

**December
2019**

**281ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER
COMPANY ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER**

No. 73

What a fabulous 50th! by Wes Schuster, President

Brian and Marilyn Paine put on a great 50th Anniversary reunion in San Antonio! They deserve a big thank you for all their hard work. Brian's excellent audio-visual presentations reminded all attendees of our exploits in Vietnam as well as our heartfelt remembrance of our buddies who gave their all.

The food and entertainment was outstanding. Added to this our camaraderie was strengthened with the attendance of 9 new members and 5 first time attendees to the association's reunions.

On the business side, the membership approved numerous amendments to our By-Laws to ensure our operation for years to come. The scholarship committee did some major review of its operating procedures and has built a strong balance sheet for a solid financial legacy.

that took place. The winner of the Quilt of Valor made by Susan Houston was Gilbert Garcia. Most of you probably don't know Gilbert. Some of you may have known his brother, Ricardo "Rich" Garcia. Rich was a Wolf Pack door gunner in the 281st in 1970. Tubby Brudvig trained Rich. The 281st stood down in 1970 and Rich was transferred to the 48th AHC. Tragically, Rich was shot down in Operation Lam Son 719 and to this day is MIA. To honor his brother, Gilbert attends both 281st and 48th reunions. It warmed my heart to see Gilbert wrap that quilt around himself in remembrance of his brother. All in all, our 50th was a smashing success. Can it get any better? You bet it can. Our next venue is focused on the greatest WWII museum in the world! Watch for Bain Black's postings.

2020 Mini-Reunion Update by Bain Black

Here in a nutshell are our plans for a grand gathering in New Orleans October 22-October 25...For those who want to spend more time in NOLA, the Higgins Hotel will extend our rate three days prior to and following the reunion. There is so much to see in this great destination city!

Thursday Oct 22: Arrival and Registration

Friday Oct 23: Charter Cruise on the PT-305 on Lake Pontchartrain (Cost to be determined by headcount). This is once in a lifetime opportunity to ride on the only operable PT Boat.

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/pt-305/history>

Dinner on your own or with friends from a long list of great NOLA restaurants.

Saturday Oct 24: Beyond All Boundaries private showing in the Museum Theater; following the movie, visit the renowned WWII Museum; Lunch at the Museum's Backstage Canteen followed by a memorial service and abbreviated general



There were many highlights during the reunion. You probably saw many of them but I would like to quickly give you some background on one event

membership meeting; remainder of the afternoon at the Museum; Dinner on your own plus Krewe of Boo Halloween parade on Canal Street (huge fun!).

<https://www.kreweofboo.com/>

https://www.nationalww2museum.org/plan-a-visit-gs?gclid=CjwKCAjw36DpBRAYEiwAmVVDMD9wOPdhKzhNc9F4Uauctq9JlGuNiawawADwcsF-8cbDzyIY0DZRgxoCx8QAvD_BwE

Sunday Oct 25: Departure....or delay departure and spend more time in NOLA.

A contract has been signed with our host hotel. The gorgeous brand new Higgins Hotel across the street from the Museum was named for the inventor of the landing craft known as Higgins Boats. Alexander Higgins also built the PT-305 in New Orleans. We will have a hospitality room with the PX, complimentary snacks and a cash bar.

<https://higginshotelnola.com/>

More to come as time nears for our 2020 Intruder mini-reunion!

2019 Reunion By Bain Black

Woohoo, our "50th Anniversary Reunion" was awesome. It was great seeing everyone again. As the years click by these memories are precious. Karen and I had a wonderful time and SAT was a terrific venue. Thanks for all the hard work by BP, Marylyn and all their helper bees.

I had a surprise at the reunion. Thank you for the Intruder of the Year Award. It is an honor, especially when looking at the earlier names on the plaque, those who have made the 281st such a great association.

The week following this year's reunion, the Bakers and the Blacks (plus another couple) went on a WWII Museum tour to Normandy France. We were



in France for a total of 13 wonderful days. We spent 4 days on the D-Day beaches with renowned historians and authors. We visited the German Cemetery with somber black crosses, and the Canadian Cemetery in

Dieppe. Jim Baker and I were selected to lay a wreath at the tomb of Major Thomas Howie (photo this page) at the American Cemetery. It was very moving and somehow connected with sacrifices made by our Intruders lost in RVN.

