

Black Cat News

FALL 2010

213TH ASSAULT SUPPORT HELICOPTER ALUMNI

ISSUE 3



Royal Gorge Railroad

Fort Carson Tour

Flying W Ranch

COLORADO SPRINGS 2010 REUNION

VIETNAM VETS TOUR AIRFIELD

by Rick Emert as appeared in
the Fort Carson, *Mountaineer*

When a group of Vietnam veterans and their spouses visited Fort Carson June 8, they got the kind of reception they might not be used to.

As the veterans stepped off the bus at Butts Army Airfield to get a briefing on Fort Carson and on the 1st Battalion, 2nd Aviation Regiment, 2nd

Infantry Division, it was the battalion commander himself who greeted them. The veterans, from the 213th Assault Support Helicopter Company "Black Cats," toured the airfield as part of their biennial alumni reunion. The vets were mechanics, pilots, and flight engineers of CH-47 Chinooks who served in Vietnam in the late 1960s. The group learned the history of Fort Carson and its impact on the local community from Capt. Christopher Neyman, garrison operations officer. Neyman, who said his

father is a Vietnam War veteran, closed his presentation by thanking the veterans. "I appreciate what you all have done, and your support for all of us has been awesome," he said. After a briefing from Lt.Col. Michael Hosie, commander, 1st Bn., 2nd Avn. Reg., and a chance to share their own experiences with the Soldiers present, the group toured one of the hangars to view aircraft maintenance and got a presentation on the capabilities of the Apache.

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VIRGINIA 2012 REUNION

Down Santiago Way

by

**Terry K. Sanderlin,
Ed.D., FAPA**



As I boarded the 737 out of Miami, I was filled with excitement and anticipation of a great adventure about to unfold. I was on a sanctioned research trip to Cuba, to study how Cuban revolutionary veterans have fared since their 1959 takeover of Cuba. A thousand thoughts must have raced through my mind during the flight to Santiago de Cuba. However, as we turned to the final approach, the pilot backed off dramatically on speed, and we were in slow flight. The Boeing lumbered to the landing field with wings wobbling, and sinking rapidly, but the pilot pulled the landing off with only a harder-than-normal impact. At touchdown I saw the rough shape of the runway and understood the pilot's dilemma; I was just happy he was so skillful at dodging ruts.

It didn't take long to unload the half-empty aircraft, but as I stepped out of the air-conditioned plane, the heat immediately hit me.

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Sam Parrish won the raffle for the wooden Chinook helicopter model

A TRIP FROM SOUTH TEXAS TO THE 2010 BLACK CATS REUNION IN COLORADO

by Foster Sexton

Because our trip to and from Colorado Springs, CO, was part of the reunion with my fellow Black Cats, I (Foster, the pilot, and my wife *Allene, the co-pilot*), figured it was worth writing about. Upon making the decision to attend the reunion (which was easy for me), my co-pilot, suggested we should fly -- her rationale was that it was too long a trip for driving. My reasoning for wanting to drive was that it would give us the opportunity to see as much of the beautiful Texas countryside as possible while we are still young and able to do so. After many days of long conversations on



the issue, she agreed with driving as long we drove a rental, not our Dodge older mini-van (winner #1 for me). That cool!

WARNING, I will be writing in Texas grammar.

Next step, we visited the closest rental car lot to our house, maybe two miles away and requested a mid-size car. The agent agreed, stated that it would be available on (June 4, 2010 at 7:30 a.m.) for pick up. The morning of departure, with our plans on schedule, the clothes packed, and suitcase near the back door, we head out at 7:10 a.m. for rental car lot, arriving at 7:15. The agent showed up a little after 7:30 (that's okay, not in big hurry) and opened the office for business.

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After greetings to the crowd waiting in line, the agent said he did not have the mid-size car that he had promised; however, he had a better deal for us, a FORD FLEX Limited (What? .. never heard of one) and that it was fully loaded. (It even had a factory- installed GPS). He proceeded to show us the finer items that car had and wanted to know if we would like to take it for the same price that he quoted for the mid-size? My co-pilot stepped up and said that it was quite big for her (there times when the co-pilot should let the pilot lead). I stepped in and stated that it looked like the right size as far as the pilot was concerned. A bystander stepped up to my aid and informed my co-pilot that he would love to have that offer and that she should take it and that he was sure that she would enjoy her trip in it. (Thank you, bystander). That seemed to have settled my co-pilot down a bit, and she agreed to take the Ford Flex.

