

Silver Spur Reunion 2023  
12-15 September, Branson, Missouri  
After Action Report

The Thousand Hills Resort Hotel, formerly known as the Radisson, hosted our reunion in Branson. Those of us who had been here many times were a little apprehensive that things might not be the same under the new management. Concern was not justified. Most agreed that nearly everything had improved. Management wisely chose to keep most of the key people, and they seem happy in their work. Most notably improved is the quality of the food. The in-house restaurant is now open mornings and evenings, and a second bar has been added inside the restaurant to take pressure off the original bar. That old bar continues to serve food there and to provide outstanding service.

As you know, the 119<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company veterans agreed to have us join their reunion. We all enjoyed a private hospitality room the entire time. Soft drinks, coffee, beer, and wine were complimentary every day, and a cash bar opened in the room every day at noon. Drinks at that bar were also complimentary the evening of the final dinner, on Thursday. There were no mask restrictions anywhere we went.

After the closing dinner, the 119<sup>th</sup> conducted a raffle of donated items. Items ranged from books to model helicopters to booze to knives, and many other desirable items. Tickets are sold for \$1 each and the 119<sup>th</sup> uses this raffle to finance much of their reunion expense. There were so many items (hundreds?) that winners, and there were many, were awarded two or three items with each win.

The 119<sup>th</sup> had about 40 attendees plus their guests. Some brought as many as ten family members, and nearly all had at least one guest. Eight Silver Spurs attended, plus their guests. No former commanders were able to attend, for various important reasons.

The 119<sup>th</sup> formally ended their reunion Thursday night with the banquet and raffle. On Friday morning, Chuck Oualline conducted a Memorial Ceremony for our fallen and missing comrades. All eight of our Silver Spurs attended, plus their guests, which included an Infantry veteran of a more recent war, sponsored by Al LaGrange. A Missing Man Table was set up, and Chuck first gave an explanation of the meaning of all items on the table. Bill McCalister led all in the Pledge of Allegiance, and Chuck read the names and dates of passing, if known, of the ten men we have lost since the last reunion, or of whose passing we were not aware during the last reunion. We really appreciate Roger Young's efforts in finding information and maintaining this list of our losses throughout each year. Next came the actual Memorial Ceremony, when the names of our KIAs were read during a DVD presentation, professionally produced by John Pepper. Our fallen include one whose remains may have been returned from Cambodia, but who has not been identified (Gregory Antunano) who is officially classified as BNR. We included the four KIAs suffered by the present-day Silver Spurs during a tour in Iraq. The ceremony concluded with the playing of Taps with the troop at Present Arms.

We were warmly welcomed by the 119<sup>th</sup> AHC, and I heard no Spurs complain about anything. On the contrary, I think all of us really enjoyed meeting other veterans and sharing stories. The 119<sup>th</sup> meets every year, in September, at this hotel. Spencer Gardner, who conducts their reunion, has told Bill and Chuck that we are welcome at all their future reunions, and he hopes we will come. I hope so, also. We who attended really enjoyed a warm welcome and all their hospitality.

And the 119<sup>th</sup> saved the Silver Spurs some money. When Spencer learned that we would have our ceremony on Friday morning, he offered the use of the hospitality room. He always reserves it through Friday morning after the Thursday banquet in case he needs the time to move things out. He was finished with the room by 1000 on Friday and allowed us to use it. This saved us money we would have used to rent a different room. Thank you, Spencer Gardner and all 119<sup>th</sup> members. And thank you all for graciously allowing us to share in your reunion, which we enjoyed.

We renewed old friendships and forged some new ones in a different unit. I said this in previous after action reports: It is sad to think that all of us might not be around for the next reunion in 2024. I pray it is not so. But reality and age tell me that it is likely. Each time we meet could be our last. So, don't blow off the next reunion. Don't put off attendance until the one after that. Be there. For each other. And for loads of fun, just like old times.

Chuck Oualline  
2023/2024 Assistant Reunion Chairman