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**\* OFFICERS \***

PRESIDENT  
Wallace H. Nunn

VICE PRESIDENT  
Mel J Lutgring

SECRETARY/  
TREASURER  
Bob Jones

WEBMASTER  
Jim McDaniel

ASSISTANT  
WEBMASTER  
Warren Hewetson

## 2005 174<sup>th</sup> AHC ANNUAL REUNION "AFTER ACTION" REPORT

The 2005 gathering of the Dolphins, Sharks and Witch Doctor's, together with a number of very special guests was an outstanding success. Party time started early Thursday afternoon and did not stop until Tuesday of the following week. Ok, maybe it tapered off slightly Monday and Tuesday, but from all I could see and hear, everyone had a great time. Our final count for the business meeting and dinner was 126. Not bad considering that 9 members had to cancel their reservations and about 10 others sent in their paperwork to renew membership, but could not attend mainly due to illness and family emergencies.

The weather was outstanding. We had a few light rain showers Thursday afternoon and early Friday morning and that was it for the bad weather. The rest of the time the weather made the Gulf shine and being outdoors a pleasure. Reclining by or in the swimming pool or walking the sandy beach provided much pleasure to many. Despite the threat of Red Tide, some played in the warm Gulf waters. The threat of Red Tide, killing fish and smelling up the air, made us cancel the Party Boat and the Fishing Trip. We did not see any evidence of the Red Tide, but the threat was enough to force us to cancel the boats. While that was a disappointment, the party spirit prevailed and we kept the party alive in the best military tradition.

The conference room was set up with tables, chairs, tons of Warren's scrap-books, wash tubs full of ice for the sodas, a large tank filled with ice and three large beer kegs, all ready to go. Long tables were set up along the wall where snack food was featured. Mel Lutgring, Mark Klindt and Warren Hewetson hung all the 174<sup>th</sup> signs on the walls. One banner advised that you entered the area at your own risk and that shots would be required (in smaller lettering, "shots" were translated into two beers or one drink).

The sign-up table was set up early Friday morning, and a rush to sign-up kept Mel, Wally and Bob busy for a few hours. The sign-up table was staffed Friday and Saturday, from 9 in the morning to 5 in the afternoon. Late arrivals on Saturday were taken care of by our ever efficient hard working Vice President, Mel Lutgring. Ted Saunders arranged for 125 sacks of handouts, containing local Chamber of Commerce materials and discount coupons for local restaurants and other tourist type entertainment.

The hotel provided a continental breakfast each morning. We kept them busy restocking the supplies and filling the coffee pots and juice dispenser.

The BBQ (Beef, Chicken and Pork) Buffet Friday night was well attended, and everyone that we saw (between stuffing faces and talking with friends) enjoyed everything served. The food was, not only very delicious, but in such abundance that we even fed the entire hotel staff- leaving way too much food left over! We saw a few die-hards making beef and pork sandwiches *fairly late Friday night*, with hot sauce and other condiments flowing freely. One member, best unnamed, was seen holding two chicken halves in one hand and a roll in the other. His liquid libation was not far from his reach, naturally. The smiles on all the faces indicated that all was well.

Big thanks are due to Ted Saunders (Our 174<sup>th</sup> AHC Association Founder) for making all the arrangements and bringing tons of snack food and sodas. Three regular kegs of beer made a big hit Friday, Saturday and a fresh keg on Sunday. We believe the beer, combined with the outdoor "Tiki" Bar, lubricated the talking muscles because we've never enjoyed bull sessions as much. Yes, flying stories were the primary subject, but friends had lots of time to catch up on buddies, old and new. Speaking of the Bar, the hotel opened the outside Bar early for us each day. The inside "Swizzle Stick" Bar was opened later in the day/every day. Both seemed to keep busy.

**Bruce Marshall** brought tons of his fresh clams from his clam farm on the East Coast of Florida. He even grilled them and provided tableside service at times. Our hat is off to you Bruce. It looked hot standing out on the patio all those hours, slaving over a big barbecue grill with Red Jones. They were good eating as the lines and smiles on faces attests. Thank you Bruce Marshall (he provides this every year)!!