That wasn't the end of the rental saga. Up drove the agent in the new Flex and stated that there was a little problem with the car, the Oil Service Due Light (OSDL) was on. To be on the safe side, he took it back to the shop and checked with the shop guy to see if the oil needed to be changed. The shop guy was no help (he did not know), then he asked us if it was okay to take the Flex to the oil change shop, (Yz mile away) and get the oil changed. Okay, we agreed. At this time (approximately 7:55), my co-pilot departed for home to make sure that everything would be ready to go when I arrived with the rental car. Around 8:35, the car was returned to the lot for me to drive away. However, the agent informed me as the OSDL was still on, for me not to worry about it, that he would put a note in the record to that point and that the oil had been changed. Because we were so nice about the inconvenience, he was going to reduce our fees some more. Great! Those rental agents are OK guys.

By the time I arrived home, it was about 8:45. Because we were running late on our departure time, the co-pilot and I did not take the time to read up on the GPS (as a matter of fact we did not read up on that Stupid Oil Light, maybe the co-pilot will check it out while I'm tooling on up the road). GPS, it was our first time seeing one of those dam things. So we turned it on to see how smart it was. No help!

The OSDL was located on the dash where, in any normal car, the mileages reading would be. In retrospect, the rental agent acted like he did not know much more than we did about the operation of the vehicle. My solution was to designate the responsibility of the owner's manual and its operation to the co-pilot. We loaded our bags and left Corpus Christi, TX, heading for San Antonio on 1-37. The route was planned with thoughts of seeing as much of west Texas (the Hill Country and the Panhandle) as possible, without going too much out of the way on our trek to Colorado Springs. By the way, the GPS showed our location and the next exit coming up. WOW, what a tool! Look out Texas, here we come!

In San Antonio, we headed west on 1-10 through part of the Hill Country. Boy, it seems like the scenery changed every few miles or so. Once we got out of San Antonio, the speed limit changed to 80 mph. With very light traffic from Corpus to the 80 mph zone, we were making good time, driving 3 mph over the speed limit. Our first major venture into real Texas, was when we exited off 1-10 onto north US 83, Junction, TX. As we exited 1-10, we headed down a very steep incline into the town of Junction. It was as though time stood still, a beautiful old town that had been well taken care of over the years. I like them old bridges that cross old rivers. Row about young rivers?

We headed north for Menard, TX, speed limit 70 mph, with very little traffic on the road, there was nothing to slow us up. I did not have a reason to pass anyone for miles. The landscape was flat, with a few rolling hills from time to time. You could see for miles ahead, as we passed water tanks, ranches, and farms with llamas, bison, cows, horses, deer, and streams named after animals, and other interesting wildlife. I cannot forget the Texas longhorns that we saw, they were awesome. What would Texas be like if there were no longhorns? In addition, there were changes in silhouette of rock formations, with different color schemes and shapes (some looked like animals and humans.) There were large mound formations in many areas that looked to have been designed to fit into the Texas landscape. I was enjoying every mile of Texas. Now to my co-pilot. She did not like the number of miles we traveled without seeing people, shopping centers, restaurants, gas stations, or subdivisions. Seems like there were not enough trees either, or they were too small, not the right type of tree, no pine trees in sight, and the cows needed more trees to stand under in the hot sunshine. Forgot one, no peach and pear trees. Oh, yes, she really liked the Texas wildflowers that were in full bloom along the way. A high-five for that! What a wonderful state! Our next town of interest on n. US 83 was Eden, TX, with its classic town square, with all the old building and stores that looked like Texas in the movies of old and appeared to be ready for business as usual, taking care of the rancher and farmers. Yes, there were the usual fast food restaurants in rural West Texas as you would see in many other small towns in rural America (Mississippi). And occasionally we even ran across a Wal-Mart.



When traveling, I usually listen to the local AM radio station to keep up with traffic problems, weather, and state news. While driving in Texas, it does not take long time before you have driven out of an AM signal. Then it is time to switch to FM. Wow! So I switch to the FM stations. Yep, all Country and Western music. No problem, I grew up in Georgia before country people had TVs and computers. All we had was a radio, and our parents controlled what was played. At night we would listen to WSM and WLAC

out of Nashville, TN, and WSB in the ATL as well as a station out of Del Rio, TX, with call letters that I fail to remember. That is no surprise, sometimes my co-pilot says that I forget that I am the pilot and give the controls to the co-pilot.

