



# *The Airlifter*

Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association  
*Promoting and preserving the troop carrier/tactical airlift heritage*  
[www.troopcarrier.org](http://www.troopcarrier.org)

*This is a special pre-reunion edition.*

As you know, October 13 is just around the corner. As of now, the following people have registered. (Others have booked rooms who haven't sent in their registration.)

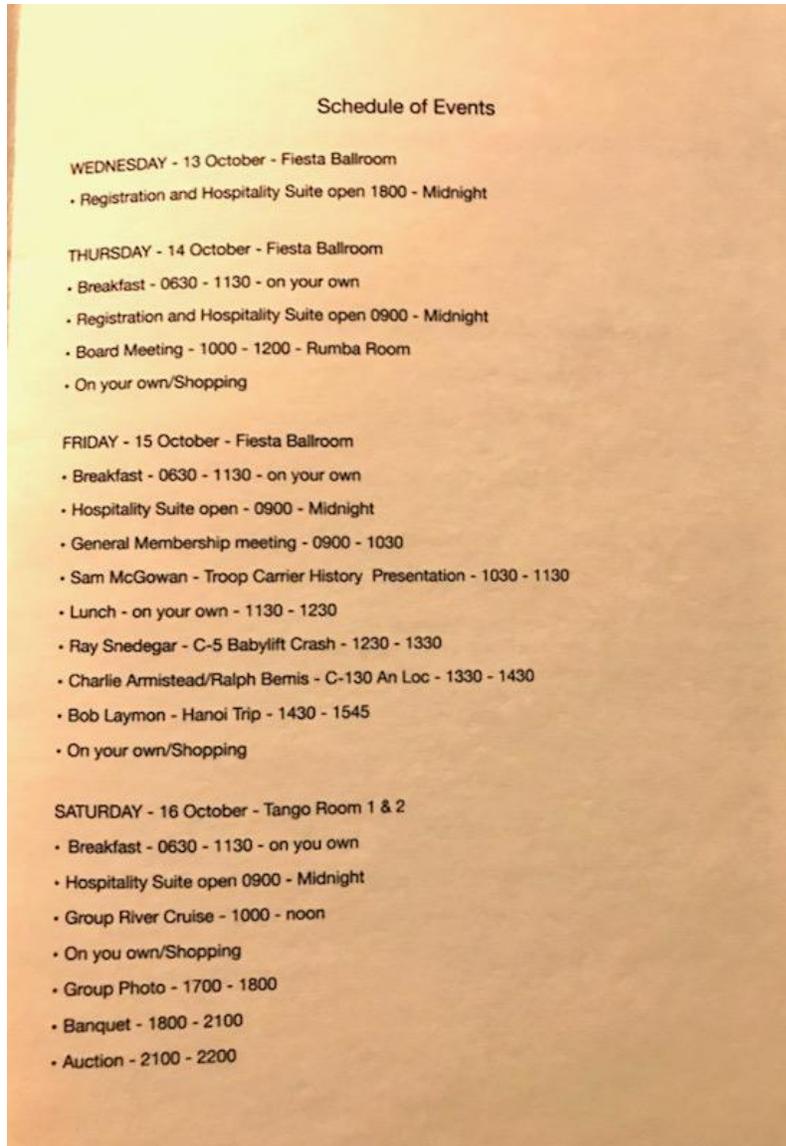
1. Andy & Norma Jean Vaquera
2. Ricky & Linda Davison
3. Mike Wright
4. David & Robin Padilla
5. Michael & Diana Vaquera
6. Ralph Bemis & Christine Marietta
7. David & Floreen Clark
8. Ora Conlon
9. Jimmy Trampota
10. Amy (Baginski) & Mark Dodds
11. Arne Suvatne
12. Carolyn Hodge
13. John Mayson
14. Carl & Beverly Penaranda
15. William (Bill) & Emme Kehler
16. William Goodall
17. Alfred & Claire Rodriguez
18. Tom & Fran Wark
19. Dennis & Mimi Moody
20. Curtis Greca
21. Sam & Ronda McGowan
22. Steve & Linda Privette
23. Rich & Joyce Klindt
24. Tom & Pam Hulse
25. Donald Horton & Carole Strobl
26. Ralph Moore
27. Benny Kerlin

28. James (Jay) Miller
29. Roger & Janet Greuel
30. Robert Kirkpatrick & Sigrun Hale
31. Mary Salerno
32. Bob Davis & Pat Barnard
33. John & Yoshie Burkhardt
34. Gary Angerman
35. Thomas Ward & Dr. Ronda Risner
36. Robert & Robin Frank
37. Douglas Rasar
38. Pete Jackson
39. Frank (Sal) Salerno
40. Paul & Helen Goubeard
41. Bill Baker
42. Brian & Cora Bauries
43. Ray S
44. Charlie , Rob , Serena , Dylan , Conner & Logan Armistead
45. Howard & Maria Berg

Note – Many members will be accompanied by their spouse, friends, family or significant others. We're looking at an attendance of around 75 people.