The Ladies were not ignored and were involved in much of the chat sessions, either with the men or with their own groups. I did see a few shopping diehards take off for the big mall to enjoy shopping for lower cost goodies. Bob Jones says: "Yes, my wife Mary was right in the pack and came home happy with her purchases".

### **Saturday Night Dinner and Business Meeting**

We headed out to the Two Trees Restaurant for the Main Event and opened the private bar at 17:00. The Two Trees Restaurant is located a short distance from our Best Western Beachfront Hotel. Although it is a Country Club golf course, the entire restaurant was ours for the night! Round tables made for easy eye contact with everyone at your table. This may be a small thing, but it sure makes a difference when you want to talk to someone down the table. No cricks in the neck.

**Wally Nunn**, our ever effective and popular President, opened the gathering with The Pledge of Allegiance to Our Flag. **Robert "Bear" Bryant** gave a touching prayer and grace before dinner. It was all from the heart Bear... Thanks.

The buffet started on time at 18:00 or 6:00 PM. A double line was set up to speed service. Lots of food was provided starting with tossed salad, oriental vegetables, Southern style mashed potatoes, pasta with shrimp in cream sauce, sliced garlic roast beef, rolls, tea and coffee. Dessert was a delicious cheesecake.



**Special gifts** were handed out as we were finishing our dinner. VP Mel Lutgring had arranged for two coins, one encased in plastic, the other loose. Actually the coins were prepared for last year's Reunion, but the hurricane Ivan spoiled that plan. We decided to save them for this year and it was a nice surprise for those attending.



President Wally Nunn started the business meeting as people were finishing their dessert.

However, next year, we are going to have to "arrange" seating for a select few- due to "age", "field grade" and "heckling". Sitting **PT Yowell** next to **Bernie Cobb** (the second and fourth oldest members side by side) this year, seemed to stimulate a lively discussion and a loud heckling section. It turns out that **Al Sarnecki** is the oldest member attending... **PT Yowell** the second oldest...and our "Treasured" Secretary/Treasurer- **Bob Jones** the third oldest... with **Bernie Cobb** coming in fourth. All these Old Soldiers were seated with in four feet of one another! Uh Oh! Yowell challenged Bob's age... and it turns out that Bob was born on February 14<sup>th</sup> and Yowell was born January 14, in the same year. Yowell took major advantage of this fact to keep telling Bob Jones, and all attendees in hearing range, that he "outranked" Bob finally. "After all those years, when he flew as my wingman, and now he outranks (age-wise) me"- Bob.

Bob Jones gave the Finance Report. Actually, only the summary page (the four page detailed breakdown of finance data was too "boring" to discuss at the event, and it was posted for all to see at the sign in table). A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the finance report as read and as posted.

Bernie Cobb made a motion to change the date of the Reunion to February, on Presidents Day weekend. PT Yowell seconded the motion. Discussion was held- with input from several people. "Hecklers" were in full cry around this time. February was suggested, but the golfers present, said the weather would not cooperate. The first weekend in May was suggested. "Our Gal"- **Peggy Mahone/ Sales Director Best Western Hotel** - Stated that March, April or May would be good weather, especially May, and that the hotel would work with us on about any date we decided. Easter and Memorial Day would not be chosen, and since the hotel does not rent out to Spring Break College students, spring break would not be to large a problem for us. After lots of discussion, it looked as if having our reunion early next May was gaining major support. No hurricanes sitting off shore and the weather would be great.

Since a motion to have the Reunion in February was on the floor, the motion was called and failed. Wally called for a hand count of those who wanted to keep the reunion in October near Columbus Day. Twelve voted to keep the same date. When Wally called for those wishing to change the date, all but the twelve voted to change the date. The overwhelming majority voted to change the date to another month promising better weather.

A motion was made to have the Executive Committee set a date in the March, April or May time frames, and communicate that to the membership via e-mail. This motion was passed.

*(For your information, the Executive committee has selected the date for our next reunion to May 6-7, 2006. It is believed that is the best bet for us considering weather, other dates that involve large crowds and limited hotel space. Peggy says May 6-7, 2006, is a great time, the weather should be excellent and the hotel will keep the same rates for us as in 2005, and will send me a contract shortly.)*

Nunn announced that election of officers would be called during our next Reunion. Wally Nunn, our President, and Mel Lutgring, our Vice President, declined to continue as Association Officers, feeling new blood would be an asset to the Association. Mel stated that his job made it difficult to arrange vacation/personal time, and he is concerned about future Reunions he might not be able to attend. Bob Jones, our Secretary/Treasurer volunteered to remain as Secretary/Treasurer, but said that anyone wanting the position, he'd be pleased to pass the torch to anyone interested.

