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2020

## 281<sup>ST</sup> ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

No. 74

### **"WE'LL MEET AGAIN"\*\* by Wes Schuster,**

**President** These are most unusual and dramatic times. It has been a hundred years since the world has been faced with such widespread health danger. For a number of reasons relating to timing on our contracts with the Higgins Hotel and the National WWII Museum and the personal impact that this pandemic has on our membership, the Executive Board has decided to cancel this year's (2020) reunion in New Orleans.

I want to thank Bain Black, our Reunion Chairman, for his tireless work in arranging this great venue. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to visit and hold our reunion in such a world recognized "experience in history" facility. In addition, we had planned to ride on a PT boat from WWII and have a great time at the "Krewe of Boo" parade.

The good news is that we will still have our reunion in New Orleans, but in 2022. Next year (2021) we are already booked with the 3-160<sup>th</sup> SOAR at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA. More will follow on that in future newsletters.

One aspect of our planning for this year's reunion at the National WWII museum was to relate to this era through each of our own family's personal histories. Many of you wrote short stories about that generations participation in the largest war in history. Since so many of you made an effort to tell some very compelling stories, we decided to leave them in this edition. I would ask those of you who would like to add to this collection of stories with stories of your relatives in WWII, please do so and we will include your stories in future newsletters.

These are critical times and I hope everyone is extra careful. I wish everyone good health and look forward to our next gathering of our 281<sup>st</sup> family.

**\*\* A 1939 British song that was one of the most famous of the WWII era.**

### **From the Cancelled 2020 Reunion Committee**

#### **Chairperson: Bain Black**

My goodness, who would have ever predicted the craziness that has taken over since I wrote my contribution to the previous newsletter? Just two weeks ago four Intruders planned to travel to New Orleans to make final arrangements for our October reunion. Indeed, we were to have been there the weekend of March 20-23! Jeff Murray, Wes Schuster, Jim Torbert and I were to review final details, plus have fun in NOLA in perfect spring weather. It was not meant to be...we cancelled the trip and the Museum announced they would close until further notice.

We are still making plans for a 2021 reunion, see Wes' comments above, and are re-planning for the 2022 reunion which will be at this year's cancelled venue in New Orleans and the WWII Museum.



**OF COURSE ARMY HELICOPTER CREWMEN!**

**Where else would you think they got the superhero idea from?**

**THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE US,  
OUR WWII VETERANS**

**Howard Gourley by Brent Gourley**

My father, Howard Gourley, had served in the USNR when WW2 started. I once saw a certificate he received for being the fastest telegrapher in the First Naval District (northeast U.S.) at forty-two words per minute (only possible using a “mill” – a typewriter). With medical issues, he did not serve in the military during WW2; but built and inspected aircraft radios at the F.W. Sickles company in Chicopee Falls, MA.

**John S. Gourley by Brent Gourley**

My second cousin once removed, John S. Gourley, died at Pointe du Hoc, Omaha Beach, with the 2nd Bn, 75th Rangers in 1944. Only 90 of the 225 Rangers made it to the top of the cliff. Sadly, John was not one of them.. Their mission was to destroy the big coastal defense guns at the top of the cliff, but the guns were not there, they had been moved inland. Nevertheless, the Rangers found the guns and destroyed them. His dad, Isaac III, worked at the Winchester factory in New Haven, CT.

**Miscellaneous relatives by Brent Gourley**

My mother's stepbrother, Harold Faulkins, brother to Raymond also served in the war. My father's uncle John, worked a barrel straightening machine on the M1 Garand assembly line. My mother's sister Edith, ran a drop forge, both of them worked at the real (US Government) Springfield Armory. My grandfather, William Gourley, worked for Hendee Industries (Indian Motocycle) on the army tech rep/sales team.

**Joe B. Bilitzke by Joe M. Bilitzke**

My dad, also a Joe, served as a pilot in the Pacific theater. He commanded the 388th Bomb Squadron, of the 312th Bomb Group. He was stationed at Port Moresby, New Guinea and flew over 100 combat missions in multiple aircraft (A-20, B-25, P-38, P-40, P-51).