2019 Reunion Summary by Brian Paine

Marilyn Paine: Let me state unequivocally the reunion would NOT have happened without my Chief of Staff, Marilyn. Her duties were endless: coordination with the hotel for meeting room requirements and organizing meeting room assignments, menu selections, flawless registration, highly attended and well received "benefits" seminar complete with a representative from the VA, SRO ladies' brunch...she based her plans on prior years' attendance and was nearly overwhelmed by the large number of attendees,...there were several items requiring signatures for raffles etc. and ALL got signed, for



the table decorations...thanks to Janie Murray, the table designs were created and Marilyn got a crew together to fulfill Janie's plans, reserved table assignments,...then there were the cargo van and SUV full of supplies...she organized everything at our house then systematically loaded the vehicles and unloaded them at the hotel having everything go to the proper place....that stuff would still be in our living room had it not been for her! And much much more.

Scott Arthur: Scott wore many hats this weekend...Executive Producer, director, MC (aircraft commander) auctioneer, ladies' brunch host...in essence, running the whole show. It was Scott who suggested and got Paul Driscoll, the magician to perform. Scott with his assistant, Cynthia Garcia, obtained a welcome letter from San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg presented by city councilman Clayton Perry. If you've never seen Scott in action, you missed a one of a kind performance.

Janie Murray: From the very beginning, Janie was there...Hotel selection...menu selection...room needs and decorations. It would have been a very bland reunion without her theme decorations. She created something new for the reunion. She insisted in having "V" neck shirts for the ladies... We sold out !!! She stepped up and took charge of things and helped make everything work smoothly. It would have been great to have her at the finish line.



Lindsay Laws: I was proud of myself for creating the slide shows for the reunion. HOWEVER, when Scott took over as director, he called on Lindsay to create a cohesive presentation. Her expertise with the computer made everything flow perfectly. I just sat back and watched magic happen! She doubled as our photographer and got tons of great stuff.

Keith Dirago: Keith was instrumental with our photo set design and stage set decorations. We had a photo set, (Janie Murray's idea) with both a western theme and Mexican theme. Keith worked tirelessly using individuals' phones to take personal photos in front of these sets. Whatever needed to be done, Keith was the man to call on.

Brroks Ausborn: Friday night was our Mexican buffet. First thought was to have a mariachi band (not a good idea...too loud) I remembered Brooks from a show we did. He played the guitar as he roamed the banquet hall playing perfect background music. His sound system was unique. No matter where you were in the room, the sound and volume were perfect. If you looked over your shoulder he would be standing right beside you! He talked to the guests and took requests.

Kevin Blessing: Kevin works for HEB, a major grocery chain. Kevin is Hawk's son-in-law. Kevin offered, and I accepted, to provide some food for the hospitality suite. Thursday morning I got a call that they were out front of the hotel and needed a cart to bring the food up to the hotel...I believe it

took them 4 trips to get everything up to the room! We had it all! Doris Hays and Cheryl Becker jumped in and got everything organized. There was no want for food or snacks.

Paul Driscoll: Breaking the mold of having a guest speaker, I tried to come up with something unique. Up pops Scott Arthur. His suggestion was the Comedy and Magic of Paul Driscoll! Paul had the audience mesmerized with his bowling ball to his 3 of hearts card trick. In between was his 20 dollar bill in an olive trick. Folks, if you missed it, you missed the highlight of all our reunions! People are still talking about his performance!

Thanks to all these people who did their best to make me look good and those people who attended. My regrets to those who could not make it.



2019 REUNION ATTENDEES

At the October reunion in San Antonio, we had the following long absent returnees and first time attendees join us for the 50th anniversary reunion: Hugh "Doug" Albright, Doug Stowe, Ron Herman, Art Patek, Gerry Richer, Gary Galvagni, Sterling Essenmacher, Johnnie Jones, Robert McMillan, Jerry La Cross, Paul Esser, John Gachich, Ben Edwards, Fred Monsour. We hope to see you all again as part of the "regular" group.