Guess what, back to the radio, my parents only turned on the News, Country and Western music, Gospel, and sometimes, they allowed us to listen to some Jazz as well as Rhythm and Blues. For that reason, I was in hogs heaven driving through North Texas. No problem, let the cowboys sing as I cruised the Ford Flex on up the road. Yes at the speed limit of 70 mph.

Oh, by the way, during part of our trip, the co-pilot took some time from her duties and checked out the Owner's Manual dealing with the OSDL as well as the operation of the GPS. Yes, a little progress gained! She closed the Owner's Manual.



Boy does Texas have some beautiful country scenery to drive through. Back to the trip. Mike and Nancy Brown departed from Kent, OH, about the same time we did from Corpus. That means we had to keep each other posted on our whereabouts so we would not get lost. At this point, I think they were doing fine in the state of Illinois with no roadrunners to deal with. Our next Texas town to pass through was Bollinger, neat. Our granddaughter (Deena Dayal) was supposed to have come with us on this trip. At this point, I'm glad she didn't come, I can hear her know, "PA!, (that is what she calls me) if you've seen one old Texas town, you've seen them all. And by the way, what is so special about any old Texas town? Yucky!" It was a very quaint and lovely town with some of the locals walking on sidewalk without a care in the world. I could envision cowboys riding down the main street past the town square on their way to the local saloon. After passing through Bradshaw, TX, I saw a road sign stating that we were 46 miles out of Abilene. Guess what came to my mind?

"Abilene, Abilene

Prettiest town that I've ever seen

Women there don't treat you mean

In Abilene, Sweet Abilene"

That is one of my favorite Texas songs, Yippee and a Yoyo!. From that point until we had passed through the city of Abilene and west on 1-20, I could not get the song out of my mind. I even tuned in the local radio station hoping to find someone playing it, but to no avail. So I had to settle for humming it to myself and not to my co-pilot.

Many of the areas that we traveled took me back into my childhood. I could visualize the cowboys, Indians, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, the Calvary, The Green Hornet, Lash Larue, Willie Nelson, Batman and Robin, the DUKE, Johnny Mac Brown, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, as well as many of the old western movies that I viewed while growing up. I could have gone farther with that.

After we passed Sweetwater and Roscoe, TX, we exited north on US 84 toward the big city of Lubbock, the home of the late Buddy Holly. It seems like Lubbock is one of those towns in Texas that is always in the local news, sometimes good and sometimes bad. Other than that, it is a very distinctive Texas town. Oh yeah, there is a lot of cotton planted in North TX as well as South TX. Don't mention that to my co-pilot.

We departed Lubbock north on 1-27 to Plain view with still more new vistas to view along the Texas countryside. Wow, I love Big



Texas Gas Country. In addition to the Texas changing scenery, there were National Gas and Oil Wells, Electrical Windmill Farms, and 2,000 head Cow Feeder Lots, where they were getting the cows all fattened up to go to slaughter houses, so we can have steaks and hamburgers to eat. How about that Big Mac!

Our next town was the major high point of the day. It was Amarillo, where we chose to bed down for the night. The first location we checked for accommodations had no vacancies. During a conversation with the agent, we found out that their annual rodeo was being held in town and that many out-of-town guests were on hand for the occasion. Not being deterred, we saddled back up and headed for greener pastures. Stop number two got us a room for the night. However, it too was full of cowboys and cowgirls (my kind of people) in town for the rodeo. Since my co-pilot and I had attended a rodeo earlier in the year, she was eager to chat with the crowd. Before turning in for the night, we contacted Mike and Nancy and found out that they getting ready to do likewise. The next morning (June 6), we got up and went downstairs for a bite to eat before loading up for the last leg of our trip.

Before heading out on 1-40 west, I checked my driving directions. (Go west on 1-40, exit US 385 north, to Vega, TX, continue to US 87, and then into Dalhart). Upon entering the Flex, I informed my co-pilot that our next point of interest going west was US 87 north. Big mistake, 87 north!, 87 north!

By the way and for the record, we did check in with our neighbors back in Corpus while we were away at the Reunion. Now back to the good stuff .

