

174th AHC Association
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*** OFFICERS ***

PRESIDENT
Cliff Stern

VICE PRESIDENT
Darrell Bennett

SECRETARY/
TREASURER
Hal Koster

*** DIRECTORS ***

Billy R. Wood
Dennis Fisher
Charlie Doherty

*** HISTORIAN ***

*** WEBMASTER ***
TBD

CHAPLIN *
Steve Kennedy

2021 "Gathering" After Action Report

During 2021, things do seem to be getting back to "what was normal." It has not been easy for any of you since our last, regular 174th AHC Association annual Reunion, May 2019. No, "**these times are changing**" has become a truism, much to our disappointment...



Recall the 1964 Bob Dylan lyrics:

*Come gather 'round people, wherever you roam,
And admit that the waters around you have grown,
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone,
If your time to you is worth saving.
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone,
For the times, they are a-changin'...*

In May 2019, we started planning for the 2020 174th AHCA annual reunion at FWB, FL. The agenda was outlined, the Saturday night banquet menu at the Elks Club was arranged/reserved, along with guest speaker MG (ret) "Lou" Hennies, snacks for the hospitality room, the Friday night buffet, etc. And then in January 2020, the dreadful news of a new virus began to spread! By February, people across our land and the government started to isolate themselves, indoors, fewer trips to the store, masks were mandated. The CDC and Dr. Fauci were on the nightly news; talk of a new virus from China and research for a possible vaccination had begun...

The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 was devastating the USA, Asia, the rest of the world and the changes which it caused in our lives were extremely frustrating. The newly elected 174th AHCA officers: President Billy Wood, Vice President Mike Hall, Sec./Treas. Hal Koster, Past President Butch Elliott, Past Vice President Dennis Fisher and Past Sec./Treas. Charlie Doherty, made a tough decision not to have a 174th reunion in May 2020.

Early in his term, 174th AHCA Vice President Mike Hall had an unexpected heart issue "pop up" and he asked if he could step down as vice president. President Wood appointed Darrell Bennett as acting Vice President until an election could be held.

There also wasn't a 174th "Gaggle" held in October 2020. The Covid-19 issue was everywhere and affecting all of us!

Then 2021 arrived and things very gently started to change. Wearing masks became optional, local municipalities started to lift restrictions. Most of the population began taking the Covid-19 immunizations. Restaurants had barely been able to endure closures; sluggishly progressing back from only being allowed to have 30% occupancy, then 50% and finally back to a "new normal..."

The 174th Board of Directors began a lengthy discussion about having a 2021 reunion! The Covid-19 situation was still a major concern, even though the crisis was declining. Plans were formulated, agenda discussions conducted, guest speaker (Viet Nam reporter Joe Galloway), tent for the patio, etc. But in the end, a "full blown reunion" was not to be. Too many uncertainties, too many remaining restrictions.

Eventually, my wife, Carolyn Wood, asked, "Why couldn't you just have a "gathering" of the 174th AHCA at Fort Walton Beach, without an agenda, without a banquet, without the normal Friday night in-house buffet, etc." That

suggestion became a reality. The Board of Directors agreed that was what everyone in the 174th essentially wanted, an opportunity to gather and have fun, without the formality of a schedule, banquets, buffets, buses, etc. JUST A "GATHERING!!!"

30 April – 3 May 2021 we held a 174th AHCA "Gathering" at FWB, FL, Best Western Beach Front Hotel. There were 54 men, wives and guests attending the 2021 "Gathering." Below are photos taken at the "Gathering"!



Butch & Janet, Mike Basler, Dee & Mel



Tiki Bar bartender Don Fuller



Jeff Morris, Dale Spratt & Mike Phillips



Carolyn Wood, Dee & Mel Lutgring



Helen Davis, Karla Daneau, Theresa Wise & Julia Skipper



Maureen Morris, Mike Basler & Dennis Fisher



Mel Lutgring at "Memorial"



Wally Nunn at "Memorial"



Since planning had begun for the 2020 reunion and “**Welcome Gifts**” had already been ordered, these gifts (women’s “Tumblers” and men’s “Koozies”) were given to members and their spouses at the “Gathering.” A list of those receiving these “Welcome Gifts” was generated and saved.



Billy & Richard Machina (our newest member 1967 VN)



Wally Nunn & Marty Wifholm

As planned, we did not have an agenda, however, we did have snacks, beer, and wine for the “Hospitality Room” and a tent on the BW patio, with table and chairs. We did conduct an official 174th “**Business Meeting**” on Saturday afternoon in the hospitality room:

- Election results were announced at the business meeting Cliff Stern would be the new 174th AHCA President, Darrell Bennett Vice President and Hal Koster Sec./Treas.
- Hal Koster gave a treasurer’s report with a current balance is \$19,548.80, which did not include this year’s “Gathering” expenses.
- Billy Wood nominated Ralph “Butch” Elliott for Honorary Life Membership for his dedication to the association and his support of Ted Saunders in his final months. The Honorary Life Membership was approved.
- Billy Wood nominated Mel Lutgring for Honorary Life Membership for his dedication to the association and his support of many association activities including display of the “174th Flag of Honor” and his attendance at many funerals. The Honorary Life Membership was approved.
- Billy Wood nominated Hal Koster for Honorary Life Membership for his dedication to the association and his support of newly injured military service members by forming and running the Aleethia Foundation and providing/arranging the “Friday Night Dinners” for wounded soldiers and family members for many, many years. The Honorary Life Membership was approved.
- Billy Wood nominated Joe and Kim Watson for Honorary Membership in the 174th AHCA. Motion was approved. Note: Joe Watson passed from this life on 2 July 2021. Sixteen 174th members/wives attended Joe’s funeral in Wetumpka, AL.

After the 174th Business Meeting, Sat. 1 May, a **Memorial** was held in the tent on the BW patio. We honored Ted Saunders (10-4-20), John Donahue (3-13-21), Chaz Simmons (3-18-21), and Jim McDaniel (4-18-21). Later that same afternoon, we found out that Harrold Simpson of Bryan, TX had died that morning.

Sunday Morning Devotional: The non-denominational devotional service was led by 174th Chaplain Steve Kennedy in the Best Western hotel “Hospitality Room.” Traditional hymns were led by Carolyn Wood, and Wilma Kennedy provided a special signing in Sacred Sign Language. We were introduced to a beautiful new song, “Earth to God” by John Rich.

Everyone really enjoyed just being together at this “**Gathering**” of a Band of Brothers.

Once again there will be another “Gaggle” 30 Sep. – 4 Oct. 2021 at the FWB Best Western. Plan to be there!!!

/S/

Billy R. Wood
Past President 174th AHCA
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