

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

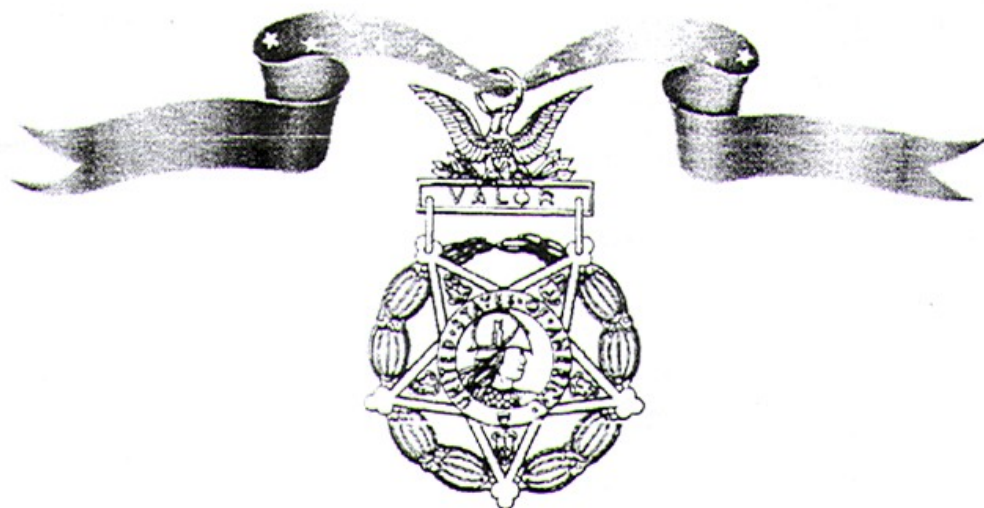


Volume 2, Number 4

The Tan Son Nhut Association, Washington, D.C.

January, 2000

Revetments' Person of the Century



The American G. I.

Thirty-Two Years Ago This Month When The Rumors Came True!



The Control Tower

Photos Courtesy of
The Lance S. Coar Collection

Rumors grew steadily at Tan Son Nhut Air Base during the January 1968 days leading towards the Lunar New Year, the Tet Holiday of the Vietnamese. The rumors came true during the evening and night of January 30-31.

We have deep gratitude to Member, Charles Penley of Kingsport, Tennessee, who has furnished *Revetments* with a copy of the official history of his unit, the 377th Security Police Squadron, who bravely, and oft-times singlehandedly, saved the lives of all of us who were there at that time. From this history we have extracted the following report of events as they transpired.

Surprise attack

The attack came without notice, and the size and firepower of the enemy units were without precedence for a major USAF installation in the Republic of Vietnam. The squadron had been placed in Security Condition GREY on the morning of 30 January in response to the increased hostile activity during the Tet "truce," and General Momyer, the commander of

Seventh Air Force, had placed all of his bases in RVN on Security Condition RED at 1730 hours that afternoon as a result of rocket and mortar attacks on a number of other installations the night before.

But, except for vague, general reports that the Viet Cong would probably attempt some type of attack on Tan Son Nhut some time before or during the Tet holidays, there was no firm indication of the type or size of attack which the Viet Cong could or would launch. Nor was there any firm intelligence concerning where or from what direction an attack, if any, was coming.

The first such indication that something big was underway came at 0300 hours on 31 January when a report was received at JDOC (Joint Defense Operations Center) that the American embassy in Saigon was under attack. A few moments later, the Vietnamese Joint General Staff compound was also reported under attack, and at 0320 hours, the first rounds fell on the east end of Tan Son Nhut near the POL (fuels) area. But it wasn't until 0333 hours, when mortar and rocket rounds started to hit the west end



On The Aprons

near the 051 gate and Viet Cong troops appeared from the tree line, that the 377th Security Police Squadron knew from where the major attack was coming or had any indication concerning its size.

At Least Seven Viet Cong Battalions

Post-attack intelligence indicated that at least seven Viet Cong battalions, augmented by North Vietnamese army (NVA) elements, were involved in the attack on Tan Son Nhut, with the total number of hostile troops estimated at 2,500 men. The majority of these troops, three reinforced battalions with an estimated strength of 500 men each, attacked the west end of the base near the 051 gate.



The Base Chapel Area

while other hostile units ranging from squad-to-battalion-size applied pressure at eight other points around the base perimeter simultaneously.

The squadron responded immediately with all the resources at its command. The men had been placed on five-minute alert when the squadron went into Condition RED earlier in the evening, and when the first rounds landed near the POL area, the quick reaction teams (QRT) were readied for immediate deployment.

West End Is Major Problem

The major problem, of course, was on the west end of the base. At approximately 0335 hours, a sapper unit (later identified as an element of the C-10 Sapper Battalion) blew a hole in the perimeter fence between the 051 Bunker and the 051 gate, and the Viet Cong started pouring through the breach. (Note: The MACV Rules of Engagement had prevented the Security Police in the 051 Bunker from firing on the sapper unit, which had driven up to the fence line in a Lambretta scooter-taxi, as the unit had not exhibited hostile intent prior to exploding its Bangalore torpedoes.)