We headed west on 1-40, passed the Vega exit and 385 sign looking for US 87 sign. Still no *light* came on. My co-pilot following orders, looking for 87. Guess what I see ahead? WELCOME TO NEW MEXICO.! WOW, I sure wanted to see NM in the worse way. At this point, the pilot was at a loss for words, but not the co-pilot, promise, she is never at a loss for words. This time I took out my driving instructions and realized that they were right, take US 385n to US 87n. After a brief and mild discussion with the co-pilot, (she wanted to backtrack on 1-40 to Vega and take route US 385 to US 87 that were laid out in the instructions). After checking the map, it was plain to me that it was shorter to continue west on 1-40 to San Jon, NM, take the first road north (State rd 485- 55mph to US 54 east-65mph to north State rd 402-55mph) through Eastern NM to US 87 in Clayton, NM. I think it was only a little over 100 miles or something. Yes, it was time my co-pilot checked in with Mike and Nancy with a full update on our location and that I had decided to tour NM in lieu of the Reunion. She even made the statement that we may be headed for Albuquerque. I do not think that my co-pilot was happy at this point. Once she saw some of the Black Cats, she would be all right. What was the lesson learned from the slip up on the driving direction? Got it, on the next trip, I am going to hire a real *Navigator*.

Back to the NM state roads and their 55 mph speed limit. In Texas the FM roads have a speed limit of 70 mph (FM stands for Farm Machinery, like them Big Tractors that can cover as many as 30 rows at one sweep, for miles and miles.) That's the way you want to travel when you need to go somewhere. Better get off those state roads in NM and head out for TX FM roads, 70 mph, Yippee!



On our journey going north in eastern NM we were very isolated, we may have met six cars and passed maybe two. Like west TX, there are very few trees, houses, no small towns for miles, and no Wal-Mart. Yes, there are farms, tractors, ranches, with a few cows and horses spread out along the wayside. There were flocks of birds on the road from time to time. When we came upon them, it seemed like they did not know what to do to get out of the way of the Flex. There had to be bird feathers on the grill. I had to have hit some along the way. The co-pilot got a little lonesome on the stretch heading to Clayton. Maybe we saw two people, no fast food restaurants or gas stations (thanks to my co-pilot, we had plenty of fuel, she is great at gassing up). After seeing eastern NM, it looks similar to west Texas Panhandle and I believe that it (eastern NM) would be better off if it was given to western Texas. Think about it, the state and farm roads would be in better repair and the speed limit would be 70 mph, not 55. Plus, there would be more cows and horses on the ranches and farms. Texas probably would add a few oil wells to help improve the look of the countryside. At least some windmills!

After arriving in Clayton, NM, we were back on track, heading NW to Raton, NM, on US 87 with the pilot on a roll again. Other than a lot of

work on the highway (making it four lanes like Texas), there was very little going on along the way, other than a few out-of-place deer in the pastures eating grass with the cows, acting like they belonged there. Upon arrival in Raton, we headed north on 1-25 (75mph -wow!, go CO!) to Colorado Springs. Not there yet, we called Mike and Nancy for an update. They were checked into the Academy Hotel and are waiting for the room to be cleaned. We had one more stop to make and that was in the town of Pueblo, CO. Why Pueblo? We wanted to stop by the welcome center to get maps and handouts telling what was going on in Colorado Springs. The people in the welcome center were a jolly bunch. We spent over 30 minutes chatting with them about things to do and places to see before getting back on 1-25 N. After that, no more stops until we have checked in at the hotel. Mike and Nancy were standing out front of the hotel when we arrived.

After we had arrived at the Best Western Academy Hotel and were greeted by Mike and Nancy Brown, we ate lunch and checked in. Understanding the situation with the Flex, Mike suggested that we go out to the car, get the Owner's Manual and see if we could figure out what was up with the OSDL staying on and give the GPS a once overall for use. Low and behold located in the glove compartment was a CD with instructions as well as the Owner's Manual. As we did not want to read, plus my co-pilot had little luck with the Owner's Manual on the trip up, we went for the CD. There was a MENU at the top and center of the console with a button that allows the pilot to select any engine or operational function desired. When clicked on the mileage, there an option for mileage #1 and #2. Using option #1, we could have recorded mileage up and on return, use #2 to monitor the mileage home or while traveling, you check mileage between any two points. Boy, that Flex is all right, and we are ready to roll with mileage on! Thanks, Mike! Now we get back to what we came for "THE BLACK CAT REUNION." One other point, maybe I should wait until the navigator is aboard before using the GPS. Now, on with party!

