in our little circle asked me to go on a blind date. It turned out there were 8 couples on this date, we all went to

the Carswell AFB O Club and my date was a real dog so being the typical horny Warrant Officer that I was I started eyeing the other girls, none of whom I knew. Long story short I ended up with Janie and we got married 9 months later, moved away 1 month after the wedding and never wanted to come back.

I ended up back in the Army and when we retired in 1990 we retired to...Fort Worth. But the pull of home got to me, not Janie, me, and a few years ago I started exploring the idea of moving back here.

We pulled the trigger last spring and here is my assessment of Weatherford. It looks the same, the streets have the same buildings, the square has the same courthouse, the bricks are gone but the Farmer's Market and First Monday are still here, the cops still give out copious amounts of speeding tickets, mine and Dave's apartment is still standing right across the street from Gibson's which still has the exact same stuff on the shelf that it had in 1970. The town square has new residents in the buildings, the town Hardware Store is now one of the best restaurants anywhere, The Fire Oak Grill (from the NY Eve Menu: ***Duck Confit with Fennel, Roasted Yukon Potatoes and Huckleberry Gastrique***) and on the bypass interstate you can find any department store or fast food joint you can find in any city in America. Mineral Wells is a short jaunt down the road, Woody's (the old Quonset hut beer stand) serves some really cold beer and burgers and the best jalapeno's anywhere. But the best thing about Weatherford? No Wendy Davis.

Anyone is welcome, the bar is always open.

Jeff Murray  
Secretary

### ***A Word of Remembrance.....***

Since our last reunion we have received notices of death for three former Intruders and one honorary member. There are probably more that we do not know about?

Recently the president of the VHPA devoted his letter to the membership on this subject. In his writings he stated that the VHPA would lose over 600 individuals in the next year. While it would be possible to statically compare their size to ours and predict a number, it is enough to simply say that the clock is ticking for all of us.

This is a simple reminder that now is the time to put your affairs in order and it is not that big of a job.

1. Make a will.

2. Formalize your final arraignments with your local funeral director. (All of us can be buried in a military cemetery and for those of us who choose cremation our remains and those of our wives can be placed in Arlington National Cemetery as Arlington now takes the cremated remains of any individual who served in the military and there is a full military honors service.)

3. Put your records and military information in order and tell your wife where they are located. (I have a folder that I keep on my desk that says "I Be Gone".) Not a lot of work but it will save your survivors a lot of grief and as we know from experience possibly a legal fight.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, TELL YOUR FAMILY ABOUT YOUR ASSOCIATION AND LEAVE THEM A LIST OF FOLKS TO CONTACT WHEN THEY SAY GOODBY TO YOU. We now hear about most deaths through someone who happens to see their obituary. We can, and often do help widows get through the bureaucracy they face in their time of grief. We will help your family and if we know in time we will arrange for your fellow intruders to attend your service.

I would be remiss if I did not tell you about the loss of our dear friend and Honorary Member, Mary Ellen Nabors who was laid to rest in Arlington on Jan 31<sup>st</sup>. Mary Ellen is the sister of Tommy Condrey, MIA, whose 70<sup>th</sup> birthday is Feb. 12. 2014. Mary Ellen was a tireless crusader in our struggle to locate and bring our 10 missing intruders home. She was one of the only Intruder relatives to still make the annual trip to DC to meet with the DOD folks and to let them know that we still care. She shall be missed and remembered.

Jack Mayhew  
Remembrance Committee

**TAPS**  
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Robert T. Brafford	June 2013
Larry L. Ouverson	3 December 2013
Raymond D. Anderson	15 July 2013
Pernell H Avery	10 August 2012
William H. "Bill" Allen	30 December 2013

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## **More on #113.....**

**F**or those not on the net 113 has recently been retired from the FL National Guard and awarded to the H.E.A.R.T.S., Veterans Museum in Huntsville, TX, all thanks to Intruder Ed Duke.

113 was one of the second pair of H-Models the 281st AHC received in January 1968. I was assigned 113 as the first crew chief. It was on many Delta missions, lead ship in the rescue in the Valley of the Tigers, it had twin M 60's on some of the Delta's and was coming out of the hole when Donald McCoig was KIA, the only 281st KIA in 1968.

113 is currently at Lance Ham's cattle ranch waiting to be moved to Huntsville, TX. With the Associations donation plus other member donations along with Ed Duke's scrounging, arm twisting, and begging it will be restored to its original appearance with 281 on the front doors for ground level display only (not flyable) condition. Several other Intruders have helped with parts and donations.

I want to thank ED, the Executive Board and all those who are helping with this project. Several combat era photos of 113 have been prepared for donation to the Museum. As much history about 113 and its missions and crews as we can gather will be given to the museum for them to display and put on their web site. Any members that crewed, or have stories related to 113 please forward them to Ed, myself or the Museum to be part of the history of this aircraft.

I have learned from the Museum that most aircraft on display at museum have very little history other than what war it was in. From what the H.E.A.R.T.S. Museum already has on 113 they have said this could well be the most documented Viet Nam era helicopter. All donations to the Museum are tax deductible.

Jay Hays  
#113 Project

## **To Close..... from the Editor**

**A**t the 2013 annual reunion Richard Houston requested to speak during the Membership Meeting about a privately owned Viet Nam Veteran memorial at Angle Fire, New Mexico. This memorial has since become a state park and as such is the only state park in the US. He informed us that he intended to place a brick there for each of our KIA's and in fact had already begun the process, paying for each brick from his own pocket. When he concluded his remarks the membership voted to reimburse Richard's cost and to pay for any additional bricks. Donations were also contributed on the spot or through online emails after the reunion. Don Budlong volunteered to head up this process.

There was a Memorial dedication ceremony on August 31, 2013 where our bricks were placed, by a group of volunteers, in a separate area. The work of the brick placement was done before and on the morning of the day of the ceremony. Pictured below are those who "did the work".

Richard and Susan Houston are to be congratulated and in particular "appreciated" for their efforts and dedication. Thank you, Richard and Susan.



Richard Houston – Doyle Creed – Jerry Montoya



Richard & Susan Houston

Members, family, and friends.... A dedicated group!



Peggy Montoya–Doyle Creed–Jerry Montoya–Cathy Lovato–Arthur Gallegos–Penny Gallegos–Joe Lovato–Susan Houston–Richard Houston–Allen Houston–Kevin Houston–Scott Ortelgel–Helena Ortelgel–Renee Ortelgel

A section of the 281<sup>st</sup> Website will be devoted to this outstanding effort organized by the Houston's. There are many more pictures. I hope to have it completed in the near future.

<http://www.vietnamveteransmemorial.org/>

*"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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