



The Tiger Gazette

121st AVN Association Volume Number 7 Issue Number 3 Date 28 November 2016

From the Editor's Desk

My, how time flies. Fifty years ago I was celebrating my first Thanksgiving at Soc Trang. I do not recall the menu, but am certain that it involved Turkey and all the trimmings. Our mess hall was well run, and although we griped about the food (we were a bunch of GIs) it was quite good. This Thanksgiving I feel that we have much to be thankful for: We are still here, we have had fifty years since we went off to war, and **no more political ads on TV**, at least for a while.

Much has happened in the world in those years. The Soviet Union is no more, the Berlin Wall has been torn down, the Huey has been replaced by the Blackhawk. We have gone from one TV per home with three broadcast networks to a TV per room with 200+ cable or disc channels. We have smart phones, cameras that do not need film (remember Kodak Chrome ?) personal computers and all the other modern conveniences. Everything that I ever worked on, sailed on or flew in is in a museum. The Brave New World is here.

Merry Christmas,
Don Jackson

Scholarships

Our annual Scholarship Program is still alive and well. Anyone who served with the 121st and associated units who is a member of the 121 AVN Association, or their children/grandchildren is eligible. Encourage your descendants to start early gathering the necessary documents for their application. Instructions and applications are on the 121 AVN Association web site. If anyone cannot download the forms, contact me at cudzuekenedy@gmail.com. The deadline for submission is June 30th. All applications and supporting documents must be in my hands by that date.

Merry Christmas to all,
John Kennedy

Historians Report –

It seems that the older I get the faster time passes. It only seems a short while ago we were in Charleston enjoying each other in the VFW hall. In fact, Jerry Daly made a point of telling me how much he enjoyed the environment in that big room. Since that time I have posted new information which is indicated by the modest growth of the archive from Version 5's size of 9.14 GB to what is now 9.74 GB but we are not yet at the end of the year. Photos from nine additional individuals now have been added. I am now in the process of organizing individual awards with citations by date, name, position, type of

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award, and relating this information to pages in the annual reports describing the actions. Needless to say this does not always work out because all actions which generated awards were not captured in the annual reports. Nevertheless, there are many occasions where associated individual citations do correlate with portions of the operations described in pages of the annual reports which paints a clearer picture. Even if this is not the case, associating all the awards issued on a given date will greatly help each of you to know who was with you on these actions. I hope to have this analysis completed in time for our reunion in Tucson.

At the risk of being like a broken record, I once again ask each of you to check your Vietnam storage for any materials which may help flesh out our archive. Such things as photos (either slides or prints), orders, letters, stories – just anything that would help tell our story. If you have put things on our website, but they are not in the archive please let me know. Remember, the archive is for long term storage; whereas, the website gives quick access, but will not be around forever. Thus there is nothing wrong with having the same materials in both areas.

Finally, I would like to give a “shout out” to Larry Dandridge for his book, Blades of Thunder. He gave me a copy at our last reunion and I found it an exceptional read. Even if you were not at Soc Trang in the 1968 – 69 time frame, you will find it most enjoyable. A word of advice: be sure to read everything after the epilogue. The end of the book is packed with useful and interesting information.

Merry Christmas,
Bob

Secretary's Report

2017 Reunion

When we held our meeting in Charleston last June, our membership voted to hold our next reunion in Tucson, Arizona. Due to the climate out there, your committee thought it would be better to hold it a little earlier in the year to avoid the desert heat. Also, the summer months (like June when we traditionally hold our reunion) are the tourist season in Tucson and the hotel prices skyrocket.

So a date has been set for our Tucson Reunion. With the help of Ernie Miller and Jim Ellis (who both live near Tucson), we have a contract with a hotel and are currently working on other reunion activities.

SAVE THE DATE! Our reunion will be held April 18 – 19 – 20, 2017.

If you are not a member of our Yahoo Group, you may want to consider signing up. Go to: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/121stAHC> and request to join. Reunion information will be posted as it becomes available. This is a “closed group” which means you have to request membership. It is easy to do and free.

You may also want to check out our web site <http://121avn.org/>, as information will also appear there.

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Our notice of our annual reunion, with all the details, will be mailed late December or early January. Please note that you will only have three and a half months to sign up. So please sign up as soon as possible after receiving your notice. (This also helps the committee with our planning for the hospitality room.)