**Our current state of Association Officers will remain in office until our next Reunion.** We need your recommendations for President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer. The election for new officers will occur during our next business meeting. Think about it, talk to your buddies, and be prepared to make nominations in the near future.

## Special Awards:

Special Awards were presented to individuals as follows. The award was a DVD, titled "*Shadow of the Blade*", covering the travels of the restored UH-1H Huey flying across our Nation and now rests in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C.

**\*Mark Klindt,** from Vancouver, BC, received the DVD, for having traveled the longest distance to attend. Might we also add that he provided Dog Tags and a P38 for most everybody? We love you Mark! Welcome Home!

**\*Charles Bischdorf** received the DVD for First to Register

**\*Bruce Marshall** received the DVD for his endless Clam Cook contribution. Lots of hot work in front of the grill Bruce and appreciated by all. How can you resist fresh clams? Plus the price was right. Bruce donates the clams. Again, all present at the Reunion thanks you Bruce!

**\*Ted Saunders** was awarded the DVD for being The 174<sup>th</sup> AHC Reunion Association Founder... responsible for organizing the very first 174<sup>th</sup> AHC Reunion and being a key person on

continued reunions. Without Ted's support, our Reunions at Ft. Walton Beach would be difficult.

**\*Carl Muthersbaugh** was presented a DVD for managing the Golf Tournament all these years. Special thanks Carl, for your management skills.

**\*Dennis and Betty Fisher** gained their DVD for bringing and serving an ample amount of homemade Wisconsin Cheeses and really great venison salami.

**\*Sam Davis** was awarded a DVD for his Volunteer Work. Sam volunteered and spent lots of time buying, delivering, and setting up supplies in our meeting room. He also supplied so many "behind the scenes" things...there is just not enough room to mention them all here.

**\*Red Jones** gained a DVD for his Vietnam Wall Rubbings of all 174<sup>th</sup> AHC Losses, for the boiled peanuts, plus feverishly cooking at the grill in concert with Marshall, and perhaps because he's the only red head present.

**\*Peggy Mahone** received a medallion gift for all the work and special treatment she and the hotel staff give the 174<sup>th</sup> AHC. Peggy treats us all first class and is the first to volunteer to help. This year she worked extra hard, especially during Friday's Buffet.

Wally Nunn made the statement: "All present are friends and buddies, and buddies could be counted on when help was needed". It seems that **Jim Story** was trapped in his home in Mississippi above Biloxi, when trees were downed by the hurricane and flooding was highly possible. Jim could not get out of his house and was desperate. **Red Jones**, who lives in Melbourne, loaded his pickup with chain saws, water, food, gas and other essentials, picked up **Larry McLeod**, and drove to Mississippi to help Jim. They cut a path through the downed trees with the chain saws, set Jim free, and then brought him to the Reunion. Red and Larry, you both are outstanding examples of what's good in our country. We salute you both. And Jim, it's great to have you safe.

Later in the meeting, Jim Story came to the podium and gave an emotional thanks to Jones and McLeod, buddies who could be counted on when help was needed. A long-lasting standing ovation was given to Red Jones and Larry McLeod.

#### **Honorable Mention:**

**Jim McDaniel**, we thank you for your creation and the advent of The 174<sup>th</sup> AHC Assault Helicopter Company Website. Much of what we speak about today, and get so excited about today, would not be possible without your endless effort. The internet communication you provide, supplies us with the element with which we can grow as the best Vietnam Veteran Reunion Group anywhere. The 174<sup>th</sup> AHC Website is the best out there! We wish you full recovery. Our Prayers and thoughts with you.

