



281st Assault Helicopter Company Association

“INTRUDERS”

NHA TRANG
1965 - 1970

NEWSLETTER
NUMBER 56

February
2015

To Our 281st Family

Spring is getting closer here in Missouri. It has been up to 60 the last few days but more cold on the way. Will be soon time to travel to St Louis for a busy day of reunion planning, EB and book meetings. If you have time and can, please join us for that time together. A little work and lots of fun as always when 281st personnel get together.

Since our reunion last September in Branson, MO, there have been several changes in the management of your 281st Association. To begin with, Fred Mentzer, one of the initial organizers of the Association passed away in November. Among many other hats that Fred wore, he was our webmaster and Newsletter editor. At the time of his death, Fred was working on an overhaul of the Association website. The Communications Committee headed up by Bob Mitchell took over and began a conscientious review of the website and viable options going forward. The Committee, including Jim Baker and Don Budlong discussed various options and alternatives. The Committee then found a volunteer and appointed Brent Gourly, Life Member No. 024, to assume the Association Webmaster duties and responsibilities.

After reviewing the website and its make up, it was decided that we do not need any major changes to the site; just minor tweaking. The website will continue to be hosted by “1 and 1” and the only on-going costs will be annual hosting fees.

Don Budlong has volunteered to take over Fred Mentzer’s Newsletter responsibilities. This is Don’s first Newsletter.

Another change in our organization is in membership. After 15 years as the Membership Chairman, Gay Stagman is stepping down. Over those years Gary has done an incredible job tracking down 281st folks all over the country and building our membership of the Association to what it is today. Gary may be stepping down, but he is not stepping out. He will be an active member of the Remembrance Committee working with Jack Mayhew. When you see Gary at the next Reunion, be sure to thank him for a job well done.

Fred Beck, our Association Treasurer has volunteered to assume the responsibilities of Membership Chair. Thanks Fred for stepping up. The Executive Board (EB) is now looking for someone else to step up to be Fred Beck’s “back-up” in membership. Any volunteers

Thanks to the people who have stepped up to carry the 281st Association forward.

That said, I am looking forward to seeing you at any one of the 281st events during 2015 to include:

- our mid-year planning meetings in St. Louis, the end of April;
- Fred Mentzer’s Memorial Service at Arlington National Cemetery, possible in May;

- the Special Operations Command Plaque dedication ceremony at Ft. Bragg, possibly in June and;
- our Annual Reunion in St. Louis in October.

More details to follow.

Frank Becker
President

From the Vice Prez.....

In January of 1970 I left Nha Trang and the 281st for the last time. The Company colors were also retired later that year. **This year we will commemorate the 45th Anniversary of the last flight of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company.** What better way to celebrate than at our Annual Reunion in St. Louis. Instead of mid-summer, this year we will rendezvous at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in the fall. Mark your calendars for **October 8-10 for this year's gathering.**

The Reunion Planning Committee will be meeting on April 29th at the Crowne Plaza to discuss our Friday night dinner, Saturday night banquet, Saturday Memorial Service, ladies day out, special entertainment and excursions. Remember this is YOUR reunion and all members are invited to participate in its planning. Anyone interested, please call (843-707-7474) or email me at donbudlong281@gmail.com.

At last year's Reunion in Branson, MO, we had a lot of "first-timer's" in attendance; many from the 1970 era. Among them was Wally Wagers, commanding officer of the 281st when the colors were retired. To further celebrate this 45th anniversary, we would like to see as many members in attendance as possible, especially those that served in 1970.

For more information as it becomes available, stay in touch by visiting the Association's rejuvenated web site at www.281st.com. Also consider joining either of our moderated networks, the HQ or Chat nets.

Don Budlong
Vice President / Reunion Chair

The Past Prez

With this newsletter we mourn the passing of Fred Mentzger our Commo Committee Chairman. Fred was also our newsletter editor and webmaster. As most of you know Fred was in the Wolf Pack and one of his deeds was the blowing up the ESSO gas station near Buddha during Tet. I remember his sense of humor as dry and at times witty. He will be missed. Internment will be at Arlington at a time to be announced later.

Wolf Pack crew chief Earl Broussard is in [Methodist Hospital](#), 7700 Floyd Curl Drive San Antonio, TX 78229-3993 he awaiting a heart donor to replace his. Send him a card and keep him in your prayers.

Our in ground plaque will be placed In Special Operations Command's Meadows Field Memorial Plaza. The Secretary of the Army approved our request 3 years after Walt Pikul took on the responsibility of the project and seeing it come to fruition. A big Thank You, Walt for all your hard work.

We will be returning to St. Louis for our reunion this year. It is planned to be at a later date than previous reunions in an attempt to have cooler weather. The Crowne Plaza will be our hotel. Look forward to seeing you all in St Louis.

Pray for our troops safety and well-being.

