

281st ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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From your President – Will McCollum

For soldiers and their families, there are times in life and war that test their ability. A hundred things can go wrong and yet life goes on; we adjust to all the up's and downs. And that is what all of you did at Fayetteville, North Carolina. A whole year of planning, organizing and working did **not** go down the drain, all of you made the best of it, we lived through the worst storm North Carolina has had in a number of years. Through it all I never heard one....not even one complaint. We got through it together. As far as I know only one person was injured. Helen Malicki fell and broke her hip. I called her today, she is doing pretty good, she is upbeat and is in the good spirit. She told me to tell everyone how happy she is to be a part of our family. She wanted me to tell everyone thanks for sending cards and calling her. She plans on coming to our next reunion in Washington, D.C., next year.

Saturday afternoon, 8th October, the hotel lost power, throughout the afternoon and evening, no lights, no banquet, yet we were inside and dry. Everyone was talking, smiling, laughing and I noticed our members were even taking care of other people not our own. One lady told me that a couple with a 281st name tags helped her to her room and made sure she was okay. People helping each other, my goodness, my goodness what a wonderful group of people you are. Everyone looked out after everyone else, whether it was helping each other up and down dark stairwells with luggage or ensuring everyone had something to eat. Truly it was a great experience to observe what a family we have in this Intruder Association.

The Doubletree did not get power until Tuesday the 11th, some of you had to stay there because of flight delays, you weathered the storm.

There will be a refund for most of you, see our treasurer's "Fred Beck" article in this newsletter.

We are still working and trying to get a refund for everyone from the hotel for Saturday night, the 8th of October. Some of you were not charged for that

Saturday night and some of us were. I will keep you posted.

From Your Past President - Don Budlong

Mother Nature refused to cooperate with us, however, that didn't dampen the spirits of those Intruders, family members and friends at the dedication ceremony Friday morning at Meadows Memorial Field on Ft. Bragg. The impending rain forced us into a theater in Army Special Operations Command Headquarters. Brigadier General John Evans, Commanding Office of Army Special Operations Aviation Command was the key note speaker. However, CSM Don Taylor, a member of Project Delta, B-52 Detachment spoke of his personal relationship with the 281st. Sergeant Major Taylor captured the essence of why we were in Fayetteville that day and why the 281st was being honored. For those of you that were unable to attend the dedication ceremony, below is a copy of that testimonial by Don Taylor in its entirety.

General Evans, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, old comrades, friends, and fellow soldiers, I'm Retired Sergeant Major Donald J. Taylor, U.S. Army Special Forces, and I'm deeply honored to have the opportunity to speak here today on behalf of my fellow Vietnam Veterans of Project Delta, Detachment B-52, 5th Special Forces Group.

We were a team during the Vietnam War, Project Delta and the 281st Assault Helicopter Company, and the placement of this memorial stone here today, dedicated to the 281st, is a reminder to future visitors to this area that there once was a group of warriors who, in the infancy of Special Operations, created, frequently by trial and error, and while under enemy fire, a system of operational procedures and techniques that blazed the trail for future Special Operations units to follow.

Long after those of us here today are gone, this stone memorializing the 281st will remain here, lying beside the stone memorializing Project Delta, in this Special Operations Memorial Garden. For many years to come,

future generations of Special Operations soldiers will pass this way, and more than likely, these passersby will occasionally pause at this stone and wonder who those men of the 281st were who fought long ago in a nearly forgotten war in a far off place called Vietnam. They'll wonder at the significance of the words on this stone that say "The U.S. Army's First Special Operations Helicopter Company" and some may notice the Delta triangle on the stone and wonder if that Delta had any meaning and whether or not it has any relation to the Project Delta stone lying beside it.



Photo by Lou Lerda

None of us here today will be available to answer these future questions. But if we were, we'd tell them that during the Vietnam War, Project Delta and the 281st wrote the book on Long Range Reconnaissance Patrolling Operations, and that many of the procedures and techniques developed by this team of Project Delta and the 281st are still in use today in U.S. Army Special Operations units around the world.

