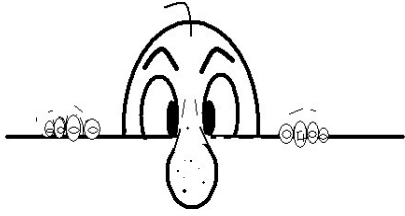


TOP SECRET



BAN ME THUOT - BARB -



Remembering the 155th Assault Helicopter Company - Sortie #29 - October '04

The Wall . . .

It is mostly during the nights that they come and visit and check on me. How I see the hearts, souls, voices, of boys becoming men in a wrong place at the wrong time, yet, they made their mark on me. How can I forget...if I ever forget...it would have been for nothing...I refuse to believe in nothingness!!! There are times when they scare me by



their appearance; but at times their visits are friendly, caring, touching me, trying to encourage me to move on, I hesitate not wanting to leave them alone with each other in the place of death...I want to bring them back into the world of the living...they don't respond when I call their names...I wake up screaming their names...then I know they are on the other side of life...a place they can't cross physically any longer and I can't cross into their world...but our spirits unite and we talk about the good old days....we remember the songs...the talk of going home...to getting back with our families and friends...to be back on the block...then we realize it can never be there again...I am thankful of their presence in my life...come back soon my brothers...come back soon.... There will be a time to sing the old songs, to dance, to remember the talks of going home, and to say thanks for being my friends my brothers and sisters...I LOVE YOU...I MISS YOU...YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN...

Kerry "Doc" Pardue

What? Me, worry? We have plenty of power, plenty . . .



I was watching Fox a while back during the Iraqi War, and the imbedded reporter said, “We have several wounded, but are unable to evacuate them because the area is not secure.” (B#**+/#t!) That would never have happened with the 155th. When I was on the ground at Duc Lap, a DUST OFF came to get us while other helicopters, and jets were taking hits. The A/C was Capt. Iley, a no nonsense, take charge,

tough as a leather knot kind of person (would have made a good W-1). As soon as he set down in the MACV compound his ship was filled with South Vietnamese troops with questionable wounds that just wanted to get out of there. Pratt and I made sure our two crew members were on board, and instantly agreed the DUST OFF could not handle our extra weight. I stepped up on the skid and told Capt. Iley, “Pratt and I are staying, you are over-loaded.” He turned his head, and looked right at me with eyes that looked like they belonged on a Pit Bull. With tobacco juice in the corner of his mouth he said, “Get your bony little, ass on this helicopter. I am not coming back!” The only answer you can give to a guy like that is, “Yes Sir!” I sat on the console, and watched the gauges as he came out. He pulled well over 100%, and it did not bleed one RPM. As a “C” model guy, I was impressed.

I would like to think we still have men like that in aviation today, in fact, I know we do.

CWO-2 Gil Terry, Falcon 2

Duc Lap, same time . . . different channel . . .

In 1968, mid summer if I remember, I was flying as Aircraft Commander on a UH-1H and using the call sign “Stagecoach 27”. I had been in country since November of 1967 and had grown to know my new occupation fairly well, though as it turned out this day, it would be full of surprises. The previous evening I had been assigned the coveted Special Forces Daily Support mission. This was normally a picnic sort of affair which involved visiting the area’s Special Forces camps with mail, supplies and personnel, an easy-going affair of new sights and not at all scary. The day got off to an unusual start when the first flight consisted of the area SF camp’s commander, a full bird colonel, his sergeant major and several other SF types, all in a big hurry to go to Duc Lap Special Forces camp about 30 miles west of BMT and just three or four miles from the Cambodian border. The camp at Duc Lap was several miles from a MACV camp of the same name but had much better defenses with several companies of local troops plus a runway. I had not been briefed on what was going on at the time but by listening to our several radios on the way over found out that an Air Force F-100 and one of our gun ships had already been shot down by NVA troops that had started attacking both camps during the night, and this was only an hour past sunrise. The first approach in was pretty normal until I got on the ground and the camp radio operator called to ask me if I had seen the fifty caliber that was shooting at me on the way in. I hadn’t but took his word for it. Rather than shut down on the camp pads, and give the opposition mortar crews something to practice on, I took on a load of wounded Vietnamese troops and went back to BMT. While there I picked up a load of ammo and supplies returning then to Duc Lap SF. And so went the day, for about twenty or so trips. Most trips we got shot at while going in, so during the early part of the day the crew chief decided to clean his M-60 on the way back to BMT. Naturally, with the cargo door open he lost control of the main recoil spring, and it sailed out the door into the fresh air. That cost us a half an hour until we could “borrow” a functional door gun. There were some interesting high points of the day. Subsequent approaches and exits were high speed, done at ten feet, and I was beginning to worry that the NVA would get wise to my tactics and start to mortar the helipad when I was on it. What actually happened was a surprise. About mid-day we had landed, thrown out the ammo/supplies and were watching the stretcher-bearers coming toward the aircraft when there was a loud explosion behind the aircraft. I instinctively thought mortars, and of course they hardly ever just shoot one. Twenty or thirty seconds later there was another explosion, and I guessed that more were coming. I