**Mel Lutgring** conducted a heart felt Memorial Service, noting that the names of the 59 members of the 174<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company "who did not come back". And they're listed in the window of the Shark Helicopter door included in the Memorial Display, located in the lobby. Mel read the names of 18 Unit and family members recently deceased, or whose family or friends inquired about their loved ones KIA. Mel then read the piece he wrote in honor of our Mike Gunnels titled "One of Our Own" (see more on Mike below). Special notice was then given to **Dennis Blackmon** who was killed in action October 1967. His Brother Maurice was in attendance this year! A special salute to Maurice and then a standing round of applause was given to Dennis Blackmon who made the supreme sacrifice.

Wally then introduced one of our very special guests: (SGT) **Larry Gill** (who lost part of his lower leg in Iraq). Larry recently returned from Basra and Iraq and is now a Law Enforcement Officer in Mobile. Mel then introduced our (SP4 67-68 CE) **Hal Koster**, who owns a 5 Star Restaurant in Washington D.C., "O'Brians". Hal started hosting free

meals for wounded veterans and their families from Bethesda and Walter Reid Hospitals every Friday. Hal has hosted the veterans and their attending families for several years, all free of charge. What started with just a few veterans every Friday has become 80 to 90 veterans and their families, every Friday, still free of charge. We should all be proud of this outstanding act by an outstanding American and "one of our own". Hal arranged for Larry Gill to come the Reunion.

Larry Gill came to the podium and thanked us all for allowing him to attend the Reunion. He appreciated organizations such as ours that showed our caring in such a visible manner. Gill and Koster were given a long-standing, heart-felt ovation.

Mel talked about the National Guard Helicopter (Huey) Flight Crews that performed rescues during/after Hurricane Katrina. The sound of Huey rotor blades on a mission of mercy were heard again. **Mike Gunnels, a Dolphin Gunner in 1971, was involved in the rescue of Katrina survivors.** Mike was a member of one flight crew that rescued people in New Orleans and flew patients to the hospital in hundreds of missions over that flooded area. Mike was clearly seen on CNN hanging from a hoist rescuing the stranded, drowning and helpless! It seems that the Huey and Vietnam vets keep serving our country.

Wally then asked **Dick Overhamm** to tell the members about the UH-1C helicopter, tail number Shark #098 that flew combat missions while assigned to the 174<sup>th</sup> AHC. Dick told of the young man, not a military veteran or a pilot, who lives outside of Allentown, Penn., had purchased the helicopter from a bankrupt museum for \$15,000.00. His purpose is to restore the helicopter to the original 174<sup>th</sup> 40mm/M5 weapons system "Thumper" Shark configuration and display it at appropriate conventions and schools. After it is finished, he wants to truck the helicopter to one of our reunions and display it outside the hotel. Dick sent the young man information about the Shark missions, a copy of the letter from the Flying Tigers Association, giving the 174<sup>th</sup> AHC permission to paint the Shark's mouth on the gunships, with radio call signs "Shark". Warren Hewetson is in regular contact with the owner of this aircraft and will fill us all in on the restoration progress.

#### **The Auction:**

**Ted Saunders** conducted the auction this year since, Eddie M. McNeil, was unable to attend. (Eddie we missed you and hope you get well soon!). 174th members donated most of the items, others were provided by other means. The auction was lively, loud, sometimes confusing, but always fun.

The first item auctioned was a Medal of Honor Book. Nick Bacon, an Army Vietnam veteran and Medal of Honor recipient, wrote a caption/autograph for the book, especially noting that the 174<sup>th</sup> Dolphins and Sharks supported him during his combat tour and was often a major factor in his survival. Bud Day, another Medal of Honor recipient, wrote another caption/autograph to the book. These two personalized hand written captions makes this book more than a collectors dream. It's special to 174<sup>th</sup> AHC members. **Rex Schumacher** purchased the book for a final \$210.00 bid.

**Marty Heuer** won the bid for the New England Grab bag, from our Marty Wifholm, which included a t-shirt, cap and New Hampshire Veterans license plate with 174<sup>th</sup> AHC, on the plate, dated 2003.

Three photo annuals were converted to a CD by Warren Hewetson, with photos from the Unit's 67/68-year book, the 68/69-year book and the 1970-year book. The CD's were sold for \$40.00 each with **Ron Conner, Hal Koster** and **John Bond** each winning a CD. Note: We should make more of these CD's for future auctions. Warren will make that happen (smile)

**Jim Story's** winning bid fixed him up with three 174<sup>th</sup> T-Shirts from previous Reunions. One featured a Shark helicopter in the front, one had "Choi Oi" on the front and all the radio call signs on the back, and one was the 174<sup>th</sup> AHC 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary shirt.