Since we (the Sextons) and the Browns checked into the hotel before the majority arrived, we decided we would go out and scout the area to see what the nightlife was about. Well, the food was good, the natives were very friendly, we liked the old historical tourist sites, and Pikes Peak looked majestic from the valley below, good food, visited more tourist sites, and went back the hotel for Happy Hour. By the way, the crew at the Best Western Academy Hotel's hospitality desk are simply great. They sure know how to make their guest feel like they are at home on the range. Plus, their free breakfast was outstanding. How do I know? I was downstairs at 6 a.m. each morning to help the crew open up and get the operation going. By the way, they acted as though they appreciated my help or was it my Tips?

Day two, we (the Browns and the Sextons) seated ourselves close the check-in desk so we could greet as many Black Cat families as possible upon their arrival. As usual, it was great to see the Haleys, the Sanderlins, Hoopes, Sam Parrish, Bill MacDoughall, the Joneses, the Ballenskis and the Allens. A big thanks to all who came.

The reunion commenced with warm greetings, great conversations, more good food, very friendly natives, old historical tours, view of majestic Pikes Peak from the valley below, the Gardens of the Gods tour, good food, visited more tourist sites, and back the hotel for Happy Hour.

During our stay, we took the Royal Gorge Train Ride (out of sight), you could tell, it was enjoyed by all.

Next, we visited the Army Airfield at Fort Carson and were briefed by the Airfield Commander on the operation at Carson, toured the hangar with the troops working on Apache helicopters, had a static display of an Apache for a photo shoot, and a climb-



aboard tour and a walk around tour of a Chinook. It is always great to visit and talk to the troops. They are doing a great job for us!

As a whole, my co-pilot and I enjoyed the City of Colorado Springs. It is one of the most enjoyable tourist towns that I have visited in a long time, if ever Hats off to Colorado Springs!

The Air Force Academy visit is one of the tours that any American would enjoy. I do not have time to do it justice, I will only cite the guided tour of the Chapel that we went on. During the tour of (both floors) of the Chapel, the guide explained the concept, design, the lengthy building process, costs, organizational donating and all of the private help that went into its completion. It is a beautiful Chapel. If only I had brought my recorder with me. Yes, I was very impressed!

No, I did not forget that we toured a real Western Ranch, with real Cowboys and Cowgirls, and it was not located in Texas. We got a chance see how they lived in the good old days, ate dinner with them ,and then listened to them sing. Wow, they could play and sing, and we gave them a standing ovation.

Now, on to other activities. As usual our Black Cats Dinner was a huge success and the climax of the reunion. It is where each of us gets a chance to converse with one another in a warm social climate. Also, it gives the ladies a chance to share their experiences with the group. After the dinner, we have our

Organization's meeting, where business is taken care of and officers are elected. I encourage all Black Cats to visit our Web site and read the minutes. In addition, John Ballenski gave each of us a model of a Chinook. (Thank you, John.) See what you guys missed by not coming to our reunions. All Black Cats should be planning on attending the next one, never know what you are going to miss.

On June the 12 , the majority of the group checked out and headed home, except the Browns and Sextons.

We talked with the hired help at the hotel, had more good food, enjoyed friendly natives, toured old historical sites, visited Wal-Mart, Outlet Mall, more good food, back to the hotel for Happy Hour and friendly conversation. Yes, Colorado, my-copilot loved your many beautiful wildflowers and plants. And trees also. She was impressed!

Sad as it may be, all good things must come an end. Since we were checking out before the Browns on (June 12), we said our goodbyes before we turned in for the night. Around 6 a.m. we departed th Academy Hotel heading south on 1-25. It was simple now, just backtrack the route that we took to get to Colorado Springs. Not totally true. Upon arrival in Clayton, NM, my co-pilot informed me to stay on US 87 S. into Texas, she had the map and was in charge of the direction that we should go. Wow, there it is, the WELCOME TO TEXAS sign and to



Big Oil Country (my sign). Then there comes Dalhart, TX, Channing, Texas.

After Vega (bye!), it's 1-20 east to Amarillo, then we were on to Lubbock. You know, I do not think that I have mentioned the weather during the whole trip. Why, is this the only time that had mattered because I was scheduled for the train ride up to Pikes Peak, it was raining, so I cancelled out. The temperature reached a high of 100 and a low of 38 degrees during the reunion. Now in Lubbock, need gas and it's raining hard, Texas style. Low and behold I see a gas price sign that seems to be too good to be true (\$2.32). Rain or no rain, I stopped and gassed up for \$2.32. Wish I had a 55-gallon drum in the back of the Flex. Maybe 50



miles out of Lubbock backtracking east on US 84, we drove out the rain and smooth sailing all the way into Abilene. Yes!