immediately announced “coming up” over the intercom and picked up to a hover, turned ninety right, applied full power, nosed over to seventy knots and pulled back to a full power cyclic climb. As we went through 1700 feet AGL I told the copilot he had the controls and looked back over the right side of my armored seat. To my disgust, I saw that the right side door gunner was not present. I thought he had either gotten shot and fell out or was back on the ground at the SF camp, and if so, we would have to go back in and get him. Then a hand appeared on the bottom edge of the cargo door, and my heart stopped! Then another hand appeared. We were going thru 2500 feet by then, and I managed to get my voice back. “Crew chief, go help the gunner back into the aircraft!” I said. The crew chief replied, “What?” Then I yelled rudely at him. Next the SF camp came on the radio, said that was pretty neat; could we do it again, and that the explosions had actually been caused by a lone NVA with an RPG Launcher, and that he would not be doing it again. I can only guess that he had been told to “lead” a helicopter when shooting at one. As it turned out, the gunner had been standing outside the helicopter with his helmet unplugged when this all started. He saw the skid go by and concluded he was about to be left behind. That broke him of that habit.



We ended up flying fourteen flight hours that day and on the last flight we took out the Air Force pilot who had been shot down early that morning. He had ejected successfully and walked into the camp wearing a gray flight suit and waving a .38 revolver. As near as we could figure, he had walked thru a company of NVA and neither side saw the other, fog of war. We were the last aircraft to get into the camp at Duc Lap for the next 36 hours. They came under very heavy attack, at one point losing half the camp and having to call in TAC air on top of them. I was not allowed to fly the next day, when the whole company was flying, because I had accumulated so much time. The colonel and sergeant major came out on the last flight, too. When the sergeant major stepped away from the aircraft in BMT he came to parade ground attention and presented a full salute. It was the best award I ever received.

William Blume
Stagecoach 27
1967-1968

The Sacking of Falcon 6 (Editor's note: different time, same channel . . .)

Dateline: May 1970. Duc Lap, Republic of South Vietnam

Our four Falcon Charlie model gun ships were the first to land. As we were shutting down, the flight of Stagecoach

slicks turned final. In the distance, ten Stallion Slicks from the 92nd (Dong Ba Thin) were headed our way; the 243rd Freight Train Hooks were coming also. It promised to be the usual Romeo Foxtrot Combat Assault, except for one thing - the LZ's were in Cambodia. Looking back, 30+ years later, it is difficult to imagine how a combat assault mission could be considered routine - but it was. Back then, a CA mission was no big deal; that was our normal “day at the office.” But Cambodia was different; it had been a sanctuary for so long, who knew what could be over there? We'd been across the fence, of course, working with the CCS (Special Forces) guys - and those were some hairy missions. But today we were going in

force, to stay for a while. The plan was to put several companies of the 23rd ARVN Division into Cambodia. It promised to be an interesting day.