### Reunion Schedule of Events

Updated schedule of events:



### **Kabul and Saigon<sup>1</sup>**

Many veterans are hearing the news of the airlifted evacuation of Americans and others out of Kabul as the United States completes its military withdrawal. Of course, the media, some politicians and others are comparing what is happening in Afghanistan with the events in the former South Vietnam in April 1975, although there's really no comparison. Veterans of the 20-year military effort are in dismay that the Afghan military more or less melted and the country is back in the hands of the "Taliban" who ruled it before then-President George W. Bush ordered a military invasion of the country in the wake of the 9/11 attacks under the premise that Afghanistan and the attacks were connected. Some of our members are directly involved in the Kabul flights and others were involved in the flights out of Saigon. Although the famous Saigon photographs are of helicopters, C-130s and C-141s brought out most of the evacuees until the US ambassador halted fixed-wing operations into Tan Son Nhut as the North Vietnamese closed on the city and the airfield came under increased artillery attack. One C-130 was destroyed by artillery. One of our members who was part of the airlift detachment overseeing the evacuation was temporarily stranded on the field when C-130 landings were halted. He and other aerial port personnel flew to a carrier on a helicopter and spent several weeks with nothing but the clothes on their back until the ship finally docked at Subic.<sup>2</sup>

I don't know how others were affected by the knowledge that Hanoi was winning the war, but I know how it affected me. Almost five years had passed since I left C-130s for C-5s at Charleston. When I left Clark, I thought the war was about over. The Viet Cong had been practically wiped out in 1968 and the North Vietnamese effort had decreased until it was little more than a ripple. US ground forces had been steadily reduced ever since Richard Nixon took office and the C-130, C-123 and C-7 force had been reduced. My own squadron was in the process of deactivation when I left. The 1972 flareup had brought C-130s back into the war for a few months but the war had settled back to a low ebb and the final US forces left South Vietnam in March 1973. I was on a trip to Tehran, Iran when the C-5 crashed after losing pressure due to a ramp actuator failure with hundreds of Amerasian children and their female American escorts on board. MAC grounded the entire C-5 fleet and we sat at Torrejon. After a few days, the restriction was (temporarily) lifted and we flew our load to Tehran. To our surprise, MAC again grounded the entire fleet the instant we touched down back at Torrejon!

The transient barracks at Torrejon had a closed-circuit system that broadcast AFRTS 24 hours a day. The news was focused on events in South Vietnam, where the North Vietnamese were rapidly advancing southward toward Saigon. I felt like the world was coming apart. I remember thinking that it had all been for nothing. I thought for years that I was at Torrejon when Saigon fell but a few years ago I looked at my old pilot logbook and saw that I flew with a student the day of the capitulation so we had been allowed to bring our airplane back to Dover. The crash was on April 4 and Saigon fell on the 29<sup>th</sup>. I don't know when we got back but we spent much of that time grounded at Torrejon. I don't remember what I thought

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<sup>1</sup> I wrote this as the withdrawal was taking place.

<sup>2</sup> This particular individual had been shot down on a C-130 earlier in the war.

the day Saigon fell but I remember feeling depressed while listening to AFRTS at Madrid. I'd feel depressed for several days at that time of year for years afterwards, until I finally got over it.

#### COVID UPDATE

As everyone knows, the COVID-19 virus is affecting the entire country, the world actually. As with other states, Texas was affected by the sudden increase of cases attributed to the Delta variant, which is reportedly more contagious than previous variants. Things seemed pretty bad statewide for a time but they seem to have settled down considerably. I live in Houston where a couple of websites give a pretty good picture of the situation. One site shows data from eighteen counties in Southeast Texas. At one point, more than 4,000 people were hospitalized for the virus but that number has shrunk to 2,200. Another site operated by the Texas Medical Center in Houston now shows that there were 1798 new cases (positive test results) in the Houston Metro Area (a population of some 9 million) on September 28, which is down from a 2,094 daily average for the previous week. There had been nearly 5,000 new cases reported each day. Obviously, the numbers are going down. Bexar County, which includes San Antonio, currently has an estimated 13,941 active cases. However, San Antonio is one of the heaviest populated cities in the US, with a population of over 1.4 million in the city alone. Bexar County has an estimated population of over 2 million.

Texas COVID regulations are greatly relaxed. Currently, vaccinated people are not required to wear masks although some businesses encourage wearing of masks. You'll still see a lot of people wearing masks even though they're not mandated by the state.

FYI, the VA just sent out a notice advising certain vaccinated veterans to get a booster at least six months after their second shot. This only applies to the Pfizer vaccine. Everyone over the age of 65 should get the booster. After that, it's people over 50 with compromised immune systems. It would probably be a good idea to get a booster prior to the reunion.

*See you in a couple of weeks!*