Some letters and comments from the SA reunion From Jack Interstein

I had a very memorable reunion, thx to BP and Marilyn in SA. It was my honor to invite the family of my Vietnam roommate, Albert Alvarado to the event. Al passed away 4 years ago. He and wife Linda lived in San Antonio not too far from our hotel. Daughter Tabitha, son Zach (area policeman) and various grandchildren and DIL also attended one or both of our dinners and ceremonies. I spoke with Al only one time after Vietnam,

hoping to see him at our Houston reunion in early 2000's. Expected to see Al but he didn't show...last minute change of heart(?) for unknown reasons according to Linda.

This time, when SA was confirmed as our 2019 Intruder destination, I immediately contacted Linda so she had plenty of time to inform family of the impending get together. NO excuses!

I have always felt Al was like an older brother to me, a 19 year old private "newbie" in Nha Trang and Intruder Ops. Along with another roommate, Al Kruck (POL and Major Littles driver), we spent our time together in Vietnam in friendship. I hope in some way I have repaid a past due debt to "Big Al, the kiddies pal."



JACK INTERSTEIN & THE ALVARADO FAMILY

From Sharyn Miller, Wife of Kenneth E. Miller

Dear Frank and Lou. September 23, 2019
I received your wonderful letter and my Honorary Member Certificate in the mail a while ago but I was too emotional to respond right away. I am proud and honored to be invited into your association and so appreciate your remembering my husband so respectfully. He was a wonderful man, an awesome husband and a dad, and a very involved grandpa to all 8 of our grandchildren. We miss him terribly but have wonderful memories that we share frequently. He will always be a huge part of who we are. I am honored and appreciative to be invited to the October reunion. I will be sharing a room with Linda George whose husband, Bob George, saved my husband's life in Vietnam and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. San Antonio is where Ken and I first met! He was a CWO just back from Vietnam and I was a young 2nd Lt. in the Army Nurse Corps. We were married 48 years when he died. I look forward to reuniting with Ken's old

Army buddies and meeting those of you I do not yet know.

From Susan Houston

I think the most memorable and meaningful event for us was the memorial ceremony. The interpretation and video on the Star Spangled Banner was very educational and informative. We did not know those details. Beautiful. Thank you to Brian for finding and showing it. Susan's sister, brother-in-law, and nephews attended the ceremony. They have commented on several occasions how thankful they are to have attended and have a new appreciation for the many sacrifices made in Vietnam. One nephew is in the National Guard. He told us that the videos of the men lost really brought home to him how young everyone was. He had tears in his eyes, as did the other family members. They thanked us profusely for inviting them and allowing them to attend. All in all the reunion was a big success. We are so humbled by the amount of work that went into the organization and planning that it takes to hold such a 5 Star event. One might say, "a Texas Size" event.

From Mary Beth Keith (Stan Millers fiancée)

I am SO proud to be an honorary member of the 281st and I thank every single person involved in allowing me to be part of such an incredible organization. You all know that Stan Miller lives in my heart and that I think of him every single day. He was SO very proud to be an Intruder. I just want you all to know that you are my HEROES!!!
Hugs & Blessings, Mary Beth



Veterans Week (not Day) by Wes Schuster

In our community, veterans are a focal point. Instead of only recognizing Veterans Day for a day, we have many events and functions to actively support worthy veterans groups over the course of a week. First we announce our veteran's charity for the year. This year it was Tee It Up For the Troops. We start on Saturday night with Guest Bartender Night where veterans man the bar. Each tip is at least \$20 and it goes to TIUFTT. On Sunday morning we place 3,500 American flags along the road to our clubhouse. It is an impressive sight since they are spaced 10 feet apart. It is our welcome to the wounded and disabled vets who visit us on Monday and Tuesday.



Each year, other veterans and I have had the privilege to play a practice round of golf on Monday with a disabled veteran. I have played golf with men with one arm, prosthetic legs and one courageous veteran who couldn't walk. He spent 4 years in veteran's hospitals and used a Paramobile to lift himself, hold him and then he was able to swing the golf club. That day it was pouring rain. I asked him if he wanted to play golf. His answer was, "That's what I came here for." It is not about golf for these guys, it is about being able to do things that most people can do.

On the same Monday our assistant golf pro, Chris, plays a golf marathon. Members sign up for \$.50 or \$1 per hole played by Chris. Each year he breaks the previous year's record. This year he played 251 holes, shot 42 birdies and 4 eagles... and raised nearly \$40,000. By the way, he started at 3:30 AM and played until 5PM. I assisted Chris for 2 hours

and timed him at 3.3 minutes per hole. On Monday evening we all get together with the vets for a hearty shrimp boil.