Project Delta was the first Special Operations unit to have its own assigned helicopter company, the 281st. This marriage of an aviation company with a Special Operations unit was so successful that it was remembered in 1986 when the Reagan Administration was rebuilding our Special Operations Forces, and what is now the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment was formed at that time.

Because it just makes common sense, most Special Operations soldiers today probably think it's always been that Special Operations Forces had their own helicopter units assigned to them, but as we here today know, that wasn't the way it was. There was a time when decision makers thought that just any helicopter unit could be given a few hours training, and then assigned the task of supporting a Special Operations mission as if it was just another ash and trash support mission.

Of course it took a high degree of skill for a helicopter unit to fly for a Special Operations Unit, but it took more than just individual skills for a Special Operations Unit to be successful. It also demanded a high degree of teamwork, and the necessary degree of teamwork couldn't be attained if different helicopter units were used for each Special Operations mission.

It was this team effort established between the 281st and Project Delta that made us so successful, because whatever Project Delta was doing, the 281st played a vital role in its outcome. In Delta Recon, we worked so closely with the 281st for so long that we came to know many of the pilots and crews quite well. So well, in fact, that frequently it wasn't even necessary to use call-signs on the radio; we simply recognized one another's voice.

Project Delta was, without a doubt, the premier Long Range Reconnaissance unit of the Vietnam War. No other reconnaissance unit could even come close to Project Delta's ability and its reputation when it came to conducting intelligence gathering long range reconnaissance patrolling operations. The reason for Project Delta's successes was that over the years it had molded its self into a close-knit team with all of its members working together in close harmony. A very important member of this Delta team was, of course, the 281st Assault Helicopter Company.



Photo by Lou Lerda

The 281st was assigned to Project Delta to provide the Project with the ability to infiltrate long range reconnaissance teams deep within enemy controlled territory, and then recover us when our reconnaissance mission had been accomplished or when we had been compromised and were no longer able to continue our mission. Not only did our reconnaissance missions depend on the skill and the courage of 281st flight crews to get us into targeted areas, but, many times, our lives depended on these same crews' courage and flying ability to get us out.



Dedication ceremony speakers L-R Jim Baker, Don Taylor and Brigadier General John Evans (photo by Cramer Gallimore)

Project Delta Recon wouldn't hesitate to go into areas where other reconnaissance units would refuse to go, and it wasn't because we were more fearless than the others, it was simply because we knew we weren't going in alone; our Delta team was always with us. If a Project Delta recon team got into more trouble than the six of us could fight our way out of, we knew we could depend on the 281st to come in and get us out.

When a Project Delta recon team called for an emergency extraction, it was just that, an emergency. We either came out, or we died. These were the extractions where 281st slicks and guns would have to fight their way in to get us and then fight their way out again, but we knew that no matter how bad it got for us on the ground, the 281st would never abandon us. It was once said as a joke, but there was truth to it, that when a 281st crew came in to recover a Project Delta Recon Team on an emergency extraction, they'd either get us out or they'd all crash beside us, but they wouldn't quit until one or the other had happened.

The thing that made Project Delta Recon the premier Long Range Reconnaissance Unit in Vietnam can best be explained in an old African proverb that goes like this: "Two men who know one another like brothers can work together and easily kill the lion. However, if ten strangers come together and attempt the same task, they'll not only fail, they'll become the lion's next meal."

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we will pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure survival and success of liberty." – John F. Kennedy

We were like brothers, Project Delta and the 281st, and that's why we were so successful in our operations. That

team spirit is still with us today and that's the meaning behind the small Delta carved into this stone memorializing the 281st Assault Helicopter Company. We were an inseparable team, Project Delta and the 281st, and this stone will keep that memory alive well into the future.