Pilot Joe Bilitzke receiving the DFC in New Guinea

**Raymond Faulkins by Brent Gourley**

My step-uncle, Raymond Faulkins went ashore at Anzio, Italy and survived being wounded there.

**Foy Woodham by Brent Gourley**

My father-in-law, Foy Woodham, spent WWII driving trucks in a Transportation Battalion between the railheads and the Seattle seaport. After 38 years, he retired as a Command Sergeant Major and lived to be 95 years old.

**Aunts and uncles by Joe Bilitzke**

My paternal grandparents contributed all four children to the war effort. One uncle was a Navy pilot in the European theater, and another uncle was a Marine Corps navigator in South America. My aunt was an Army combat nurse stationed in Italy. All four survived the war and returned safely home. A lot of war stories around the dinner table.

My Italian maternal grandparents had four girls. So, they all did their war duties on the home front.

**Jack Murray by Jeff Murray**

My dad, Jack Murray, was a B-24 bombardier in WWII, flying 29 missions over Germany and Austria and flew on the last drop the 8th Air Force made. He returned to college then was drafted for Korea so he remained to complete his 20, retiring as the Professor of Air Science at UV while Jeff was in Vietnam.



Bombardier Jack Murray getting in some stick time

**Jeff's uncles by Jeff Murray**

Uncle Buster, James C. Kidd, was also a bombardier on B-17's and was shot down over the North Sea on his 8th mission and then spent an estimated 12 hours floating in the water tied together with 5 of his crew in their Mae West's,. They were found, almost frozen and unconscious, by a boat looking for another crew. He retired as Professor Emeritus from North Georgia College.

Another uncle's sister married Chesty Puller, a Marine of some repute. Chesty's son was Lewis Jr, who Jeff

used to visit in the summers in Virginia. Lewis lost both of his legs in Vietnam as a Marine Lieutenant, became a lawyer, and wrote a book which won the Pulitzer Prize (Fortunate Son) before PTSD took him. He is buried in Arlington.

#### Wesley C. J. Schuster by Wes Schuster

My father, Wesley C. J. Schuster, was an orphan. When he was old enough to work he lived on farms in Wisconsin as a foster child but was really unpaid labor. When he was 19 years old he joined the Coast Guard.

His shore duty was on Thatcher's Island and shoreline footpaths in Gloucester, Massachusetts to look for German submarines and other suspicious naval craft. Then he was assigned to the USS Wakefield. My father's duties included manning a 4"/50 caliber anti aircraft gun in a turret. My father made 40 crossings of the Atlantic Ocean on the USS Wakefield carrying troops to Liverpool, England and Naples, Italy and transporting casualty-evacuees and POW's back to the United States.

The USS Wakefield, nicknamed the "Lone Wolf" was the converted cruise ship, SS Manhattan. The USS Wakefield could operate at faster speeds than convoys and made all its crossings without escort protection. Although the threat of submarine attack had diminished it always boggled my mind to think if the Lone Wolf had been sunk that 6,000 men would have been lost. That's more than double those lost at Pearl Harbor.



Wesley C. J. Schuster on Anti-Aircraft gun

#### Black Family Members by Bain Black

My mom's brother, Austin Blongastainer fought in Burma. As a kid I remember uncle Austy talking about the cold and shortage of rations. My uncle and Godfather, Frank Carboni served as an MP after landing at Anzio. My dad, Jeremiah (Jerry) Black and

his brother James served in the Navy on the Cruiser Nashville in the Pacific. Their brother Lane served in the Pacific as a Seabee. All three brothers enlisted shortly after Pearl Harbor. I suspect an added incentive was to escape the farm in Union County, NC. All survived the war: I wish I had asked more about their service, they did not talk much about the war.

