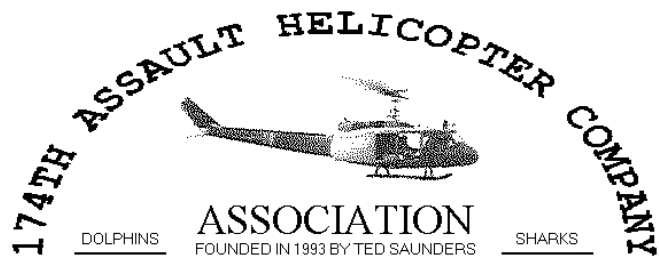


174th AHC Association
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*** OFFICERS ***

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Butch Elliott

VICE PRESIDENT
Dennis Fisher

SECRETARY/
TREASURER
Jim Young

WEBMASTER
Jim McDaniel



**174th AHC Association
2017 24th ANNUAL REUNION
AFTER ACTION REPORT**

The 2017 gathering of the Dolphins, Sharks, Witch Doctors, 409th Maintenance Det., 452nd Signal Det., 133rd Ord. Det., 756th Med. Det., and 498th Dustoff, together with several very special guests, was another fantastic success! Members and guests began arriving on Monday, May 1, with most of the group firmly in place by Thursday afternoon, and the party did not stop until the last of the folks checked out of the Best Western on Monday morning of the following week. This year's theme was "Patriotism and our Flag." Everyone seemed to have had a wonderful time. There were about 121 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, family emergencies and even one because of an early spring snowstorm.

The weather was excellent this year unlike other years, where rain was the main weather event, or even last year when most folks were looking for someplace cool to hide from the extreme heat. We did explore the possibility of air conditioning for the tent this year, but that was not an available option. 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. It was noted that some of these guys might be slowing down just a little. Long tables were set up along the wall where the very best snack food that Walmart could provide were featured. The 174th 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 the 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, our members rented several condos next door at “The Breakers.”

The 174th Company Store: The Company Store “storekeep” **Mel Lutgring** 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 \$1,102 in sales for the Reunion period. That exceeded the \$850 in sales for last year. Thanks to all who made purchases.

Again, the intrepid **Mel Lutgring** displayed our traditional Table of Honor to our Fallen Comrades along with our own 174th Vietnam Wall Memorial listing the names, dates and hometowns of those 174th members lost in Vietnam. Also on display was the Flag of Honor listing all those members lost in Vietnam and those members that have passed since the 174th AHC “Stood Down.”



Memorial to those Members of the 174th AHC lost in the Vietnam War

Table of Honor

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.

Friday:

Friday Golf Tournament: This year was the 15th anniversary for the 174th AHC Association "Black **Sam Kalagian** 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.

Painting with a Twist: What had become the annual “**Pickles and Patron**” Ladies event was replaced this year with lunch, with ample wine, and a painting class. With more wine, the approximately 20 participating ladies created and took home their own, self-painted, tropical themed “masterpieces.” All who participated responded that it was a great experience and that they did not know beforehand that wine actually made the painting a better experience.

Friday Evening:

“Patriotism and Our Flag” The Friday night buffet was again catered by The Golden Coral. There was plenty of food for all to enjoy and several Members were seen going back for “seconds” and perhaps one or two occasions “thirds.” Now while there were no prizes awarded to the best “Patriotic Costume,” the consensus winners just might have been Past President and current Board Member **Ron Conner** and his wife **Jodi**. Man, it takes a real man to wear a pair of britches like those!! There were many other folks in unique and colorful costumes as well.

Our very capable DJ, Steve Williams, played the Rock and Roll music of our youth again, 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. Your Association again provided pre-dinner cocktails.

Past President Ron Conner and wife Jodi



Saturday:

Several members and their wives and guests departed very early Saturday Morning for a tour of Fort Pickens. The fort is a pentagonal historic United States military fort on Santa Rosa Island in the Pensacola, Florida, area. It is named after American Revolutionary War hero Andrew Pickens. The fort was completed in 1834 and remained in use until 1947. Fort Pickens is included within the Gulf Islands National Seashore, and as such, is administered by the National Park Service.

Veterans’ Service Officer Survivors Briefing: A briefing regarding those benefits that are available to surviving spouses and how to apply for them was held in the ready room Saturday Afternoon. All who attended indicated that the information provided was very beneficial although they hoped that it would be a long time until it was needed.

Annual Business Meeting: President **Butch Elliott** called the meeting to order shortly after 1530hrs. Minutes of Last year's meeting that had been posted in the Ready Room since Wednesday were approved. Sec/Treas **Jim Young** presented the Association's financial report "...the Association is in a very strong and sound condition..."

Director Billy Wood discussed proposed changes to the Association's Bylaws regarding clarifications to our "Honorary Member" category. Honorary Members cannot hold office, nor vote, and do not pay dues. However, they would be required to pay reunion registration, banquet and reunion related fees. Widows of deceased Members will be granted Honorary Lifetime Membership and are exempt from paying dues, reunion registration fees and all reunion related fees such as banquet dinner fees. A new class of membership, "Heritage Membership," was proposed to allow children and grandchildren of members to join in this category. Those so qualified would be considered Honorary Lifetime Members and would be exempt from holding office, voting, and paying Dues. However, they would pay reunion registration fees and all reunion related fees such as banquet dinner fees. After a period of discussion, the motion was made and seconded to approve these changes to the bylaws. The motion carried unanimously.

A highlight of the meeting was that **Louie Beasley**, who had erroneously been listed as DAT, was in fact very much alive and participated in "removing his nametag" from the Flag of Honor. He stated that he was very happy to be able to do that!! No kidding?