On behalf of my fellow Veterans of Project Delta Recon, I thank all of you Veterans of this First Special Operations Helicopter Company, the 281st, for being there for us back then, because Project Delta couldn't have done it without you.

Good luck, God Bless, and I'll see you all again one day on the final LZ.

"THE" Quilt – From Susan Houston

Marilyn Paine asked me to make a quilt to raffle for the 281st Scholarship fund. I chose a pattern called "America". She wanted the 281st Members in attendance at the reunion to sign it. I believe all in attendance signed the quilt. Also, some signatures are from family members and friends remembering those who have gone on before us.



Doyle Creed and Susan Houston holding THE Quilt

Quilts have special meaning and often take on a life of their own; this one certainly has. This quilt represents the 281st AHC and all that you are as people. Your valor, courage, and commitment to one another is unlike any other organization I have been associated with. I want to borrow the words of Doyle Creed, "It's sacred." Not because of the quilt itself but because of all it represents. It represents all of you as well as all who aren't here. I also believe that those who have gone on before you are watching and saying, "Well Done, Intruders, Well Done."

The raffle sales were incredible. Thank you to Mike Rivenburg, Art Balcomb, Lois Budlong, and Phyllis Lamarre for your dedication and work in helping to sell the tickets as well as getting all the signatures. It would not have been possible without all your efforts. Thank you to all who purchased tickets.

So far no one has come forward with the winning number (**#332458**). I still have possession of the quilt. If no winner is found, I think that it should be hung each year in the memorabilia room with the other 281st artifacts. Eventually to be donated to a museum with those items.

It was my pleasure to be a small part of this project.

Quilt Winning Ticket

If you have the winning ticket **#332458**, please scan it or take a photo of the ticket and send it to Susan Houston at this email address susan1@bajabb.com to claim your Quilt. Do it now because the statute of limitations on the winning ticket will run out soon.

From your VP & 2017 Reunion Chairman – Bain Black

Whew, what a time we had in Fayetteville. I'm sure there will be much written in this newsletter about the storm, the power failure, Helen Malicki's unfortunate fall, and what upwards of 15 inches of rain looks like. Despite the storm, 281st camaraderie continued unabated. Just like old times, there we were sharing adult beverages, in the dark!!

Someone told me that weather is just an average of extremes, and that may be correct. In Charlotte we have had no more than a trace of rain since hurricane Matthew. We currently are 7 inches below our average YTD rainfall and there are firestorms in the mountains. That means we should have a wet winter, maybe.

I'm sure that most of you share my sense of relief that the elections are over! Now let's unite and move forward. Those who disagree with the 2016 results will have another chance in four short years.

2017 Reunion: Before the lights went out in Fayetteville, we were able to show attendees a short presentation about the Hyatt Regency Hotel and some of the planned activities in DC. Go to goo.gl/yA6LOO and you can see slides from that presentation and follow

the links to the special 281st hotel registration site. The room rate of \$109 will be honored starting Wednesday October 11th through Sunday night, October 16th. That gives us a couple of extra days to tour DC. Normal rates at this beautiful hotel are \$249. I hope to see all of you next year.

Reunion Accolades

We talked about it on the way home and aren't quite sure how you arranged it, but the storm made for an amazing adventure. Certainly, the 2016 reunion will go down in 281st history. Seriously, though, you dealt with the catastrophe very effectively. Just as the 281st has always done, you were faced with an extremely challenging situation and . . . you made the very best of it. **Tom and Amy Ross**

From your Treasurer – Fred Beck

The reunion hotel has reimbursed the entire cost of the Saturday night buffet meal plus the ballroom and equipment rental. This reimbursement will be mailed to the attendees that paid for that meal through their registration fees. That amount will be \$39.73.

Also the Executive Board has determined and approved that those of you that were registered and prepaid for the reunion but were unable to attend due to the hurricane will receive a refund of their entire fees with the exception of the Friday night meals which we had to prepay and were non-refundable. The Friday meal cost was \$36.36. Hence the total refund for each \$125 fee, including the hotel reimbursement, for those that were unable to attend will be \$88.64.