#### Leo Castello by John Castello

My dad, Leo Castello, enlisted at the age of 17. He tried to get in the airborne but was too small. He ended up in the infantry as a BAR man (big gun for a small guy). He was with the 9th Armored Division when they took the bridge at Remagen, receiving a bronze star.

He was with Patton for a short stint (not caring for it much as he said they always had to have shined shoes). After the war, he was stationed in Alaska.



Leo Castello

#### Sherman B. Ruth by Wes Schuster

My cousin never knew his father, Sherman B. Ruth. My uncle was a standout person, a good student who went to college early in the 40's, but joined the war effort before he graduated. He joined the Marines and was part of the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific Theater in WWII, Okinawa.

Leading part of the 29<sup>th</sup> Marines they made steady progress south until May 12, 1945 when on the outskirts of Naha, Okinawa they ran into a low, loaf shaped hill which was soon to be named Sugar Loaf Hill. The 29th would sustain heavy casualties over the course of the next few days while taking the hill. They made numerous frontal assaults on the hill and finally secured it on May 18th but in the process they sustained so many casualties that they were rendered combat ineffective. My uncle was killed in action on May 17, 1945. He never saw his son.

The 82-day battle lasted from April 1 until June 22, 1945. Okinawa was the bloodiest battle of the Pacific War. In memory of my uncle, the Gloucester High

School named the National Honor Society, the Sherman B. Ruth Chapter. I doubt the students know much about neither the name of their chapter nor the history of WWII.

#### Elmer W. Roesner by Dean Roesner

My dad, Elmer Roesner, was drafted in early 1941, trained as a medic, and served with the 359th Bomb Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group, 8th Air Force. First stationed in training at Alamogordo, NM, then Boise, ID, and finally Molesworth, England in early spring 1942. Besides working in the base hospital, he was also on the "meat wagon", the ambulance that went to the planes returning from missions to get the wounded. He hated the job of removing dead, dying, and pieces thereof from the planes, so eventually got a transfer to maintenance as a mechanic on B-17's. Probably due to his high mechanical aptitude, he enjoyed working on the aircraft. His primary plane was the Thunderbird which survived over 100 combat missions and the war. He came home in September of 1945.



B-17 "Thunderbird", Elmer Roesner on right

#### John Cherrie by Lou Llerda

My cousin, John Cherri Jr., joined the Army in 1940 and was assigned (after Basic and AIT) to the HQ, 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment Assault Gun Platoon as the gunner on a M3 halftrack w/ 75mm Pack Gun initially as a tank destroyer.

He served with the 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment all the way from Algeria to the Po River in Italy. When the unit was reorganized in December of 1944, he was sent back to the states. At that point he had served 21 of his 33 months in active combat and was the only senior NCO who remained from the originally deployed members of the 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment Assault Gun Platoon.



John Cherie's M3 halftrack w/ 75mm Pack Gun

#### Anthony "Tony" Izbicki by Lou Llerda

My cousin, Anthony Izbicki, enlisted in the USMC in 1939 and served initially, as did many others from the Northeastern Pennsylvania anthracite coal area, because there were no jobs to be had other than the military. He is the brother-in-law of John Cherri. Trained as a radio operator, Tony soon found that he liked radios and electronics and made it his career for life. He was a real go-getter. He served in the Pacific with the 1st Marine Division in the Solomon's campaign and after being given several Japanese radios, he managed to determine the particulars, which got him promoted and assigned to San Diego as an instructor. He was discharged in December, 1945.

#### Burton K. Cartwright by Al Cartwright

My Dad, Burton K. Cartwright, an Iowa farm boy, left the farm at nineteen and joined the United States Navy in 1925. After Boot Camp and Engine Mechanic's training he was assigned to the Battleship U.S.S.

Tennessee during his first enlistment. He also served on submarines for 13 years into WWII in 1943, one of which, the Stingray, earned 12 battle stars on 16 war patrols, a record. He finished WWII on board the Battleship U.S.S.