**Tom Roddery's** bid gained him an almost never worn "Black Sam Golf Tournament cap". I don't think that "**Old Baldy**" **Bob Jones**, wearing it briefly, constitutes it as worn.

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**Rachel Marshall's** (Bruce and Mary's lovely little Daughter) bid won her the Commemorative plate with a painted Dolphin and Shark, similar to our unit patches.

Two 174<sup>th</sup> license plates were auctioned. Dick Overhamm is no doubt relieved to be finished with that project. Our thanks to Dick for his initiative and efforts in having the plates made for us all a few years ago. **Butch Elliott** bid of \$35.00 gained him one of the license plates. **Rouna's** bid of \$35.00 won the other plate.

The next auction item: A very detailed and fairly large new "toy" kit of the 174<sup>th</sup> gunship #242 (the second) "Easy Rider" with Shark mouth painted on the nose went up for bid. Our own **Jim Messinger** provided information for the 1<sup>st</sup> CAV version years ago. During development the toy company released it, inadvertently, as a CAV "Slick". Jim told them it was a gunship... and if they wanted to do the UH-1C replica justice, they should redo it as a 174<sup>th</sup> AHC Charlie Model Shark. The toy company agreed. This is the first prototype and was given to Jim Messinger for his support in its development and for Jim to approve, prior to production. Jim sent the helicopter to **Warren Hewetson** for the 174<sup>th</sup> AHC Museum, yet Warren believed it would be ideal for the auction (Messinger agreed). **Jan and Abe Gomes** won the helicopter with a \$220.00 bid, successfully outbidding several in the highly spirited bidding. Maybe because it was Jan's Birthday? Happy Birthday Jan Gomes!!

**Hal Koster** bid \$20.00 for fresh Thai Peppers, picked that morning by **Ted Saunders** from his lovely/beautiful Wife's Thailand garden.

**Ben Kennedy**, a well known artist of Vietnam and Military art, a veteran of three tours in Vietnam from 1968 to 1971, donated a large painting of Huey helicopters and various weapon systems. The original painting was first shown at "The Art of Combat Exhibit 2000". The painting was the subject of fast-paced, reasonably friendly, bidding with **Rex Schumacher** finally winning with a bid of \$350.00. (\* We need to add here, that a piece of Ben's work was purchased by the Best Western Beachfront Hotel to display in the lobby permanently!) We encourage all to visit a sample of Kennedy's Studio on-line at <http://www.174ahc.org/kennedystudio.htm>

**Wally Nunn** had one more DVD copy of "Shadow of a Blade". **Al Sarnecki's** bid of \$50.00 got him this DVD.

**Wally Nunn** announced that a person wanting anonymity had made a \$100.00 donation if the audience could match it. The collection from our group totaled \$750.00. (Aww hell...Warren Hewetson identifies him as Marty Heuer. Marty you can kill him)

The business meeting was closed and the group headed back to the hotel for more social activities. As my room was just three floors above the back patio, I can attest that the social lasted till after 3 a.m. All in all I would say that a great time was had by all.

Sunday was departure time for most of the group, though a surprising number remained to reflect, tell stories, catch up on old friends, hear the stories of new friends, and in general, enjoy the reunion for as long as possible.

**Our Secretary/Treasurer Bob Jones authored this "After Action Report" (edited by Assistant Webmaster Warren Hewetson). Bob's efforts and President Wally Nunn's and Vice President Mel Lutgring's efforts for the success of this Reunion are unequalled anywhere! Thank you Wally Nunn, Mel Lutgring and Bob Jones! "NOTHING IMPOSSIBLE"**

Bob Jones continues, "Mary and I had to leave Monday morning, getting off around 9 a.m. for the long drive home to Coral Springs. Ok 10 + hours driving time may not seem like much to people who came to the reunion from Washington State, or New Hampshire, or Canada...but for the *third oldest member*, it was more than enough after the long hours of the reunion. Still I hated to leave some of our close friends.

So my personal thanks to all who came and made the 2005 reunion such a resounding success. We missed all those that could not make it, but May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, we can be together again".-Bob

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