Prior to issuing refunds we will be sending an email (or US mail) regarding the refunds. It has also been approved by the Executive Board that we ask that each person that is entitled to a refund consider making a tax deductible donation of all or part of their refund to the scholarship fund or to the reunion account. If you wish to do so, respond to the email when it is sent to you. A check will be mailed within about two weeks if we do not get a response.

A Younger Man's Take Away from the Reunion

There always are young people at our reunions; children, grand children, nieces and nephews. There appeared to be more this year than in the past.

There were also more Intruders than ever before. The combination of young attentive folks asking questions and Intruders willingly telling war stories is a guarantee for a good time. One such encounter happened this year when Rick Houston began to chat with Buck Yancey. Small talk led to the proverbial question, "what did you do in the war?" Below Rick Houston recounted in a letter to his mother what Buck's story meant to him.

Buck proceeded to tell Rick about an incident in which Rick's father Richard Houston was his crew chief. Long story short, while hovering in an LZ, gun fire was exchanged and the flight crew returned to base unscathed. Buck was grateful 50 years ago for the support of his crew and is just as grateful today. "So it was for me," Rick said, "the Vietnam war was no longer just a story I've heard all my life, or a Hollywood action movie. It became real for me, a reality that has impacted my life; a reality that I see so clearly now."

Rick went on in his letter to say, "This reunion was fantastic. I've learned so much and met such wonderful people. I am proud of you Dad. I always will be. I love you very much!

The Rescue - a Movie

Many of you know Tom Ross either from his attendance at 281st functions or from his book, *Privileges of War*. Jay had a few dozen copies of the book at the Reunion PX and they sold out quickly. This nonfiction book is about the rescue of a Vietnamese village in 1968 in which the 281st played a prominent role. What many people didn't know, but do now, is that *Privileges of War*, is being made into a movie. The name of the movie is *The Rescue* and in Fayetteville, Tom unveiled for the first time in public the "movie poster" (see above). Presently Tom is busy writing the screenplay, transforming the book into a movie script.

Filming in the US will begin sometime early next year. We will keep everyone updated as to the progress of the movie with each quarterly newsletter.

281st Ladies Bracelets

Lois Budlong had 281st bracelets made up to be raffled off at the Ladies Fun Time in Fayetteville. The bracelets were so popular many ladies said they wanted to purchase a bracelet for themselves. She ordered an additional 23 bracelets and will sell them at cost, \$8.00 to include postage. Anyone still interested in a 281st



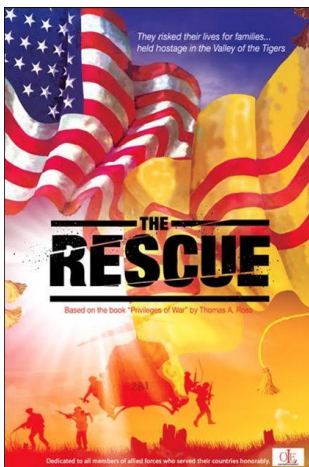
bracelet should contact her by email loisbud@aol.com or phone 252-940-9875. Hey guys, they make great Christmas gifts for your very special lady.

From our IT Guru – Brent Gourley **Webmaster and HQ Net Moderator**

Thanks to Jack Mayhew for gently twisting my arm to attend the reunion. I heard from so many in Fayetteville: "I know that name from the email that comes out every ____ days!" I promise I will shorten and amend; it's old, some of the instructions in it for dealing with Yahoo may not be correct.

The HQ Net is moderated; if you don't see your email, send it to me directly. Sometimes I don't receive a copy and sometimes when I respond nothing happens. If your posting is political, forget it. Political stuff is for the Chat Net only.