Alabama, spent a year at White Sands N.M. working on the V-2 Rocket Project and then retired after a full career.



#### Narcy J. Yenchak by Lou Llerda

My uncle by marriage, Narcy Yenchak, served in the USN as a Pharmacists Mate aboard the USS LST-284 (Landing Ship - Tank). He was born in 1924, enlisted

in the Navy in 1943, and according to family records, joined the crew of the LST-284 in New York in early 1944. He was aboard the 284 on D Day at Utah Beach for the Normandy Invasion, then for the Invasion of southern France and finally ended up in the Pacific for the Invasion and occupation of Okinawa.

0900hrs, 9 June 1944, Portland UK.



### Jim Crowe by Denny Crowe

My father(Jim Crowe) was a Sergeant Bombardier. The crew he was on was headed to England from the Southwest when he came down with pneumonia. He was dropped off in St. Louis. He was placed in hospital at Jefferson Barracks. After he was cured, the administration at Jeff Barracks didn't know what to do with a white Air Corps sergeant so they made him a drill sergeant. He was assigned to a new company of soldiers, some of them didn't even have uniforms yet. He got the soldiers all lined up and announced that he was sergeant Jim Crowe and he was from northwest Georgia. He asked if there were any questions. There were no questions. Then he asked for the biggest toughest man in the ranks to come and stand front and center. Well the men looked around and sent out a giant of a man who came out and said that he reconed that he was the one. Dad asked him his name; the man told him his name and Dad said, "good you're the corporal"

After the stint as a drills sergeant, Dad applied for the Aviation Cadet program. He went through training in

the southwest and finally graduated in early 1944 as a B-17 pilot. He was made an IP right out of training and eventually got a transition into B-29s. He got to Okinawa as the war ended.

### Gene Crowe by Denny Crowe

My Uncle Gene entered the Marine Corps in 1942 . He was trained at Parris Island and sent to the 4th Marine Division. He made landings at Roi-Namur, Tinian, Saipan, and Iwo Jima. He advanced from private to Platoon Sergeant and was the leader of a machine gun platoon. He was shot by a sniper on Iwo Jima. When he woke up in a hospital they started calling him 'lieutenant'.

### Richard G. "Mac" McCollum by Will McCollum

When Mac was drafted, a sergeant asked recruits if anyone wanted to be a paratrooper. Mac immediately agreed, after learning that paratrooper's pay was \$50 per month more. "An enormous sum of money," he said. Mac completing basic training near Little Rock, Ark. and was transferred to Fort Benning, Ga. for jump training. After intensive training and five jumps, Mac earned his 'wings.' He served with the 101st Airborne and embarked into World War II. Mac served in Ireland; Scotland; and Newbury, England, but spent most of his time in France and joined the fight at Normandy. He participated in the Battle of the Bulge and jumped into Bastogne, Belgium.

### Arthur H. McCollum by Will McCollum

Arthur spent several years in Japan after his graduation from the Naval Academy. Later he served on the staff of Commander- in-Chief U.S.Fleet. He stayed in the Navy and had a distinguished career, retiring in 1951. He was recalled to active duty with the CIA and retired once more in 1953.

### Clifford Wheeler by John Mayhew

My wife Cindy's father, Clifford Wheeler, served in WWII and Korea. He joined the navy as a young kid, thinking that he would be safe as a Medic on a big ship. What they did not tell him was that the Marines did not have Medics as they were provided by the navy. His first shore visit was Iwo Jima, as an attached Medic (Corpsman), where he offered to help raise the flag, but was told that they needed big tall guys, not short Medics. Following WWII, he went ashore with the Marines at Korea and when the war was over he came home. As a civilian he achieved several records. He made and spent considerable sums of money on his seven (7) wives and was a classic case of untreated PTSD, but he loved life. He lived with us for a few years until

the cold weather got to him. Not one to pay attention to advice from doctors, he continued to party hard and after a long XMAS party he died in his sleep, with a smile on his face. For the record he was an accomplished artist, and it was he who drew the sketches of our MIA and KIA's. I still miss him.



