

174th AHC Association
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174TH AHC ASSOCIATION 2016 23RD ANNUAL REUNION AFTER ACTION REPORT

The 2016 gathering of the Dolphins, Sharks, Witch Doctors, 409th Maint. Det., 452nd Signal Det., 133rd Ord. Det., and 756th Med. Det., together with a number of very special guests was another fantastic success! Members and guests began arriving on Monday April 25 with the majority of the group firmly in place by Thursday afternoon and the party did not stop until Monday of the following week. This year's theme was "Rockin' n' Rollin' thru the Ages." Everyone seemed to have had a great time. There were about 135 Members and Guests in attendance (including wives, significant others, sons, daughters, grandkids and assorted other shirttail relatives and friends). Not bad considering that several members had to cancel their reservations and could not attend due to illness and family emergencies.

This year's Reunion Registration Gift was a limited edition 'Commemorative Challenge Coin' celebrating the 50th year anniversary of the 174th Assault Helicopter Company's deployment to South Vietnam. The coin is a bit larger than the current edition available in the Company Store (center). The 50th Anniversary edition depicts an Eagle with a Vietnam Service Ribbon and a large "50th" numeral in the center on one side and the depiction of two Hueys in flight over the Vietnamese terrain with another Vietnam Service ribbon and the 174th motto "Nothing Impossible" etched on the reverse side (left, front and right, back). See below.

The weather was excellent this year unlike other years where rain was the main weather event. It was so warm that many were heard saying that "...we definitely need to add air conditioning to the tent for next year..." As always, the enthusiasm and camaraderie prevailed throughout the reunion. The party spirit



prevailed and we kept the party alive in the best military tradition.

The "Ready Room" was set up with tables, chairs, tons of memorabilia - scrap-books, photo albums, wash tubs full of ice for the sodas, a large tank filled with ice and two large beer kegs, all ready to go. Some of these guys might be slowing down a little, as the hotel did not bring out all of the beer that was ordered. Long tables were set up along the wall where the very best snack food that Walmart could provide was featured. Company store Manager **Mel Lutring** again had our Flag of Honor on display for all to see and reflect on those warriors who are unfortunately no longer with us.

The Best Western Beachfront Hotel (Paula Evans, Lee Ann Collins, bartender Don Fuller and entire hotel staff) did everything humanly possible to make our reunion a total success! The hotel provided a continental breakfast each morning. We kept them busy restocking the supplies and filling the coffee pots and juice dispenser. Additionally, since our 174th members/guests had filled the Best Western to overflow, several condos were rented next door at "The Breakers" by our members.

The 174th Company Store: The Company Store "storekeep" **Mel Lutring** and crew set up their sales operation in the hotel lobby on Thursday. Shirts, hats, head bands, unit pins, decals, patches, blankets, polo shirts, with 174th AHC unit logos, "Dolphins," "Sharks," and "Witch Doctors" embroidery, were available for purchase for one and all. The Store had several days of great volume such that the cash register rang up more than \$850 in sales for the Reunion period. Thanks to all that made purchases.

Thursday Evening: Dinner Thursday evening was "on your own." Ft. Walton Beach and the Destin area are blessed with many fine and different restaurants ranging from Korean BBQ, Irish Pubs, Sea Food, Italian and Louisiana Cajun just to name a few.

Note sec/trea **Jim Young** and wife **Pam** discovered a relatively new restaurant in Destin, O'Quigleys Seafood Steamer & Oyster Sports Bar. Of note, the owner apologized for the size of the soft shell crabs as they were all that he was able to find that week. One crab filled the entire dinner plate. He said his normal crabs would "spill over" the dinner plate. Definitely worth a return trip. They are located at 34940 Emerald Coast Parkway, just east of the Mid Bay Bridge Road on the "Gulf Side."

Friday:

Friday Golf Tournament: This year was the 14th anniversary for the 174th AHC Association "Black **Sam Kalagain** Golf Classic" ramrodded again by the very capable **Carl Muthersbaugh**. Carl reported that a group of nine able and in some cases not so able, golfers participated. They played the Fort Walton Beach Golf Club and as best Carl can remember, all of the golfers were winners. The weather cooperated with lots of sunshine and a little breeze. After the 18 holes were played the group had a great lunch at the Two Trees restaurant at the course.

Pickles and Patron: The Ladies were in full swing again this year with more than 50 involved in what has become an annual event, the Pickles and Patron extravaganza. It seems that this event gets better and better each year. Lunch was from the local Publix Market deli department and wine from the Hotel and obviously the star attraction Patron. Music for the ladies was provided again by retired U. S. Air Force sergeant and Disc Jockey Extraordinaire, Steve Williams. The ladies renewed old friendships and made many new ones.

Annual Business Meeting: The annual business meeting was held on Friday this year due to all of the other activities that were scheduled for Saturday. President **Butch Elliott** called the meeting to order shortly after 1500hrs. Minutes of Last year's meeting were read and approved. Sec/Treas **Jim Young** presented the Association's financial report "...the Association is in a very strong and sound condition..." Discussion regarding a new class of membership was undertaken with the results that Past Sec/Treas **Billy**

Wood would research and recommend language to amend the By Laws to provide such a membership classification and distribute the proposed change to the Board of Directors for their action.

A call for nomination of a new slate of officers was made as the term of our existing crew will expire at the end of the 2017 Reunion. The nominating committee will put together a slate that will be voted on during the next several months.

President Elliott announced that next year's Reunion will take place 5 through 7 May 2017 again at our host hotel The Best Western Beachfront Hotel in Ft. Walton Beach.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1530.