The website work proceeds. Please check out the 2016 reunion page (goo.gl/xAFgyg) in the member area. Pages that do not have a "camo" background have not yet been updated by me. For the technically inclined, the pages made originally with MS Office are being converted to pure HTML (doctype HTML) using cascading style sheets. This procedure makes the page more compatible in the future and gives an almost-old but recently retired guy (me) another project. The site occupies over 55,000 files on my computer. I'm not using a website builder but trying to preserve the features and look of the original site and prevent huge increase in file size. Narrowing the page to about the center half of a wide-screen monitor makes them easier to see on both a PC and/or a mobile device. If you have any questions about the web site or HQ Net, please email me at bgrly@comcast.net. For questions about the Chat Net, contact Jim Baker at bakerjw@icloud.com.



From Jay Hays, the PX Grunt

Thanks, Thanks, Thanks is all I can say to all for the help and support I received in preparing for and attending the reunion! After not having a right knee for 6 months, I had a new one installed on Friday, released the following Monday and left for the reunion Tuesday morning. I was unable to walk or do much; so the help was incredible. PX sales at reunions are usually around \$3,000 and about a \$1,000.00 in orders during the rest of the year. This Reunion our sales topped \$8,000 despite the hotel flooding and power failure that resulted in very little sales on Saturday.

A couple weeks before the reunion we had a couple orders for multiple Rat Pack Pins and Patches that depleted our inventory. The new 281st Helicopter Pin which has a "281" on the pilot door was not only a bargain at \$5.00 but well received as we sold 112 (see photo below). The Crew and Pilot wings were another great bargain as well.



All PX inventory and Memorabilia was loaded the week prior to the Reunion due to my surgery with the exception of the Viet Nam 281st Campaign ribbon stickers and the new Delta Stickers (see photo above). They came in large sheets and had to be manually cut-to-size, but mistakenly were not loaded into the trailer.

We sold 140 *Above the Best* and all 30 *Privileges of War* books on hand at the Reunion. We have plenty more in stock so don't hesitate to order more for friends and family members.

Thanks to Earl Broussard we sold over a case of *Above the Best* books at the Special Operations (SOA) Annual Reunion in Las Vegas two weeks after our reunion.

A very special thanks to my wife Doris who slept on the floor in the PX Saturday night with me as our room was on the 4th floor; no power, no elevator. She gathered

some table cloths from the banquet room for blankets. Remember the days of getting caught in a monsoon and sleeping in the Bell Hilton (Bell Helicopter)?

Veteran's Day Weekend at Brian Paine's by Jeff Murray, your Association Secretary

So, just as I have been doing for the past 10 years, Janie and I made the trek down to Houston for the Paine's annual "Christmas" party. We went because Brian and Marilyn are big supporters of the 281st AHC Association and our programs and of course, our friends. Brian was instrumental in establishing the 281st scholarship fund, he has served on the SOA Board in an official capacity and represented our interests well, and he commissioned the recent Joe Kline print many of us have hanging in our houses. A lot of you have been to Brian's parties in the past, people have come from CA, GA, OK, NC and of course Texas. A lot of former Delta operators come as well, Jay Graves is a regular, so is Chester Howard. A few former 281st commanders have also been. As we all seem to be getting older, the attendance has dwindled, noticeably this year. A few of us questioned the timing or even the continuance of the event. Having our 281st reunion so close to this event probably had an impact on the lower numbers.

It was a good time, very patriotic, relaxing, and a very nice gesture by both Brian and Marilyn. Any time there is a chance for Intruders to gather is a good time. Thank you to both of them for many years of faithful dedication to the 281st for this event.

The Scholarship Program Update – Karen Heintz Forcht and Dennis Crowe Vice Chair

The Scholarship Committee is proud to report that all of our current scholarship recipients have continued to "make the grade" (minimum of 3.0 GPA). We added one new recipient at the meeting in Fayetteville in October, 2016. Leslie Vincent is attending Marymount University in Washington, D.C. We wish her the highest achievement of which she is capable. Our Treasurer, Walt Pikul, reported that the scholarship fund is doing well as of 2016. Many of the 281st AHC members made very generous contributions in memory of Bob Mitchell who served on the committee since its inception. We need to keep the contributions coming so that the fund remains solvent in the future.