Clifford Wheeler

**NOTICE TO NEWSLETTER RECIPIENTS,**  
THE FORGOING STORIES WERE SUBMITTED  
**BY 281ST MEMBERS ABOUT THEIR  
RELATIVES.** WE WOULD LIKE MORE  
STORIES FROM **YOU** ABOUT **YOUR  
RELATIVES IN WWII** FOR THE NEXT  
NEWSLETTER IN JULY. PLEASE SUBMIT  
THEM TO DEAN ROESNER BY MAIL OR  
EMAIL.

SEND PHOTOS IF YOU HAVE THEM.

**DEAN ROESNER**  
**494 WOODCLIFF DR**  
**REDDING, CA 96003**  
**deanroesner@aol.com**

#### **Stanley Morud by Will McCollum**

In line with the above stories but somewhat different, we had an Intruder who also served in WWII as a pilot flying P-51 Mustangs in Europe. Stanley Morud was a real character from the first day he arrived in Nha Trang, He was our first commander of the 483rd Maintenance Detachment. He also could and did operate a grader and bulldozer to help get our helicopter parking area finished. I am only guessing here, but it looks like he might have trained in the P-39s and P-51s at Craig Field in Alabama. This is from what I found in my research. He served with the 9th AF in WW II, he also served in the Korean war. The 9th AF participated in Egypt and Libya, the campaign

in Tunisia, and the invasions of Sicily and Italy. The 9th transferred to England in October 1943 and participated in the Normandy invasion and the rest of the European continent until the VE-Day.

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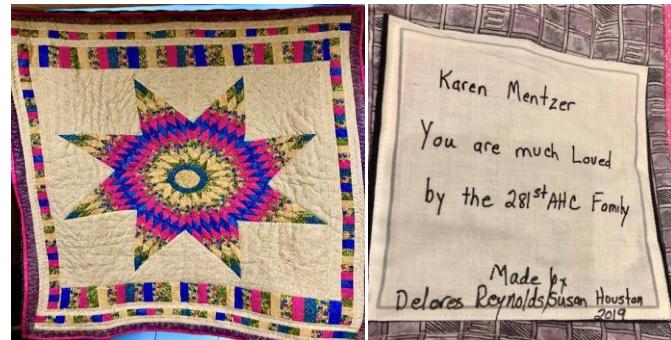
#### **TRAVELERS TALE OF WOE BY JOE BILITZKE**

Returned home Thursday night from South Africa. It was a four-day trek.

Last Wednesday morning, South Africa closed borders to all incoming and outgoing. We made it out Tuesday by twelve hours. Besides a total of 35 hours in the air (full cattle cars), we had an eight-hour layover at the Istanbul airport. Every flight on the Istanbul airport big board showed *CANCELLED* or *DELAYED*. We came home to the Twilight Zone.

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#### **A quilt for Karen Mentzer by Susan Houston**




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#### **SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE BY JIM BAKER**

Well, in almost no time, coronavirus/Covid-19 has changed our world. I hope that you and all your families are well and remain so throughout this situation.

Putting national politics and the pandemic aside for now, I am happy to report that our Scholarship Fund is active, alive, and financially strong. Our members and their families continue to produce bright young people interested in continuing their education. Doing so for the students and their families has always been a financial challenge, but the unpredictable economic times that appear to be ahead of us are sure to make it even more difficult.

We are one of only a few former Company level organizations to provide scholarship assistance for the descendants of our families-something of which we can be justifiably proud. We sustain this assistance by donations from former Intruders, their families, other interested individuals, and corporations.

Those donations are still tax deductible as a charitable contribution. That deduction may not be meaningful

if you take the increased standard deduction at tax time rather than itemize, but others may be able to take advantage of it.

Given the expected economic turbulence we appear to be flying into, our budgets will be strained, but then so will the student's. We can only try to keep a straight and level attitude, and hopefully we'll get through this together. Please, don't forget the students.