Friday Evening:

"Rockin' 'n Rollin' thru the Ages" The Friday night buffet was again catered by The Golden Coral. After a bit of a "mix-up" last year the owner of the Golden Coral ensured that things ran very smoothly this year and the great "Rock and Roll" buffet was enjoyed by all. The Rock and Roll music of our youth was played by our very capable DJ Steve Williams and it provided a great look back to the "sock hops" and dances of years gone by. Many of our members enjoyed dancing under the tent and moonlight. Pre dinner cocktails were provided by your Association.



Some of the members who attended the museum tour

Saturday:

National Naval Aviation Museum:

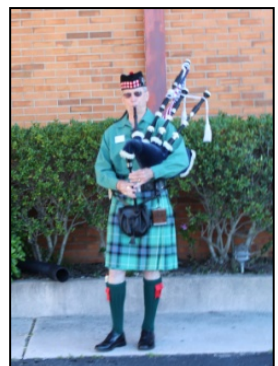
Approximately 30 members and wives drove the 45 miles to Pensacola to visit and tour the National Naval Aviation Museum. A personal tour was provided by long time tour docent CW2 (ret) Tom Phelps. Tom served two tours in Vietnam, the first with the 162nd AHC (Vultures, UH-1D) and the second with the 271st ASHC (Innkeepers, CH-47C). Tom served in the 271st with our own 174th member, the late **Bill Fife** ('67-'68). Everyone attending said they really enjoyed the tour.

The museum contains many rare, one of a kind aircraft that can only be seen in

Pensacola. After the tour a lunch was provided in the private dining room of the "world famous" Cubi Bar Café. The only regret is that Saturday is not a practice day for the Blue Angels (practices are normally on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings).

Saturday evening Banquet - Elks Club: Our dinner banquet was once again held at the FWB Elks Club. Our dining room had a private bar which began service at 5:30 pm. The Elks Club Restaurant is located a short distance from our Best Western Beachfront Hotel on the road to Destin.

Our traditional Honor Table to Our Fallen Comrades was again present. Additionally, Members **Mel Lutring** and **Jim McDaniel**, appropriately dressed in a fine kilt, et al, (**Jim** not **Mel**) "piped" the evening's Memorial Service. Most attendees took advantage of the bus transportation provided by the association from the hotel to the banquet and a return trip back to the hotel. This has been a good addition to our Saturday nights!



Dinner choices again consisted of Prime Rib, Sliced Ham and then added this year, Chicken Cordon Bleu. The Elks Club staff again did an excellent job, such that we have already booked the Club for next year's reunion banquet.

Our "special" guest speaker for the evening was Colonel Robert Kirila, Deputy Commander of the 7th Special Forces Group (A) stationed at Eglin AFB Florida. Colonel Kirila provided an excellent briefing on the Special Forces current mission and related some interesting insights into today's Army. The remark heard over and over was "...wow, they sure make O6 at a very young age now..."

Saturday night "Live Auction": The Live Auction conducted after the banquet meal at the Elks Club was a great success. The President and CEO of the Ft. Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, Ted Corcoran acted as our auctioneer for the evening. Many items were donated by our members, some even sent by members who unfortunately could not attend this year for one reason or another. One of the highlights was the Custom Hand Made Hunting Knife with engraved Unit Crests made and donated by **Phil Daneau**. The total revenue generated was over \$1,600.

Auction items included

- "Wife of a Vietnam Veteran" necklace donated by **Johnny Abbe**;
- Wooden 174th Company Shield donated by **Ken Dunham**;
- A piece of Duc Pho pavement donated by President **Butch Elliott**;
- Knitted Quilt made and donated by **Betty Fisher**;
- A carved wooden Huey donated by **Jim McDaniel**;
- A carved wooden P-51 Mustang donated by **Jim McDaniel**;
- A new, "never been worn" SPH 5 helmet donated by **Bill Murphy**;
- Two Baby Quilts made and donated by **Judy Murphy**;
- Laser cut POW/MIA saw blade donated by **Carl Muthersbaugh**;
- Military Helicopter gig saw puzzle donated by **Chris Garbow**;
- Two laser cut 174th Company crests donated by **Tom Petty**;
- A UH-1C Shark model donated by **Shirley Schumacher**;
- The previously mentioned hand-made hunting knife made and donated by **Phil Daneau**;
- Six sets of one bottle each of Chandelle Winery white and red wine with the famous Larry Lapadura Shark Print label donated by the 174th AHC Association;
- And several other items provided by members at the last minute

A huge **Thank You** to everyone who provided items for the auction and a huge **Thank You** to all of those who bid on those great items.

Sunday Morning Devotional: A non-denominational devotional service was led by **Steve Kennedy** in the Best Western hotel "Ready Room." Several hymns were led by **Carolyn Wood**. **Ms. Myrtle Mainor**, guest of **Harold Simpson**, sang a beautiful solo.

Sunday Evening Survivors Pizza Party: The reunion "Hanger-oner's" were treated to pizza supplied by your Association on Sunday night in the tent on the Best Western Beachfront patio. Many reunion members/guests continued visiting and had a wonderful time. This was a fun and enjoyable occasion.

Jim McDaniel, we again "thank you" as we are indebted to you for your efforts, time and especially for your creativity regarding the 174th AHC Assault Helicopter Company Website and the "list-server". Thanks for sharing the "guest book" entries and your comments. Because of your interest, tireless energy, we can say we are part of the largest post-Vietnam, continuously meeting, aviation unit group of Vets, with the greatest website in existence, anywhere!!!

We are especially indebted to entire Board of Directors of the Association for all that they have done this past year to make this reunion one of the best. Additionally, thanks to all who came and made the 2016 reunion such a resounding success. We missed all those that could not make it, but mark your calendar for 5-7 May 2017 for the "Next Big One" - our next annual reunion.

Jim Young
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