Karen Heintz Forcht, Secretary led the discussion concerning the accomplishments of our awardees.

Mom Torbert agreed to serve for one more year as Chairman of the committee. Dennis Crowe was "drafted" to serve as Vice Chairman and to fill in for Mom as he intends to retire from the post at the next reunion. Any 281st AHC members (and spouses) who would like to serve on the committee, please e-mail Karen Heintz Forcht at kforcht@elon.edu.

The current scholarship recipients are:

1. Onnie (JR) Watson), Fairmont State University. JR's thank you speech for his scholarship funding at our reunion in Fayetteville, along with his grandparents, Rose and Joe Boarman, was a great tribute to these outstanding students.
2. Kelsey Lang, University of West Virginia
3. Morgan Torbert, Rice University
4. Jamie Greiner, University of Pittsburgh
5. Sarah Lanning, California State University, East Bay
6. J. R. Little, North Carolina State University

Dr. Jessica Barker recently graduated from Pharmacy School at Concordia State University in Wisconsin with a 3.6 GPA overall.

Remembrance – Jack Mayhew & Gary Stagman

We were recently contacted by our DOD MIA Office contact and informed that the helicopter that we had all believed to be Helicopter 67-19512 with WO Terry L. Alford, aircraft commander; WO1 Jim R. Cavender, pilot; SP4 John A. Ware, crew chief; and SP4 James R. Klimo, door gunner, on board was in fact a helicopter that belonged to the 129th AHC. The crew of that helicopter was recovered some time ago.

This takes us back to square one for all of our Ten MIA's. We ask for your assistance in contacting your federal representatives and asking them to help us find our 10 unaccounted for Intruders, who now have been MIAs for over 50 years. To find your representatives go to this link goo.gl/xQ9yvN. Ask your Representative why the DOD MIA Washington office has been without a leader for most of this year?

Looking for a Missing Intruder?

Email your request concerning a former Intruder or for assistance filing a claim with the VA to Jack Mayhew at intruder06@me.com. Include all pertinent information related to your request along with your contact info.

Military Records

If you need copies of a veteran's military records, contact the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis at this web site goo.gl/yFxbkl. The NPRC is the repository of millions of military personnel, health, and medical records of discharged and deceased veterans of all services. The records are made available upon written request to any veteran or next-of-kin of a deceased veteran. You may also contact the National Archives at goo.gl/WPqP2 to order a copy of military records. Another way to request records is via Standard Form 180. Follow this link and download the form goo.gl/hhfEKO.

When requesting records, be specific with your requests i.e Personnel, Flight, DD Form 214, Medical, or Awards and Decorations. If you have been treated by the VA, they have records of your treatment. Contact your local county veteran's service office for help requesting these records. If you have lost your awards, or you are the next of kin of a deceased Intruder you are entitled to a reissue of the awards and decorations. To request them, simply follow this link goo.gl/HOIuWM for details.

In Memoriam

Our Intruder family will always remember them

George Hewlett

George Hewlett who served as a pilot with the 281st from May 1966 to May 1967 passed away on February 3, 2016. At the time of his death, George was living in The Villages, FL. He was survived by his loving wife of 55 years, Barbara.

Sick Call

Robin Hicks (Bandit 11/67-9/68) was involved in a serious crash on his bike this summer and suffered multiple injuries to include a broken leg, arm, ribs and numerous cuts and bruises. Due to his injuries, Robin was disappointed that he was unable to attend this year's Reunion. He is undergoing extensive rehab and is looking forward to next year's Reunion in Virginia.