Jim Baker, Chairman, Scholarship Committee

### **How I got to the 281<sup>ST</sup> by Jeff Murray**

My orders for Vietnam said I was headed for the 17<sup>th</sup> Aviation Group, I had no idea where that was but the aircraft landed at Cam Ranh Bay and a bus took me to Dong Ba Thin and the 10<sup>th</sup> CAB. We sat there for I believe 2 days while no one talked to us. Finally the S-1 pulled our group into his office, there were maybe 8 pilots and he had the battalion units listed on a big chart and for some reason I thought the 155<sup>th</sup> had neat numbers. Now I can think of no better way to decide your next year's assignment than cool numbers but when he called my name and asked if I had a preference I said "I'd like to go to the 155<sup>th</sup>."

Suddenly I got whacked on the back of the head, like Jethro on NCIS does to Tony, and this lieutenant said "You're going with me to the 281<sup>st</sup>." I didn't know this guy, perhaps we had a few too many CC & waters the night before but being the junior guy in the room, I meekly complied and a day later we were winging it north to Nha Trang. Best decision I ever made, thank you Dave Mitchell. Side note: he says he has no idea why he brought me along but I repaid him by including him in my wedding. He doesn't remember that either.

### **281st Intruder Special Forces Pilots**

We had what seems like a more than usual number of pilots in the 281st that were former SF. Apparently, once they obtained their pilots wings to go along with their jump wings, they flocked to the 281st for flight duty. Maybe they wanted to support their former comrades still on the ground in SF from the cockpit, and decided that being an Intruder was the best way to accomplish that objective. The following Intruder pilots are known to have been former Special Forces before flight school.

**Fred Funk** -- Rat Pack -- 68-69

**Lee Brewer** -- Wolf Pack -- 68-69

**Bobby Stanfill** -- Maintenance -- 68-69

**John Korsbeck** -- Rat Pack -- 69-70

**Eldon "Duke" Paine** -- Rat Pack -- 69-70

**Bob Moberg** -- Bandits, Intruder 5 -- 67-68

**Don Torrini** -- Rat Pack -- 67-68

**Jim "Pappy" Holt** -- Wolf Pack -- 69-70

**Jerry Montoya** -- Wolf Pack -- 66-67

**Ted Untalan** -- Rat Pack -- 67-68

**Phred Sherrill** -- Bandits -- 68-69

**Ron Turner** -- Rat Pack -- 70

**Dave Devere** -- Wolf Pack -- 69-70

**Johnnie Gilreath** -- Rat Pack -- 69-70

**Barclay Boyd** -- Wolf Pack -- 67

**Ken Kunke** -- Bandit -- 67-68

**Jim Murphy** -- Wolf Pack -- 69

**Ken Miller** -- Wolf Pack -- 69

**Jackie Keele** -- Wolf Pack -- 69-70

**Donald "Corky" Corkran** -- Wolf Pack -- 66-67

**Gary Shaner** -- Bandit -- 70

**Don Oxley** -- Wolf Pack -- 70

That's 22 total so far folks. I think that without sticking my neck out too far, saying it may be a record for Assault Helicopter Companies in Viet Nam is likely a valid statement.

**Mr. Lubic has given me a number of stories, here is one that has been edited. Will McCollum**

### **20 minute warning fuel light by Richard Lubic**

*How much time do you have when the 20-minute fuel light comes on? Over the years, several people have asked me, "Were you ever afraid in Vietnam?"*

Thinking back over the years and remembering that, I was shocked once when Jerry Montoya was wounded and was always apprehensive when going into a strange area, and generally speaking, the pucker factor was always there, but I was not afraid.

That ended on the night of 14 May 1967 on a late evening mission with Delta when Warrant Officer Hood and his crew were shot down inserting a Special Forces team in a small hole in the jungle. In a matter of a few minutes, the crash site was dark, and darkness comes fast in the highland's jungle of South Vietnam.