Tuesday is our actual tournament where all our members pay a fee to play and buy a hole in memory of a veteran. I always dedicate a hole to the 281st KIA & MIA. It is a very informal tournament, again the objective is to raise money and spend time with a disabled veteran. Afterwards we have a luncheon where we ask a disabled veteran to tell his story. You can always hear a pin drop. In our community, we have a group of quilters. At the conclusion, the guest speaker receives a very patriotic quilt.



On Thursday, we have our annual Veterans breakfast. This year we honored 3 WWII veterans. Each man had a sponsor who told the veteran's story. Again, it was a very silent room...with great applause at the end.

Then the flags are picked up and stored for next year. By the way, it takes about 45 minutes to plant the 3,500 flags and less time to pick them up. You see everyone rushes to get his or her allotment and pitch in to help. With couples in about 60-70 golf carts it is controlled chaos. We raised over \$60,000 this year for TIUFTT.

The Mystery Box by Wes Schuster

The security personnel at airports must have stories about what they find each day as they go about their jobs. We added to their litany of different and unusual discoveries while scanning luggage. We properly loaded a cardboard box on the conveyor belt and just knew it wasn't going to pass muster. Yes we became that culprit that causes the x-ray machine to stop. Not only did it stop, but also it caused a huddle of TSA agents to study the screen. Then the box was picked up and put on the conveyor belt for a second scan. Again more study

and more delay. We were prepared for this so we had plenty of time to catch our flight. However, as you can imagine the long line now had stalled and some folks were getting pretty antsy.

Finally one brave TSA agent carried the box over to us and asked what was inside. We explained and of course we didn't look like your everyday terrorists so the agent proceeded to open the box. She carefully removed the entire bubble wrap and held it up with great curiosity and exclaimed, "What is this?" We explained that we had just been to an Army reunion and what she was holding was a cyclic stick /gavel. She looked at my 281st hat and said, "Wow that's cool" and thanked me for my service! I'm sure that was the only cool object they inspected that day!

From an open letter to Jay Hays, the PX grunt, his lovely wife Doris and family posted on the HQ net in November by Will McCollum

Jay, I am so thankful for you, Doris and the other members of your wonderful family, and all that you have done for the Intruder families, and our association over all these many years.

When any of us needs something from the PX, all we have to do is give you a call or send an email, and within a few days, it is wrapped, boxed and mailed to us. I wonder how many thousands of hours you have spent standing in line over the years at the post office to do all that? AND, I know that when someone cannot afford something you will still send it and pay the whole cost from your pocket. I can only imagine how many hours it takes to load, unload, organize and keep track of all the items you provide for us at all the reunions; The cost of transportation, the equipment, vehicles, trailers and more that it takes to get all the items to our association meetings. I believe this year it took you three days driving to get to Texas and three more days to get back home and you drive to and from our reunion location year after year after year without regard to distance, cost and your physical condition. You have the most wonderful wife, children, and grandchildren. What an honor it was to see all of them in San Antonio having fun mingling with all the guests. What a pleasure it was to meet them. I noticed at the Saturday night event that they all had on the green 281st shirt, it looked like you had a whole flight of Intruders.

Colonel Jack Mayhew said, "the way you, Doris, and family manage and operate the PX touches the lives of more of our Intruder brothers than anything else we do as a group." You do so much more than we know about, you are a giver of your time, money, effort and kindness. You are one of a kind. Jay, you do so much more than any of us realize, and we have yet to hear you complain. I could go on and on, but I want you to know how much we appreciate you and your family, and on behalf of our fellow intruders; Jay, we cannot imagine our lives or our 281st AHC Association, without you. **Thank you so much.**



Bain Black gave a talk to the Eighth Air Force Historical Society about his experiences as a gunship pilot during the Battle of Duc Lap in August 1968 at their November 2018 meeting.



From Jay Hays, the PX Grunt

For December, free shipping, no PX postage. All new items are on the Web. BTW, while at the recent SOA Reunion wearing my 281st Hat, at least a dozen S.F. came up and said "I'm here because of the 281st AHC. A Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year from my Family to Yours.