Given the mission, naturally all of our gun ships were loaded for bear. We carried max rockets, the minigun ships each had a few hundred extra 7.62 rounds, and the backseaters' ammo boxes were overflowing. We were flying into Cambodia, we expected a fight - and the Falcons would be ready. Oh, incidentally, we were violating a battalion directive on max gunship loads - but we didn't much care. More on that battalion directive later. During the spring and summer of '70, the 10th Battalion had lost 3 gun ships due to accidents on take-off, so ammo limits had been imposed from on high. MAXIMUM limits for gun ships were set at 1000 pounds of fuel, 5 rockets for 7-tube pods or 12 rockets for 19-tube pods, 1000 rounds of 7.62 ammo per minigun, and 500 rounds of 7.62 ammo per door gun. It so happens that the Falcons were involved in none of the three gunship accidents. And, of course, the 155th was actually stationed in a combat zone, rather than along the beach (like the Battalion HQ and all the other companies). Given our distance from battalion HQ, adherence to their orders was sometimes less than perfect. I know that we did reduce our loads . . . a little bit, at least.

Back to Duc Lap. Knowing that we were going into Cambodia, we had loaded up. Each Charlie model carried as much as the Aircraft Commander believed he could safely get off the ground. In fact, we all HAD gotten off the ground and flown from Ban Me Thuot - testimony to the skill of the Falcon pilots (and to the guts of the Falcon crews who flew with us). We knew the mission, we knew the risks faced by the slick crews and the ground troops - and the Falcons were going to provide the best gunship support that we could.

Soon after we shut down, the 10th Battalion Commander walked behind our gun ships. He was seen kneeling, to look into our rocket pods. Then he looked over the crew chief's and door gunner's ammo boxes. What was going on? What's the Battalion CO doing on his knees? By then the pilots were gathering for the mission briefing, and the Battalion CO's visit to our gun ships was forgotten.

Soon thereafter, our two light fire teams were escorting the initial flight of slicks into the first LZ. One team shot up the LZ as the slicks approached, then went to refuel and rearm. The second team hung around the first LZ as more slicks and Hooks went in, then they escorted the first lift into the second LZ. By then the first team were back on station - and that's how it went throughout the day. We took a little fire, but not much. Actually, this CA went pretty much as planned. The Stagecoach, Stallion, and Freight Train guys did a great job that day - my hat's off to all of them. Finally, the last element was lifted into the final LZ, and we were headed back to Ban Me Thuot. Mission complete - the end of a long day.

There was the usual banter among the crews during shut down and post-flight; now I know it was a way to let go of the tension built up during the day. Any slick crew that came in range was fair game for good-natured insults. If there weren't any Stagecoach guys to harass, the Falcon crews jawed back and forth about which ship was better; backseaters teased pilots - and vice versa. We walked to Operations tired - but satisfied with the day's effort.

As soon as we walked into the Ops hooch, we got the news. The Battalion Commander had relieved Falcon 6, Capt. Tim Russell, because the Falcons had violated the gunship max load limitations. To say we were dumbstruck is a considerable understatement. Tim was a Peter Pilot who hadn't been in the platoon very long. He was a quiet, personable West Point grad, well liked by all. Even though he was the Falcon Platoon leader, Tim was willing to let the more experienced guys take the lead - no matter their rank - while he observed and learned. To my way of thinking, that's exactly what he should have been doing. As the senior Falcon pilot and platoon Instructor Pilot, Tim looked to me - and trusted me - to make decisions having to do with flying. I considered loading up to be a flying decision. Quite frankly, it never crossed my mind to ask Tim what he thought. There was no question that the Falcons had, that day, violated the battalion directive on gunship loads. (In fact, "grossly violated" is probably a better description.) Peter Pilot Tim didn't have anything to do with our decision to carry max armament that day. But, as the platoon leader, the Army held Tim responsible - and it was his head that rolled. Tim left BMT for his new assignment the next day, and we never saw him again.

Even today, that's still a tough memory for me. I hope that someday I'll be able to shake hands with Tim, and tell him I'm sorry for what happened that day.

CWO-2 Les Davison, Falcon 2, '69-'70

A little bit of red dirt . . .