*"Abilene, Abilene
Prettiest town that I've ever seen
Women there don't treat you mean
In Abilene, Sweet Abilene".
Yippee Yo, It's Back!*

South of Abilene, we stopped backtracking, the co-pilot directed me to stay on US 84 south and I did. On the way down 84, we are seeing a different Texas that we had left in the northern part. Yes, the landscape were changing ... more trees, (a happy co-pilot), signs of peaches ahead for sale, different vegetation, and farm products in the fields. Oh, yeah, we had checked with the Browns, they had a pleasant departure from the hotel and are traveling east with no problems in Kansas. Same as the trip up, very little traffic on the road (speed limit 70 mph, we're in Texas), maybe saw three police cars. We had towns ahead of us to check out as well. (What's important to checkout?) Not *only* is land flat, there are rolling plains in the distance with farms and ranches of different sizes and shapes. Big and little houses as well as valleys, ridges with varying and different plant life that is unique to this area of Texas. No, I do not know the names of these plants or trees. (No, they are not mesquite trees). All I know is, they looked different, and a beautiful sight to see! Forgot, time to check on Mike and Nancy, they were getting ready to bed down for the night.

In Coleman, we merged onto US 283, then on to Santa Anna and Brady. South of Brady. Then we had to get onto US 87 & US 377. Most of these small towns have a traditional town square at the center with many buildings that look like they should be on a picture postcard. Yes, we were getting closer to home. In Mason, TX, we took US 87 toward Loyal Valley (we were in the Hill Country), and the speed limit was 65 mph like in NM. In the history of this area, a large number of the first settlers were German, and you can see it in the layout of the towns. Driving through Fredericksburg is a tourist's dream, other than they roll the sidewalks up at 5p.m. There is a winery in the center of town on Main Street, with pubs and restaurants, old hotels, and various shops that look like you are back in the old country. Being curious, we stopped at the first local store that was open, the gentleman gladly briefed us on the town and the many who visit for the German food and beer, the local sausage and wine. Got to come back for a visit Fredericksburg!

From Fredericksburg, we continued south on US 87 @ 65 mph (Alabama speed) to I-10 E. (70 mph, TX speed), then into San Antonio, where we picked up I-37 to sweet home Corpus Christi. We enjoyed the trip and reunion, but it was to get home at around, 10:45 AM. Mission Accomplished! No, not quite, we must depart from the Flex in the morning. Happy Trails to all you Black Cats!

In conclusion, I would be remiss, if did not allow my *co-pilot* to write a word or two. It is possible that I may have forgotten some interesting points.

Go for it *co-pilot*:

Comments from the co-pilot:

It was a long, but enjoyable trip driving from Corpus Christi, TX to Colorado Springs, CO We saw a lot of interesting sights and the terrain was absolutely beautiful. We rode for miles seeing only birds and farms in a far distance. I understand now why the cowboys fell in love with his horse (smile). Being that we have attended all of the Black Cats Reunions, It was great seeing and spending time with everyone. I just wish more Black Cats would attend. I do understand that everyone's situation is not the same. When you attend your first one, you can hardly wait for the next.



We rented this Ford Flex Limited, too much car for two people. It was very comfortable and had space galore. The extra space came in handy when Nancy and I went shopping (smile). One thing that I do like about traveling by car, you see the layout of towns and the landscape. Since I love gardening and flowers, it is very refreshing to see how others do theirs. One of my hobbies is photography, so I took a lot of pictures during the trip. There were lots of windmills along the way, some working and some not. I find them interesting when they are turning and you are fairly close to them.

It was awesome seeing the snow on Pikes Peak in June. My pilot and I have lived in South Texas too long. I packed clothes for hot weather only. We had to go shopping for warmer clothes. Nancy offered me a pair of her socks, but I was able to wear a pair of the pilot's socks. Best wishes to all.

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT ONE!



It felt like 40 years ago stepping off the jet in Vietnam; the humidity was so high it was like breathing underwater with a heat lamp above my head. I could already feel the beads of sweat beginning to roll down my face, and my thin shirt was sticking to my flesh as I moved across the tarmac into the airport to get my bags and go through customs.

After checking into the Las Americas Hotel, I decided to see what Santiago was all about. I walked the somewhat rundown and neglected side streets to get an idea of what life was like in the second-largest city in Cuba.