Jim Christensen
Past President

The Jr. Member@Large.....

Hello Intruders! During the reunion in Branson, MO this past October, I accepted the position of Junior Member at Large (JM@L). Duties of JM@L include administering the election of officers at our next reunion to be held back in St. Louis. We will take nominations for 2 (two) positions that are up for election.

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 (SM@L).

Traditionally the SM@L has moved into the position of Vice President. Will McCullum currently holds the office of SM@L and said that he will accept nomination as VP. This does not preclude other nominations for this position and anyone interested in serving is encouraged to offer their name for consideration.

We also need nominations for Junior Member at Large. If you have interest in serving on the Executive Board and helping with the administration of our fine organization, the JM@L position is a great opportunity.

If you are interested in serving as our JM@L or know someone whom you want to recommend, please contact me at bainb@adelphia.net or call at 602-743-9856 (Mobile).

Bain Black
Senior Member at Large

This from our Bean Counter.....

As can be seen in another part of the newsletter I am picking up another duty that of Membership Chairman. A provision I made in volunteering was that we find a backup for that position and

for the treasurer position. We will be addressing that at our EB meeting in April.

The main reason is that we are not getting any younger and as can be witnessed in the unexpected passing of Fred Mentzer, we are now scrambling to continue his duties. As for the treasurer duties my suggestion will be to have someone who could temporarily take over paying bills, making deposits, and maintain the books until a new treasurer can be found. That person would also have to be aware of the location of the bank accounts and could maintain a backup of my computer records in case of my demise. In the past when a new treasurer was elected, the past treasurer was able to transfer records and brief the new guy.

Much of the above would hold true for my duties as membership chairman. Fortunately, I had Gary's input before taking them over. Any of you guys out there willing to volunteer?

Fred Beck
Treasurer

The "OLD" Membership guy.....

This is being written by the old Membership Chairman for 15 years, I have decided that I just had been doing it just too long, and let some new blood in on the action. I have transferred all of the records and computer files and software to Fred to continue on without any having to make new forms.

So that means if you want your newsletters or any other association information you must send to **FRED BECK** (the "new" Membership Guy) any and all changes to your contact information. Keeping all data up-to-date on the rosters makes it easier for some of your old buddies to be able to find you. At the reunion the membership area was changed, which changed the dues back to 1 Jan - 31 Dec of the membership year. Any dues not paid before 31 Jan of the new-year become delinquent, not able to vote or hold any of the Executive Board positions. The dues year will not change even though the reunions are going to be held later in the summer/fall so it will be cooler.

One of the positives, dues have come in more regularly along with some annuals changing to life and also the gaining of a quite a few new members, both life and annuals. So folks keep up the great work!!

Just you all remember this unit was not just comprised of the 281st AHC only, remember all the Pilots, Crew Chiefs and Door Gunners, plus 95% of the aircraft.

The 145th ALP, 6 Platoon (Fangs) and all the 2/172st Helicopter Company helped to add to the new guys coming in to in fact, If I left out any of the units or personnel I did not do it on purpose, maybe it may have something to do with my age!!

All of your dedication and hard work made the 281st AHC to be:

"Designated as the First US Army Special Operations Helicopter Unit".

Mailing address for Dues and New Membership paperwork now needs to be sent to:

J. Fred Beck
Membership Chairman
281st AHC Association, Inc.
205 Carey Court
Neenah, WI 54956
Phone: 920-558-4127 E-mail: JJB@new.rr.com

I would like to thank all of you for your service and do please help Fred out as he is also the Treasurer. My hats off to you all for your support.

I guess for me to finish I need to give you all a big WELCOME HOME !!

Gary L. Stagman, Served in the 281st AHC 66, 67, 68 & 1970

Gary Stagman
"Old" Membership Chairman

The "New" Membership guy.....

As your new membership chairman I'd like to first give my thanks to Gary for the great job over the

many years as membership chairman. I encourage the rest of the membership to do likewise. My understanding is that Gary will still be involved in remembrance activities and looking for new potential members. However, now that he's free to go camping more often, he should be less grouchy.

Please don't hesitate to call or e-mail me regarding membership items. Gary has provided my contact information.

Fred Beck
"New" Membership Chairman

The Sec'y gasses.....

So it's back to St. Louis for us again this year. I'm sure there are folks who are happy and folks who are, shall we say, less than happy. All I have to say about that is we will take input from anyone who is willing to help with the planning. Reunions are a lot of work. I am a VHPA member, there is also a VHCMA I think it's called, for crew members only, and both organizations have reunions. A lot of AHC's have reunions as well, we're not unique at all in that aspect. But in reading my VHPA magazine I have noticed a lot of variance in location. Most of our pilot's remember Possum Kingdom Lake, it sat out there west of Dempsey heliport. It was just a lake. I spent this weekend on that lake for Valentine's and today it is a home for the rich people and the not so rich people, it's grown into a beautiful resort and vacation destination, 17,700 acres of lake that unfortunately has been hit by a drought and it's down about 20% leaving a lot of docks high and dry. That didn't stop one AHC from scheduling a reunion in a few months on the lake at one of their resorts. I have no idea what their turnout will be, I have no idea how they are getting everyone from DFW airport to the lake, that's about a 100 mile trip and most folks will have to rent a car to get there and back, but it's not St. Louis.