An afternoon I remember quite well was in the spring of '66. The 25th ID had come to the highlands and on this occasion a Battalion showed up at BMT city to begin a sweep from BMT to Pleiku. We began "leap-frogging" them from LZ to LZ over the next several weeks doing inserts, re-supply, and dust-off. On this particular day we were about two thirds of the way to Pleiku and the entire company had flown up to a small landing strip carved out of the jungle. As the CO led us in I remember thinking how odd that a strip was out here with no roads around, no bulldozers, just trees knocked down and the red dirt strip carved out of the ground. As we came in, off in the distance we could see planes diving on a position and the flash of their wings as they turned, dove, and climbed out. We landed single file on the north side of the strip on cleared land while a C-123 was at the far end of the runway unloading supplies. We tied down rotors and while pilots went up to the CO we hung out on a hot afternoon. I was lying on the floor of my slick when this very loud rumbling noise started and I sat up just in time to see an A1E Skyraider go sliding down the runway on his belly and towards the C-123. Fortunately friction took-over, and he only went halfway down the runway doing a 180 and parking beautifully on the south side of the runway where it came to rest. Amazingly there was no fire and with only the banged up propeller the plane was in great shape. We all ran over to the plane and while the pilot, a tall USAF captain, was pretty shook he still was a walk-away. As we looked at the plane one of the Crew Chiefs pointed out a hole the size of a quarter in the 12:00 position cylinder on the engine where he had taken return fire from the ground. His wingman had flown by during the hard landing and left when he saw it was successful. That little bit of red dirt runway had proven very opportune on this particular afternoon.

James Kohler

"MAIL CALL!!!" *Sharing Commo . . .*

AIR MAIL

"This being Memorial Day and having recently reread the Bo Atkinson profiles, my memory got a take-off call, and so I offer these bits which may help fill some of the 155th's historical blanks for the Fall issue of the BARB: October 30, 1966 is a day that I'll never forget. That was the day WO Michael N. Coryell met his unfortunate fate with only a very short time left to DEROS. I had just arrived in country a month earlier and was assigned to the 165th Maint. Det. as the M.O. However, due to the shortage of pilots, I flew daily missions with Mike who was experienced and introduced me to combat assaults etc. etc. His patience and calm manner while teaching me the ropes was particularly noteworthy and we became friends. I never understood why he continued to fly missions while so close to his departure date but his dedication to the 155th and the great people in it reflects the person that one comes to respect. On that fateful day my maintenance officer duties required my presence, and I did not fly with Mike but my memories of our experiences together will forever remain. He was a great soldier/aviator for whom this Memorial Day is dedicated. God Bless him."

Capt. Charles A. (Chuck) Thibodeau, Jr. Maintenance '66-'67



EXPRESS

“...**155th** et al, Copied the latest "BMT Barb" and will share it all with the USAF "Mike" FAC's at BMTE 66-72. As we pass another 4th of July, I am reminded of the important part you guys played in one of Nam's most dangerous missions. You were professional and heroic as were your 189th AHC comrades at Camp Holloway. Though many years have passed, and I can only recall a few of your names, I recall your Unit's bravery and mission performance very well. You all can stand tall in the annals of US Army history.”

Karol (Karl) E. Franzyszen, Mike 51, O-2 FAC/ALO, BMTE Apr '69-'70.

FRAGILE

“**M**y name is Wayne Murray, and I was a crew chief with the Falcons when the (new) 'C' models came out. After the guns were installed and while on our first mission, I heard a noise and asked the A/C to go back to base. Upon inspection, I found a bolt that was cutting into the mast. Approx. Dec-Jan '66-'67

16 May 1969

TOP SECRET

“01:00 - 17 82mm hit corral. 484 had one land 4' from left side. Ship will have to go back to the states.

Jeff and I went up but couldn't find anything. Came back down at 01:35. At 01:55 I heard four rounds leave the tubes. We went up again but fog had settled in. Jeff made it back to BMT. I tried 6 times but couldn't get through clouds. Had to R.O.N. at East Field.

08:15 - ARVN POL was hit and burned with 122's. Porter and Marvin went up but couldn't find anything.