Joe Bilitzke (Wolf Pack 34, 1/68 – 4/69) was ready to jump on a plane to Fayetteville for the Reunion and his cardiologist **Red X'd** him for flight. Shortly thereafter Joe had surgery (Angioplasty) and presently is back on flight status. Unfortunately Joe missed the Reunion where he would have been our master of ceremonies. See you next year Joe. Email: JoeB2@mindspring.com

Barc Boyd (Wolf Pack 36, 1/67-8/67) was another Intruder scheduled to attend the Reunion and had last minute surgery for a hernia. Barc is recovering well and will see everyone in Oct, 2017.

Email: icihicpl@aol.com

Honorary member Helen Malicki, sister of Bandit door gunner Paul Swol, attended the Reunion this year for the first time since 2004. Unfortunately Helen slipped and fell in a hotel stairwell breaking her hip. Upon returning to CT she had surgery and is now recuperating and undergoing physical therapy. Despite the injury, she was so happy she was able to make the trip to Fayetteville with her daughter Debbie. They met so many nice Intruders and wives that made her really feel as though she was part of the Intruder family. She is looking forward to the reunion next year. If you would like to send Helen a note of encouragement during her recovery, her mailing address is:

98 Centerbrook Road
Hamden, CT 06518.

Ed Duke (Rat Pack 11/66-9-67) was ready to head to Fayetteville when Matthew (the hurricane) got in his way. For the past few years he has been the head honcho rebuilding and renovating A/C 113 (see below) at the H.E.A.R.T.S. Museum in Huntsville, TX. Ed, who has a history of heart issues which included a heart attack and by-pass surgery, will be undergoing exploratory surgery again on November 18th. Please remember Ed in your prayers. His email is: anitaed62@suddenlink.net.

Don Jutz, a/k/a Zorro suffered a stroke earlier this year and is now recuperating in Wisconsin. Don was a pilot in the 281st from 11/66 to 9/67. A card or call would certainly lift his spirits. His contact information is:

Room 112 Saint Andrews
3800 North 92nd Street, Milwaukee, WI 53222
Room 414 935 4941 / Cell 850 387 4610

Aircraft 113

We were told at the Reunion that aircraft 113 was already on display at the H.E.A.R.T.S. Museum in



Huntsville, TX. That is not exactly the case. Except for a few minor details, the restoration of 113 is almost complete. The museum has a Huey in a ground display that will soon be moved to an elevated

pedestal which can be seen by vehicles passing by on the interstate highway. Aircraft 113 will then be moved to its permanent location in that fenced ground display.

As you will note from sick call above, Ed Duke, the man behind this restoration will be undergoing surgery soon. Let's hope and pray Ed will be back on his feet in no time and get 113 finished and in its permanent display.

2016 Veterans Day in Bowling Green, OH **By Frank Becker, 499th 67-69**

Bowling Green Middle School, which I attended in 19?? has a Veterans Day event which I have attended for the last 17 years. As part of the program the students provide a free meal to veterans and their families. To fund the program the students raise money at school sporting events in concession stands; they are also assisted by a grant from the local electric coop.

At the event, the students do all the work. They set up tables and chairs, decorate, park cars, bus tables and clean up at the end of the day.

They usually have a local veteran as a guest speaker. However, when our book *Above the Best* came out this year, I gave a copy to my daughter, a teacher at Bowling Green Middle School. She then discussed the book with the Student Counsel Sponsor who then asked if it would be possible to ask the book's author to speak at their Veterans Day Event.

I called Will McCollum and he agreed to be their guest speaker. He did an outstanding job and that is not just my opinion. There were over 400 veterans and family



members along with 300 students in attendance that gave Will a standing ovation when he finished his speech.

In addition to his speech, Will attended a morning assembly of 8th graders then visited my daughter's class room where he was asked many interesting questions. I also presented a copy of *Above the Best* to the school librarian that Will and other 281st members had signed.

I have spoken at this event in the past and am still amazed at the interest these young students take in what us old folks have to say.