An Intruder Christmas by John Galkiewicz

It was the day after Christmas
And Santa's work was done.
Everyone was tired
But now it's time for fun.

Mrs. Clause and the lady elves
Had prepared a might feast.
Everyone was ready for fun
From Santa to the very least.

The joy was very merry with
Food and drink till New Year's day.
The elves were now all plastered
And mighty Santa was the same way.

But there were several yet sober
They were known as "Intruder" men.
They had a most important job
Of finding that sleigh again.

Every year it's always the same
With some of those elves you see.
The sled gets taken for a joy ride
Then no one knows where it be.

They usually find it in a snow bank
All dented and bent up.
But by morning it's always ready
Because Intruders know their stuff.

A little holiday humor (from Halloween) for Jeff

NO!!!! You can't go Trick or Treating as a
Gunship Pilot on Leave!

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A 281ST
SCHOLARSHIP**

If you are a former member of the 281st or its attached or predecessor units, the 281st Scholarship Fund is designed for your descendants. Anyone who is a member of your family, including through marriage, may apply.

Children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, including those of your, and your wife's brothers and sisters are eligible. Any nieces, nephews, or great nieces and nephews may apply.

If you know of any relatives who have graduated from high school, and are planning to continue their education at a college, university, or approved trade or technical school, let them know about this opportunity.

Additionally, if any are already attending somewhere, but have not yet applied, they would also be eligible to do so.

A CHRISTMAS GREETING FROM THE PAST

**WOLFPACK "DEATH ON CALL"
WISHES YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

Photo and text are from a 1968 Christmas post card sent to family members of the 3rd platoon.

XMAS in Kontum (1967) by Jack Mayhew

During the month of December 1967, the Intruder Task Force supported Project Delta from two base locations. First we lived, along with the men of Delta, in an abandoned school area in Kontum.

Early each day we flew west to a jump site named Polie Kleng where we operated out of the small dirt strip located a few clicks from the Laotian border.

On the previous delta at An Hoa, we had introduced members of the Rat Pack to Delta flying and they had come together as a team. Flying out of Polie Kleng we accomplished more than could be expected, to include recovering three of our crews that were shot down. Inserting the entire ARVN Ranger Battalion in one morning, supporting them during an intense firefight, and extracting them the same day. Early in the morning of that same day, the FAC left the area with engine trouble and we controlled the tac air for the ground operation. At one point we had fighters stacked to fifteen thousand feet, and Wolf Pack was on station all day and never missed a beat. It was amazing to see a fighter jet dropping napalm on one area and the Pack giving the NVA "hell from above" on another area of the fight. On a different mission, we inserted elements of the battalion at last light in an area of Elephant grass using ladders, and recovered them the same night when they, or the NVA, set fire to the grass. We also received sufficient rockets to last the Wolf Pack for the rest of the war. (Lance Ham the Pack ammo officer, earned his forever name of "Rocket Man" when someone in the depot made a mistake and added a couple zeros to his rocket order, which resulted in him receiving several truckloads of rockets at the Polie Kleng site.) I suspect that they are still buried there. On December 21st our luck ran out and a transit gunship overlapped blades with one of our slicks that was starting up and we lost three slicks, More importantly, we lost Les Paschall who was KIA, and we had three other individuals injured and hospitalized.

To Our Intruder Family, Where Ever You May Be, Remembering a visit by Santa

(There are two, & they live in Ohio)

A few years ago (2005), there was a visitor in the lobby of our office building that was interrupting our staff. Being more curious than interested, I went down. When I stepped off the elevator, much to my surprise, most of our staff were being entertained by Santa Claus himself, and in the parking lot, we saw his sleigh.

The war in Iraq was raging, and more and more of our troops were being sent to war. To do our part in supporting them, we joined forces with the Intruder Association, and together we purchased, wrapped,

and sent several hundred Xmas packages to our troops. One of our key supporters in the association was none other our own Joe Bilitzke, who had



previously taken his Wolf-Pack skills and experience to the desert war, flying Hueys as a medi-evac AC.

The individuals that Santa Claus was entertaining were responsible for purchasing, wrapping, and shipping the packages. Many of the Association families also sent individual packages of food and comfort items needed for the desert environment.