21:00 - Had approximately 30 rounds 83 mm and 2 rockets of some kind hit camp. Porter and Marvin went up and got 1 mortar tube. We had people try to get through the wire but they didn't make it. I didn't fly but was in COC trying to coordinate a few things. As the guns came down Charlie lost his tail rotor on the hover way and had to auto rotate from a hover. No one was hurt, but 077 was totaled out.”

Capt. Robert A. Gardner, Falcon 5 '68 - '69 from his daily journal

I was in the 243rd Radar Detachment located at the entrance to the Gunship Corral. Lots of times during alerts Falcon pilots would jump in our Conex Container Bunker when rockets or mortars were still dropping in.

Lou Lupo (Editor's note: Lou, I may have spent some time in your bunker a few times. Thanks for making room.)

I still haven't managed to find a website on the old A Co/1st Avn. in the days prior to it becoming the 155th AHC. I did make contact with Capt. Curry, our Flight Surgeon for A Co. He returned to civilian life and ran a medical clinic for the last 30 something years just 40 miles away from me. We have agreed to drink coffee and tell lies before long. He knows Capt. Charlie Gilmer (we were shot down together), and they attended a reunion together a couple years ago. Charles lives in Alabama. Also made contact with Glenn Mantooth. He was part of the original bunch. I thought I remembered him from the 54th Trans Co (H-34 outfit) at Ft. Sill in about '57. He said he was in the 64th at Sill. I can't really remember the 64th unless it was the H-21 outfit up by the tower. That was a long time ago. I told him about Capt. Curry and put him in touch. Sure wish I had a copy of the roster of A Co. Hard to remember the people unless something jogs my memory. Any suggestions on finding a website with the original bunch on it?

Milam Taylor (Milo) (Editor's note: Milo, I believe you have already found the A Co/1st Avn/155th AHC site. We try to cover all time periods from the unit's first time in-country to the unit's tear down at BMT.)

We now have “Falcon” hats to offer those that are interested. Price of the hat with wings and “ARMED” on the backside of the hat is \$20. The hat can be monogrammed as “Pilot”, “Crew Chief” or “Gunner”. Check the website for pictures. Contact Chuck Markham if you are interested in obtaining one.



ATTENTION ON THE COMPOUND:

I Want You! **LZ-FTW2 REUNION . . . WE'RE COMIN' TO COWTOWN! TIME TO GIDDYUP AND GO!!**

WHEN: Thursday 11 November thru Sunday 14 November 2004

WHERE: Fort Worth Plaza E
1701 Commerce Street
FTW, TX 76102

(Same hotel as last time, just a fancier name)

Reservations: 817-882-8888
(Mention 155th AHC for the discount rate)

Room Rate: \$69 if you reserve by October 29, 2004

WHAT: *Thursday* - Sign in after 12:00 hrs; 155th Hospitality Suite/available 24 hour/\$15 to share costs.
Friday - "Mexican Hat Dance" performed by Chuck Markham. This, in itself, is worth the trip.
Saturday - BBQ Grub at the Gardner's "Heaven's Gate" homestead.
Definitely dead cow, other good stuff to be announced.
Sunday - 14:00 hrs. check out.

New officers, new business, date and location of the 2006 reunion will be voted on at this get together.

WHO: Contacts are "ragrly@aol.com" & "markham@erath.net".

You can also go to our website at "<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Quarters/1517/>" for more information. So far, well over 30 have confirmed plans to attend. Remember, the reunion is open to **all that served** at BMT/Camp Coryell, no matter what time period, no matter what your rank or MOS. And please, feel free to bring your families.



Our host in Fort Worth . . . Bob Gardner. This picture was taken at BMT in 1968.

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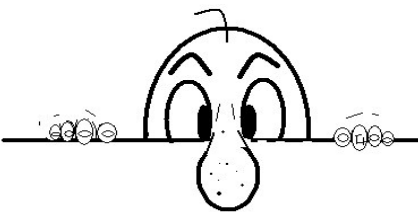
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Earl Baldwin, Door Gunner Extraordinaire at Work (evidence of the one time that he wasn't asleep!)



TOP SECRET