President Elliott explained that in accordance with the Bylaws, the Board of Directors had approved the purchase (\$225) of a new wheelchair for Association Founder Ted Saunders. Ted had arrived at the Reunion in a well-used chair that was in a serious "Red X" condition and was basically unserviceable. It would not have even made a good "Hanger Queen." The donations of our members are greatly appreciated and provide the source of funds for expenditures such as these and flowers at the funerals of our members who have left us.



Ted with his new "Ride"

President Elliott announced that next year's Reunion will take place 3 through 6 May 2018, again at our host hotel The Best Western Beachfront Hotel in Ft. Walton Beach.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 15:58.

Saturday Evening Banquet - Elks Club: Our dinner banquet was once again held at the FWB Elks Club. Our dining room had a private bar that 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.



Again this year, as they have done for many years, Members **Mel Lutgring** in his still fitting jungle fatigues reverently placed the folded American Flag at the base of the Flag of Honor as **Jim McDaniel**, appropriately dressed in a fine Scottish kilt, et al, “piped” the evening’s Memorial Service.

Mel Lutgring

Jim McDaniel

This year we were honored to have four widows of deceased members present: **Mrs. Carol Bergmann (Walt); Mrs. Louise Campbell (Jim “Soupy”); Ms. Dale Fowler (Ken Johnson); and Mrs. Sheila Miller (Art).** Past President Ron Conner presided in the presentation that included giving each of the widows



present a gorgeous bouquet of flowers and a reading of the names of all the known widow Honorary Lifetime Members and their husbands.

With the help of Vice President **Dennis Fisher**, several ladies of The Choctawhatchee Bay Chapter of The National Society of The Daughters of the American Revolution were present to bestow upon all members a Certificate of Appreciation for our service during the Vietnam War. The Chapter also gave each member the official USA “Vietnam War” lapel pin.

Dinner choices again consisted of prime rib, sliced ham, and 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. The Association provided a round or two of adult beverages for those so inclined.

The Association again provided shuttle bus service from the hotel to the Elks Club and back throughout the evening. Approximately 50% of those attending the Banquet chose this service.

Keynote Speaker: Our keynote speaker gave a spellbinding discussion of some of the special operations he had been involved in during his 30+ years of service. Roland Guidry is a retired US Air Force Colonel with a distinguished career as a pilot, engineer, and air commander. Piloting unique models of the C-130 aircraft and commanding special operations units and missions dominated his career. During the Vietnam War, he flew 110 Top Secret missions air-launching photo reconnaissance drones into North Vietnam and south China, including gathering intelligence to identify the POWs and for the raid of the POW compound at Son Tay, North Vietnam.

On the mission to rescue the hostages held in the US Embassy in Iran in 1980, he was the squadron commander and one of the pilots on the lead aircraft for the landing at Desert One in the Iranian desert. He also commanded the air element during the training and rehearsals for the mission to rescue the American medical students on the island of Grenada in 1983.

He is a founding member and the first chief of air operations of the Joint Special Operations Command, known as JSOC (J-SOCK), the parent command of the Delta Force, Seal Team 6, and other elite counter-terrorism forces that have taken down Osama bin Laden and the Somali pirates.

He has been inducted into the Air Commando hall of fame. He currently resides in Destin, Florida with his wife Patricia.

Saturday night Live Auction: The Live Auction conducted after the banquet meal at the Elks Club was an enormous success. Ted Corcoran, President and CEO of the Ft. Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, once again did an excellent job as our auctioneer for the evening. Many thanks to Ted for another “job well done.” Our members, some even sent by members who unfortunately could not attend this year for one reason or another, donated many items. Honorary Lifetime Members **Mrs. Carol Bergmann** (Widow of **Walt**) and **Mrs. Sheila Miller** (Widow of **Art**) donated several of their husbands’ prized possessions for the auction. Revenue generated was nearly \$700.



Ted Corcoran, Chamber President & CEO

Some of the Auction items:

- A framed Joe Kline 174th AHC print donated by **Carol Bergmann**;
- “Reflections,” a framed print of the Vietnam Memorial donated by **Sheila Miller**;
- Walt Bergmann’s personal “Blood Chit” donated by **Carol Bergmann**;
- A Beach Bag filled with all manner of beach items donated by **David and Sheryl Clark**;
- 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:

Sunday Morning Devotional: A non-denominational devotional service was led by **Steve Kennedy** in the Best Western hotel “Ready Room.”

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. The Association continues to owe **Mel Lutgring** a huge “Thank You.” For those who may not be aware, over the last several years **Mel** has travelled nearly 10,000 miles attending funerals of our brothers who have passed. **Mel** takes and erects the Flag of Honor to each of those funerals that are within his travel distance. **Mel** conducts a “memorial service” much like the one he conducts at the Annual Banquet and explains what the Flag symbolizes to the family and friends attending the service. This is over and above his duties as our “Storekeep” where he devotes countless hours ordering and stocking the store with the items you want to show your support and patriotism for the 174th AHC. He then fills all of your orders for hats, t-shirts, pins, patches, stickers, unit flags, Joe Kline Prints and the like. **Mel** we can’t thank you enough.



The Flag of Honor

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 veterans, 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 2017 reunion such a resounding success. We missed all those of you that could not make it, but mark your calendar for 3-6 May 2018 for the “**Next Big One**” – it will be our **25th Annual Reunion**.

The “**Unofficial Gaggle**” is to be held at the FWB Best Western this 6 – 8 October 2017.

Jim Young
 Secretary/Treasurer
 174th AHC Association
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