So what am I saying here? I'm saying it's not the destination, it's the people. We meet not because we like going to St Louis, we meet because we like seeing each other. Well, some of you anyway. So get yourself a ticket and a room reservation and come to St Louis, it may

not be as fancy as the lodge at PK Lake but the people you'll hang around are a lot more fun.

Jeff Murray
Secretary

Special Operation Plaque - Update

Our request to have an in ground plaque placed in the US Army Special Operations Command Memorial Plaza has finally completed the approval process, and in late January we received final approval from the Secretary of the Army. The granite marker has now been ordered and should delivered by late March or early April.

The Meadows Field Memorial Plaza is located outside of the headquarters building of the Special Operations Command at Ft. Bragg, NC. The Plaza contains stones dedicated to past and current Army Special Operations forces, and the 281st has been designated the US Army's First Special Operations Helicopter Company. There are thirty stones currently in the plaza, and ours will be placed beside the marker for Project Delta.

An official dedication ceremony conducted by the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), supported by the US Army Special Operations Aviation Command (USASOAC), the 160th SOAR, is now tentatively scheduled for early June of this year at Ft. Bragg. Our stone will be officially unveiled at the ceremony by the Commanding General of USASOC, and there will be many other high-ranking officers in attendance including the Commanding General of USASOAC. Other distinguished guests will also be in attendance. Plans are to have an Army Band, a bag piper, and tents will be provided for all guests, plus a bus for our transportation on Post. All members of the 281st AHC Association, Inc. and family and guests will be invited to attend the ceremony. We also expect several retired members of Project Delta and Special Forces who live in the Fayetteville area to attend.

Additional details including hotel accommodations, and etc. will be forthcoming once we get a final date from the Army. This is a

once in a lifetime event, and a significant chapter in the history of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company, its predecessor, and attached units. For now, make plans to attend if you are able, to show our pride and support for the legacy we created in Special Operations Aviation.

I will be the point of contact for the Association, and Walt Pikul is the POC with the Army. Anyone with any questions can contact either of us.

Jim Baker

Words of Wisdom from Jack Mayhew..

The 281st Intruder Book Project

The Intruder book project is moving ahead under the direction of our author, Will McCollum with a goal of holding a first draft review in Saint Louis on 28/29 April. The members of the book committee and anyone else who would like to attend are more than welcome. Will has received stories and information from many Intruders and their families and is well on his way to producing a book that we can all be proud of. Although Will is a highly paid author he is donating his time and talents to the association for this book. Please contact him with your stories and other items of interest. At this time we are searching for the following:

1. **Information as to how the Bandits were named.** (We have the information for the Rat Pack and the Wolf Pack)
2. **Pictures of the former First Sergeants and unit Commanders.**

If you can help please contact Will. His contact information is:

William (Will) McCollum
1916 Upton Ave,
Waterloo, IA 50701-3203
319-239-5529
WillDanMac@yahoo.com

Scholarship Update

The time for Scholarship applications is rapidly approaching. Thanks to the generosity of our

members and HRI, our corporate sponsor, we were able to continue our trend of offering assistance to each qualified student who applied last year. If you have a child in your family attending college this coming year please direct them to the Scholarship section of the web site for information and application forms. If they need assistances please contact Dr. Karen Heintz Forcht at kforcht@elon.edu or by phone at 336-638-7544

Remembrance

We finally have some good news concerning one of our lost crews. We have been told that UH1-H 512, which was lost on November 4, 1969, has been located and what appears to be the remains of the crew along with personal and military items have been returned to the identification lab in Hawaii. Assuming that the remains found and returned are that of our fellow Intruders, their families and we can expect to receive formal notification later this year, hopefully by reunion time.

As you may know by now Gary Stagman has resigned his position as membership chairman and will now devote his time to the Remembrance committee. Gary has been instrumental in locating our intruders who have died after their tour of duty (DAT) with the 281st and working with their families to assist them in their time of need. In this area our thanks go out to Will Clark who has also helped locate several of our DAT's.

However, we still have over 600 Intruders on our unfound list and we need your help in finding them before we find them on our DAT list. If you can help please contact Gary Stagman at cooter@charter.net or by phone at 618-797-1336

Last but certainly not least one of our founders and dear friend Fred Mentzer passed away in November. Fred held association membership #1 and was our first President. He leaves us with very large boots to fill. Fred will be interned in Arlington National Cemetery with full honors in the spring. We will inform you of the date and time as soon as Arlington schedules his funeral.