The narrow main streets in the historic district were so saturated with pollution from automobiles and scooters that it became hard to breathe on several occasions. When I attempted to get away from the smog in buildings off the street, I found the doors were open and the interior also filled with a bluish haze, a little pollution control might go a long way in fixing this problem.

However, on Saturday night the historic district along Calle Jose' A. Saco becomes a street festival of shopping and music, with people from all sectors of life joining in the fun and activities. The music scene in Cuba was largely born on the

streets of Santiago, which is alive with the music of "son and salsa." Cubans just naturally seem to have the rhythm of the native music built into their being. Santiago is not a laid-back city of Latin America; it is alive with the constant buzz of life and activities. The people are warm and friendly, interested in talking with Americans, and hungry for information about life in the United States, jobs, the war in Afghanistan, and Arizona's immigration law. Professionals in Santiago -- such as teachers with a master's degree -- make the equivalent of about \$15 per month in pesos. A physician may make the equivalent of \$30 or so *per* month, with his house and office thrown in as benefits. Cubans do have subsidized housing, medical care, and food allotments, but economically the best-heeled people outside government, work in the tourist industry, where tips from tourists far exceed any salary they could otherwise make in Cuba. Cubans were forbidden to work more than one job until recently, when Raul Castro became president of Cuba and changed the law. While talking with Cubans, it became abundantly clear that they desire more freedom to make their own decisions in life and have more opportunity to prosper from their own labor.

Santiago sits between the Caribbean and the Sierra Maestra Mountains and is a mix of "Afro Caribbean culture," steeped in history, music, art, and literature. It was also the launching site of

Fidel Castro's revolution.



Fidel Castro had approximately 116 men for the planned attack on the Moncada Military Barracks in Santiago on July 26, 1953. This was the day after Santiago's annual carnival, and Castro hoped the men would be slow to react to the attack because of the previous night's festivities. The barracks would at times contain upward of two-thousand regular army troops. Castro hoped to raid the armory to secure weapons and munitions, and escape to the mountains. He had also hoped to create an uprising within the general population, because of dissatisfaction with how Batista took over the government of Cuba in his 1952 coup.



Castro left from the village of Siboney early the morning of July 26, leading the majority of his troops in auto convoys. However, only one of his men was from the Santiago area, subsequently causing

confusion in navigating the complex streets of Santiago. Two vehicles became lost before ever reaching Santiago. The attack itself was broken into three separate units-- with Raul attacking the Palace of Justice, Able Santamaria attacking the military hospital, and Fidel attacking the barracks. Before the actual attack began, an outlying military patrol spotted Fidel's group, and only one of the attacking vehicles made it into the Moncada Barracks before the alarm was sounded. The 10-minute battle left a number of rebels dead and captured. Fidel and Raul initially escaped, only to be captured a few days later with the other survivors of the failed attack.

Twenty of the rebels had stayed the night before the attack at the Rex Hotel, located on the Plaza de Marte, which is the entrance to the historic district. The plaza was once a Spanish parade ground in the 19th century. It was also the site of public executions of rebels by the Spanish Army.

After my initial tour of Santiago, I arranged for an interpreter and a vintage American automobile to take me to Raul Castro's Second Front Museum. Cubans who can afford an automobile take



great pride in the ownership of vintage American autos. Although far from having original parts, the Cubans are innovative in maintaining their American cars, both converting parts from other autos and literally making parts to replace worn-out components.

The next morning my interpreter and a driver pulled up to my hotel in a stunning vintage Dodge. This was to be my chariot through Holguin Province and onto the Second Front revolutionary headquarters of Raul Castro to tour the museum and attempt to interview rebel veterans. Along the way we were stopped at a police checkpoint, and the driver was told to take on two passengers and drive them to their destination. The driver dutifully did so. In Cuba it is not advisable to tell the police "no." The two young ladies were charming, attractive, and certainly distracted my two traveling companions until we dropped them off at the village of LaMaya. LaMaya had been one of the sites in the Second Front that saw fighting during the latter part of the revolution. Once the girls were safely in LaMaya, we continued on our journey past the villages of San Benito del Crucero, La Prueba, Lorna Blanca, and finally to Mayari Arriba, where we turned off to enter the plantation that was the headquarters of Raul Castro's Second Front. Our first stop was the mausoleum, which housed the remains of all the rebels who died during the rebel struggle. As well, all

revolutionary veterans are eligible for burial in these hollowed Cuban grounds, upon their deaths. Raul's late wife, Vilma Espin, is buried here, and upon Raul's death, he will be placed next to her. The grounds are filled with revolutionary



symbolism. The native red flowers directly above the burial sites represent the blood of rebels that was spilled during the fighting. The 73 palms on the ridge above the mausoleum represent the 73 original soldiers Raul led to the Second Front in 1958. After a tour of the rebel museum we were again on our way, this time in search of rebel veterans to interview.