C&C (Command and Control) and the mission commander requested a flare ship and other support to locate the crew and provide cover as we had to do everything possible to recover them. The first recovery ship went in to get them, it came under heavy enemy fire and was shot down. Now all together, there were about 15 men on the ground.

After a few flares were dropped my crew and I waited for instructions. Then I was given a location to home in on, I could see the light there on the ground. We

made a dive, and there was the light, but it was not the down crew's location, it was only the dim light of a flare going out. I did not waste any time getting back out for, as always, the pucker factor was in the red. When I came out, I informed C&C that I was low on fuel and he gave me permission to leave the area to go and refuel. As I was leaving about a half minute later, C&C called and said that they had a positive location of the down crew and asked me if I could go back down and get them. Of course, I said, so we went back to the area, came to a hover, and dropped the rope ladder. It seemed like an hour, but really it took only just a few minutes before Mr. Hood and his crew were inside. I came out of the hover and was on my way when the 20-minute fuel warning light blinked very brightly on the instrument panel.

A couple of thoughts instantly rushed through my mind; (1) Mr. Hood was shot down, and now he and his crew were on another helicopter that stood a good chance of crashing, (2) I was now flying at 3000 feet over the mountains and the very dark jungles below with maybe 19 minutes of fuel and about 20 minutes to the base. That red light on the panel was a very bright red staring in my face.

### **NOW, I WAS AFRAID!**

I had to make this work, crashing into a mountain in Vietnam at night was not an option. I quickly figured out at 3000 feet, 20 minutes of fuel...(maybe), so I set up a 150 feet per minute descent at 100 knots. This had to work. I had to milk this for all it was worth. (I think only pilots truly understand the milking process.)

That red light was bugging the heck out of me, that was all I could see. I knew I was just about out of fuel, I did not need that thing to remind me anymore. Suddenly a thought came to me, from I don't know where that said, "overhead breaker panel, third row up, the third breaker in, I pulled it." The red light was gone.

When I got close to Phu Bai, I was about to call the tower when an Air Force Caribou Pilot called, saying, "he was on extended left downwind to east runway for landing." Tower said he was cleared number one for landing. I called the tower and said, "Army 155, three miles west for landing," tower cleared me to land number two after the Caribou. I responded to the tower, "I am critical fuel." Immediately the Air Force Caribou pilot called the tower and said, "he would be doing 360's north of the airport," the tower cleared me for a straight-in approach landing. I landed at the

medivac pad, Mr. Hood and his crew exited the aircraft and I hovered over to refuel. When my crew got fuel flowing into the tank, my fuel pressure was already dropping, and the low fuel warning indicator had been on for 19 minutes. Even to this day, I cannot tell you how grateful I was that my crew and I were safely on the ground. Dick Lubic

Bandit Aircraft 66-01155

AC - CWO R. E. Lubic

Pilot - A.G. Rampone

Crew Chief - PFC D. Franco, Jr.

Gunner - PFC W.G. Lang

S.F. Recovery NCO - SFC H.B. Stanley

### **Addendum by Will McCollum**

I called Colonel Lou Lerda and asked if the 20-minute fuel warring was pretty much correct, he said, "yes." He also said, "usually it is within 18 to 22 minutes, and that depends on the wind and how much power you have to use getting to a safe landing area." He had experienced a similar situation on a flight in Vietnam.

### **Addendum by Lou Lerda**

Nineteen minutes into the twenty-minute light is unnerving. In my case, I did not have the presence of mind to pull circuit breakers or do any fancy footwork, and at 22 minutes, the bird started to wind down as I started to roll off the throttle on the pad. Great job, Dick, each one of us did things with Mr. Bell's machine that he never expected us to do with it. That's why I placed so much faith in the Huey. It was very common to use a high average of 600 pounds (88.24 gals) per hour. You had to remember that there is a 20-minute safety reserve "caution light" that reminds you to land as soon as practicable. That is 200 pounds or less usable fuel in the tank. That red light always causes the pucker factor to rise.