One of the remembrance projects that Fred was working on with Walt Pikul is the placement of the Intruder memorial stone at the Special Operations Command's parade field at Fort Bragg, NC. This project continues to move forward under Walt's and Jim Baker's capable hands. The memorial stone placement was approved by the Secretary of the Army and now clearly identifies the 281st AHC as the US Army's First Special Operations Helicopter Company. This event is a "must-attend" for all Intruders and their families as it clearly establishes your and your unit's place in Army Aviation history. It is also a reflection of Fred's many contributions to the Intruder family.

Jack Mayhew
Remembrance Committee

What's on Jay Hays' Mind...

From the PX

It was a shock to hear of our friend and comrade, Fred Mentzer's unexpected death. Fred was very involved in our association as Intruder of the year recipient, Past president, web master, news editor, and reunion planning committee. He and his wife Karen participated in about all aspects of our reunion. He supported me when I was association president and assisted on the reunion committee. For several years he handled the PX T-Shirts.

The PX has ordered several different pins that we needed for inventory.

Restoration of 113

The sync elevator attachment parts have been located by member Robert Timmerman and arrangements are currently being made to transfer them to Ed Duke for assembly. A few weeks ago Ed slipped and fell resulting in a broken collar bone, which delayed some work on 113. Ed we send our wishes for a speedy recovery. A local senior art student had volunteered and has completed painting the Intruder logo on the nose of 113. Ed informs us that she used an automotive paint that should not fade and last for years. No pictures are available at present but Ed reported it looks great.

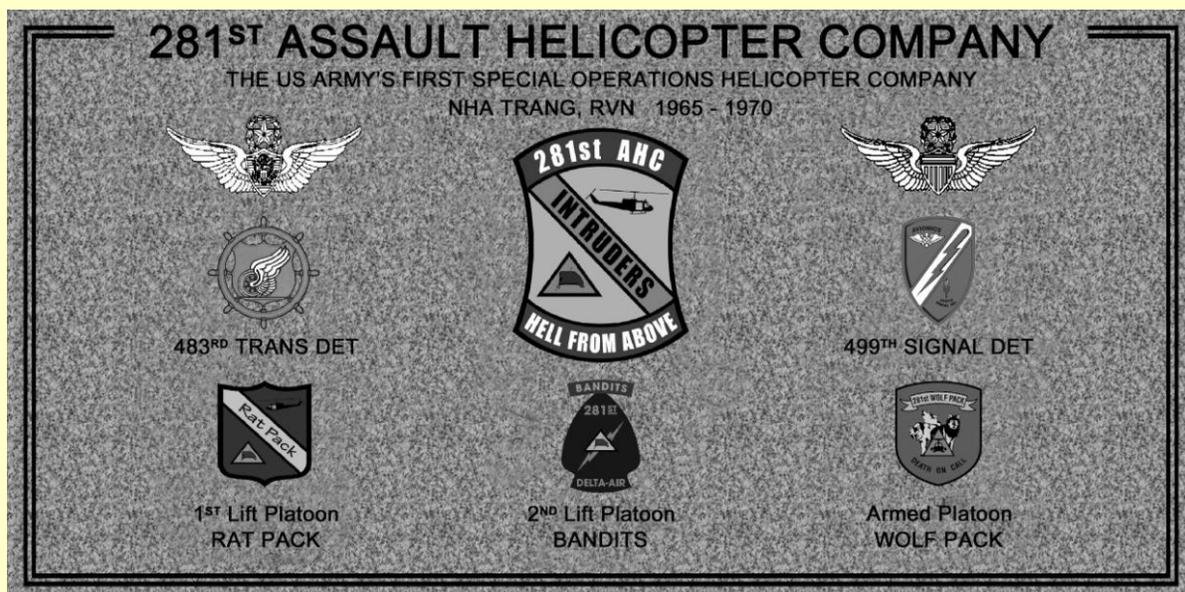
To Close..... from the Editor

When I first heard of Fred Mentzer's death, I was in shock. This man who had done so much as a leader in the 281st as Wolf Pack 36 and continued that leadership role in our 281st AHC Association as its President, webmaster, newsletter editor and so much more, was gone. He was at every Reunion, on most committees and always offering help and support to anyone who asked for it. If you followed Fred on the Chat net you knew he had a dry, but very funny sense of humor; He brought a smile to everyone's face. Most of all, Fred was a good friend and he will be missed by all. Our condolences go out to his wife Karen and his family. We miss you Fred.

Don Budlong
"New" Editor



Fred Mentzer and Joe Blitzke at Fred's last Reunion in St. Louis (2013)



281st Plaque to be dedicated later this year at Special Operations Command, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina

"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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