In the municipal center of one of the small villages on my second day of trips to the small communities outside of Santiago, I was fortunate to run across three veterans, now in their 70s and 80s, but minds still sharp with the images of the revolution. It was not easy to find rebel veterans and more difficult to get them to discuss the aftermath of war, especially to a non-Cuban. I used the criteria for Post Traumatic Stress, laid out in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, .Fourth Edition, as

the basis of my beginning interviews. I was only slightly surprised by the lack of symptoms related to trauma. Although these veterans were youthful in 1958 and saw significant combat actions where they were always outnumbered, they had several advantages not shared by many American troops who experienced the war and saw action in Vietnam.

Rebel recruits fully **believed** in the cause of the revolution and had the support of their families and friends. Rebels were well prepared for the fighting and death to come through the completeness of

their military **training** by ex-American Marines, who were then veterans of Korea. Thereby at least partially **inoculating** the rebels to the stress and horrors of war. After the revolution was won, rebel veterans were considered **heroes by most Cubans**. Although many Cubans later fled Cuba once the revolution turned communist, the Cubans that remained largely continued to support the rebel cause. The rebels were rewarded for their victory by **social status and significant positions** within the new revolutionary government. The rebels not only fought together but were able to maintain contact with one another- after

the revolution was over, thereby maintaining **cohesive and supportive social relationships**. Rebel veterans were also remembered for their courage through numerous **monuments and tributes to their deeds**, which can be found abundantly in Cuba. Perhaps the rebel veterans that fled Cuba after Castro's revolution became a communist state will have a different tale to tell than their counterparts still in Cuba, but those tales are yet to come.



From left to right: Tom Hoopes, George Haley, John Ballenski, Roger Jones, Mike Brown, Sam Parrish, Foster Sexton, Bill MacDougall, and Terry Sanderlin



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The fact that the Chinook veterans were visiting an AH-64 Apache attack unit led to some light-hearted jabbing during the briefing over which was the better aircraft, but didn't stop some members of the group from climbing up into the Apache. "That was great," said Veteran Terry Sanderlin moments after sitting in the pilot's seat. "I wanted to do that right away." Sanderlin said he was amazed at how much the technology has changed since his days in combat.

"Technology is just overwhelming now compared to what we had," he said. "It's a little bit of a different mindset. We were more seat-of-your-pants, and (soldiers) at this time are more precision-oriented."

He said talking with today's soldiers allows the veterans to "parallel what we did in the military to their attitudes and their proficiency." Sgt. 1st Class Jon Wiseman, who spoke to the veterans about the current standards for aviation maintenance, said the interaction was good for the 1st Bn., 2nd Avn. Reg., soldiers. "I enjoyed seeing them interact with the soldiers, since most of (the soldiers) don't get the chance to meet Vietnam vets otherwise," Wiseman said. "For these soldiers to be able to hear some of their stories was amazing." Hosie

said the visit showed his soldiers something about the earlier days of Army aviation and that they are continuing that lineage. "This is a great opportunity for both provided an opportunity for the older veterans to come and see what aviation is all about 30-40 years later and an opportunity for our soldiers to see that they are a part of the 'long green line' (of Army aviation)." Although



Terry Sanderlin sits at the controls of an AH-64 Apache

the veterans were not expecting to even meet Hosie, he stayed with them until the tour ended. He thanked each of them for their service to the nation as they boarded the bus. It was a thank you they may not have received when they returned from war. "We were not looked upon very favorably by a lot of groups at that time, because there was such a divisive nature in the Vietnam War," Sanderlin said. "Not everybody was behind it. I think the nation was split just about in half." Still, Sanderlin said, the veterans are proud to rally around soldiers who now deploy on

multiple combat tours. "We can easily support them, because we know what they go through," he said. "We understand combat; we understand the hardship of combat and all of the different roles, from the supportive role, the liaison role to the actual combat role. Many of us have had all of those particular roles or at least some of them while we were in Vietnam. "It's easy for us to support the troops, because we know what they go through — physically, emotionally and in the aftermath."