### **A new beginning for Army Aviation and the 281st**

On October 22, 1956, the first flight of the Bell Model 204, XH-40-BF, serial number 55-4459, took place at Bell's helicopter factory at Hurst, Texas.

**Below is 55-4459 on its first flight.**



The XH-40 was designed with a primary mission of battlefield medical evacuation. It was 42 feet, 8 inches long with a main rotor diameter of 44 feet, 0 inches. Empty weight was 3,693 pounds with a maximum gross weight of 5,650 pounds. The prototype XH-40 was powered by a Lycoming LTC1B-1 (XT53-L-1) free-turbine (turboshaft). The engine used a 5-stage axial-flow, 1-stage centrifugal-flow compressor with a single-stage gas producer turbine and single-stage power turbine. A reverse-flow combustion section with 12 burners allowed a significant reduction in the engine's total length. The engine had a Maximum Continuous Power rating of 770 shaft horsepower while the Military Power rating was 825 shaft horsepower. It could produce 860 shaft horsepower at 21,510 r.p.m. At Military Power, the XT53-L-1 produced 102 pounds of jet thrust. The power turbine drives the output shaft through a 3.22:1 gear reduction. The T53-L-1 was 3 feet, 11.8 inches long and 1 foot, 11.25 inches in diameter and weighed 460 pounds. The helicopter had a maximum speed of 138 miles per hour. The service ceiling was 17,500 feet and its range was 212 miles.

This aircraft was the prototype of what would eventually be known world-wide as the "Huey." It was originally designated by the U.S. Army as HU-1, but a service-wide change of aircraft designations resulted in that becoming UH-1A. Produced for civil and military customers, it evolved into the **UH-1C gunship**, as seen below.



The "**Charlie, Delta, and Hotel**" models were all used extensively by the 281st throughout its service in RVN. Later, the production evolved into the twin engine Model 212 (UH-1N), the heavy-lift Model 214, and is still in production 60 years later as the twin-engine, four-bladed, glass-cockpit model 412 and the UH-1Y.



Above is the UH-1D/UH-1H slick.



Above are the UH-1Y & AH-1Z, 40 years too late for us, we sure could have used them in VN.

While researching this info on Hueys, I discovered that the Charlie model was updated in 1970 in limited numbers to a Mike model which was simply a C model with the same engine as in the H model slick (1400 Shaft Horse Power vs. 1100 SHP). Too bad this was too late to benefit the 281st. Now, at first thought, getting almost 30% more power in the gunship would mean no more bump and hop takeoffs down the runway due to being over loaded with weapons and ammo. However, knowing the mentality of the pilots and especially the crewchiefs, I'm betting the bump and hop takeoff method would have still been necessary, as the M models would just have had more ammo added until they could only barely take off, just like before. After all, there's no such thing as too much ammo in a gunfight!



**St Louis mini reunion preparing flag cases for presentation (and having some lunch too)**



**Presented to Richard Murry's daughter Bobbi and husband John Buckner by Jay and Marshall**



**Jay & Doris Hays, Frank & Cheryl Becker present a flag case to Gayle, widow of Bill Holt**



**281st Group photo, San Antonio, TX**

### **ABOUT THOSE FLOWERS ON PAGE ONE:**

In case any of you are wondering why a combat unit would have flowers on their newsletter (especially on the front page), well, it's spring, (hence the green borders) and those flowers are the closest to Easter Lillies that I could find! The Editor.

### **OBITUARIES**

#### **Richard Murry**

Served in maintenance  
3/68 - 3/69.

**12/4/46-12/27/19**



### **281st AHC Association Contact Information**

#### **THE EXECUTIVE BOARD (Elected)**

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Bain Black, Reunion Chair [BainB@roadrunner.com](mailto:BainB@roadrunner.com)

#### **APPOINTED OFFICERS (Abbreviated list)**

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