Each package contained a personal letter expressing good wishes for a safe return home. Santa Claus had traveled from Lordstown, Ohio, to say thanks to all of these wonderful individuals. That's the way our Santa is, and we are blessed to have both he and Mrs. Claus.

At that point, Santa Claus, was known to most of us as the former Crew Chief on 113 and the Bandit Platoon Sergeant, and he was becoming a key player in our young association. Little did we know that he was the "front-man" for a wonderful lady named Dorris. When our Santa returned from duty in Vietnam he was more interested in fast cars than settling down; that is, until Dorris came into his life. During an early reunion one of our self taught computer experts was operating the computer, and many of the slides failed to match the screen.

Dorris took over, and we never looked back. No job is too small or too large for her.



Santa and Dorris are the epitome of the Intruder spirit! Nothing is impossible, and the hard jobs get done first. In discussing the fate of 113 someone said that we should have taken the helicopter to a small museum in the vicinity of Lordstown, and had we done that, we would be flying 113 to the reunions. That may not be true; but if it were, I assure you, Dorris would be the Aircraft Commander. Thanks to both of you for all you have done and continue to do! You are both true Intruders and we love you. On behalf of our own Mr. & Mrs. Santa; Merry Christmas to all. See you in New Orleans next October.

MEMBERS OF THE INTRUDER FAMILY IN NEED OF SOME KIND WORDS

Jim Wolfe, Rat Pack 1968

Susan Houston, our angel of Quilts, has done it again! On Friday, November 22, the Chaplain of Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, VA, presented Jim Wolfe with his Quilt of Valor. She then blessed the quilt and tucked him in.

Jim still suffers from injuries that resulted from a UH-1H (67-17342) crash on December 17, 1968. Jim was medically evacuated and has not been able to walk since the accident. The other crew members were injured but returned to duty. It appears that he will be in the VA hospital for a few months, so cards, letters, phone cal and emails are encouraged. If you live in the vicinity of

Richmond, VA, or traveling through, please stop in and visit with Jim.

James M. (Jim) Wolfe

Cell: 4100-709-0244

Email: wolfej241@gmail.com

Mail: Hunter Homes McGuire VA Medical Center

1021 Broad Rock Boulevard

Richmond, VA. 23249

P.S. A note of thanks to Saint Susan is in order. (susan1@bajabb.com)



Mrs. Karen Mentzer, widow of Fred Mentzer

Karen has been struck by dementia, which has created a serious situation for her. As there were no family members to step in and assist her with her affairs, the State of Oregon appointed a Guardian Attorney for her who now administers her affairs. Her appointed guardian relocated her to a secure facility that specializes in housing individuals with dementia. The attorney also liquidated all of her holdings, including the home that she and Fred purchased.

Individuals who have visited Karen report that her laugh, her way of speaking, and her sense of humor were intact. They also report that she can have visitors, although she may be reluctant to do so, and has the right to refuse to see visitors. She can receive cards, flowers, and gifts. Our wonderful Susan Huston is sending her one of her quilts.

We also have two intruder families, living in the area, and they are checking on her living conditions. So far, it appears that she is in good hands. Her mailing address is: **Mrs. Karen Mentzer, The Arbor at Avemere Court, 450 Claggett Street, NE, Room 120, Keizer, OR 97303**



OBITUARIES

Rick Barrett

Rick served in Maintenance during 5/67-5/68



6/7/47-7/15/19

Bill Cnota

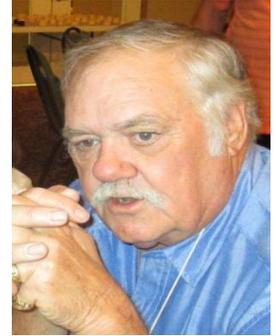
Bill was a Bandit pilot from 2/69 to 2/70



7/31/45-8/3/19

Bill Holt

Bill was a Wolfpack pilot from 8/68 to 9/69 and was the platoon leader for part of that time as Wolfpack 36. He was also known as Holt-Holt of the Jungle for flying a heavy gunship through the tops of some trees.



10/14/43-5/13/19

Gary Southwell

Gary was a pilot in the 145th Airlift Platoon, a predecessor unit of the 281st AHC. He then became an instructor pilot at Ft Rucker for 39 years.



7/4/41-7/18/19

281st AHC Association Contact Information

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