When I visited Tucson in late September, I guess I didn't know what to expect. To my surprise Tucson turns out to be a great location for a reunion. In the coming months I'll be posting information about things to do while you are there – and there are a lot of them.

We will be putting together a list of tourist attractions that may be of interest for those of you who will be attending. We will have tourist packets full of brochures waiting for you when you arrive.

As usual, if you have any questions or you need help with signing up for our Yahoo Group, please don't hesitate to contact me. johndschmied@yahoo.com.

Hope to see you in Tucson in April.
Merry Christmas!
John Schmied, Secretary

Another Tiger has passed

Sadly, we have learned that Gary Dowler has pulled pitch for that big LZ in Heaven. I first met Gary when I started crewing. I had that tired old dog 663, and he was often assigned as Aircraft Commander because he had the finesse to coax her into the air with a full load of troops. We flew many missions together, one particularly memorable one was when we were flying low on final approach to the LZ and Tommy Satterfield sprayed mud all over his windshield with a burst of suppressive fire into the canal bank we were following. I shall not repeat Gary's comments. He was a good comrade and thoroughly nice guy, and I hope to see him again in a better world.

We also lost one of our Comrades who was in the 80th /93rd in the mid 50's. Gene Turechek passed away earlier this year. Gene was instrumental in getting some of the old timers from his era to attend the reunion in Nashville in 2015.

Where is the target?

“Target: tank, 2200 meters at 11 o'clock!” “I don't see him!” “Neither do I!”
It was July 1983, and as a TOW section leader I was trying to direct my gunners to aim at an M-60 tank at North Fort Hood, Texas.
“He is skylined on that ridge!” “I still don't see him.” How do you not see a main battle tank? My thoughts went back fifteen years to February 1968. Major McNair was flying my helicopter, as his Tiger 6 aircraft was down for maintenance. We were over Can Tho, while General Minh's troops were trying to clean the VC out of the university. Never one to stay out of the fighting, Major McNair had us at a very low altitude over the scene of the action. He had spotted an armed VC in a doorway and was trying to direct me to fire on him. I was certainly not adverse to shooting him, but it was obvious that we were

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not looking at the same place. We had not worked together as a crew, thus our commo procedures were not perfected – I am sure that Breighner, his regular crew chief would have understood him perfectly. I never did locate that man. In retrospect I should have fired a burst and Major McNair could have adjusted fire. But just like the tank fifteen years later, the VC escaped unscathed.

How much weight can you carry?

On another occasion, we were doing resupply missions out of Ca Mau. The NCO in charge of loading us asked: “How much weight can you carry?” Fool that I was, I replied: “1000 pounds.” I then realized my mistake, and added: “That is pounds, NOT kilos.” He proceeded to load us with a lot more than 1000 pounds. I suspect that he rounded it off to 500 Kilos, which would be 1100 pounds, and any error he made was on the heavy side, i.e. we had a lot more than 1000 pounds on the helicopter. This was with 663, and 1000 pounds was probably highly optimistic for that bird. CWO Mayer was the Aircraft Commander that day, and a good thing he was! He picked up to a hover and when he tried to move to the runway the helicopter shook like a wet dog and settled back to earth. I promptly offered to set some cargo off, but he told me that he thought he could get us into the air. Through a superb combination of skill and finesse he got us airborne. By the time we arrived at our destination we had burned enough fuel that we were close to the design parameters weight wise, but it was a lesson that I never forgot. I converted every weight that I thought I might need to discuss with ground troops into kilograms, and afterwards always used them when communicating with non-aviators.



This was Donald Henry’s aircraft. I do not recall who the Aircraft Commander was. On one mission Don had put his baseball cap in the lower left cargo compartment. A round passed through, perforating the bill of his cap as well as the helicopter. “I am going to tell people that I was wearing it when the bullet passed through.” He said.

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This helicopter was formerly known as “Scrap Iron.” It was crewed by a gentleman named “Puffenberger” who changed the helicopter’s name to match his. Superstition holds that changing the name of an aircraft brings on bad luck. In this case, this helicopter was flown into the ground while trying to lead the flight to Bac Lieu in a dense fog one morning in 1968. Was it a coincidence?

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