The bunker returned the enemy fire, but was silenced by two direct hits from RPG2 or RPG7 rockets, which killed four of the five Security Police inside (the only Security Police Squadron KIAs during the battle.)

The squadron's Central Security Control (CSC) immediately dispatched the four-man sector Security Alert Team (SAT), two three man CSC Standard SATs, and the 13-man reserve SAT to the scene. The sector SAT was the first to arrive. It took a position just south and east of the 051 Bunker and poured fire

(Continued, please see Tet, Page 3)

Tet continued from Page 2

into the attacking forces until it was forced to withdraw for lack of ammunition, and resumed firing into the advancing enemy forces. The other SATs were unable to reach the bunker because of the intense hostile fire. One standard SAT and RSAT took positions approximately 200 yards southeast of the bunker and opened fire. The other SAT, coming in from the north, guarded against flanking movements on the north side of the penetration area.

Steady, well-disciplined fire blunted the Viet Cong penetration

Next, three 13-man QRTs and platoon of Task Force 35 (30-man platoons of Army augmented under the operational control of the 377th SPS) were dispatched to the west end to form a blocking force directly east of the advancing Viet Cong penetration force, and another Task Force 35 platoon was sent to bolster the southeast flank. These units formed the main defensive line just east of the western most crossover taxiway north and south of the main runway. They were ordered to return the enemy fire and hold their positions.

By this time, an estimated 600 Viet Cong -- one reinforced battalion augmented sapper and NVA units -- had penetrated through the breach in the perimeter fence. This main assault force was armed with or supported by RPG2 and RPG7 rockets, 81 mm mortars, .50 caliber machine guns, hand grenades, automatic weapons, small arms, and other miscellaneous weaponry. Although outnumbered at least four to one and facing superior firepower the Security Policemen and augmented maintained steady, well-disciplined fire and blunted the Viet Cong penetration.

Standoff in the west

Meanwhile, Lt. Colonel Carter, back at JDOC, deployed the other QRTs to reinforce perimeter defense in the northwest, north, northeast, east, Main Gate, Gate 2 and south section of the perimeter; held the third (and last) platoon of Task Force 35 in reserve at CSC in the event of a Viet Cong breakthrough; and worked feverishly with U.S. Army and Air Force counterparts to secure air, artillery, armor, and infantry support for his beleaguered Security Policemen.

Fire support was requested from U.S. Army helicopter light fire teams (LFTs) but clearance was delayed for approximately 45 minutes because the LFTs were unable to distinguish between friendly and enemy positions. A platoon of three Vietnamese light tanks arrived at

approximately 0500 hours, but within 15 minutes two of them were destroyed by enemy rocket fire and the third was forced to withdraw. The Vietnamese field commander, Major Chieu, was wounded when one of the tanks was hit. At this time, the Vietnamese commander of JDOC, Lt. Col. Coung, turned over his command to Lt. Col. Bernard L. Garred, Jr., U.S. Senior Advisor to the Tan Son Nhut Sensitive area. A short time before, around 0430 hours, forward air controllers (FACs) reported a very large Viet Cong force in the fields directly west of the 051 Bunker and 351 gate. This was later identified in post-attack intelligence as two reinforced battalions totaling 900-1000 men. At 0523 hours, friendly artillery received clearance and began taking a heavy toll on these forces outside the perimeter fence.

During this period and for the next hour, the battle on the west end of the base was a standoff. The defense forces kept up a constant but well-disciplined fire on the hostile positions, keeping the Viet Cong pinned down and unable to advance. But, although two companies of Vietnamese airborne arrived to reinforce the defense line, the friendly forces had neither the firepower nor the manpower to counter-attack and drive the attackers off the base.

Combat intensifies

At approximately 0600-0613 hours, however, the fire from the Viet Cong positions became extremely intense, and the FACs reported that the Viet Cong in the field to the west of the perimeter were starting to advance toward the base. The defensive forces braced themselves, returned the fire, and held their positions.

About 06630 hours "C" Troop of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment (3/4 Cav) of the 25th division (less one platoon) which had been placed under the operational control of JDC, was sighted coming down Highway 1 from the north towards the 051 gate. Although it suffered heavy casualties in an ambush from a row of houses just north and west of the gate, the troop pushed through and hit the Viet Cong on the north flank, distracting their attention from the Security Police main defense line. The defensive forces and particularly the 3/4 Cav unit remained heavily engaged with the enemy forces for the next hour. At approximately 0730 hours, "B" Troop of the 3/4 Cav (plus the remaining platoon of "C" Troop) entered the 055 gate at the northwest tip of the base, sped down the outer perimeter road and hit the Viet Cong

from the north. At this time, the Viet Cong again increased the intensity of their fire, apparently to cover the withdrawal of the units inside the base perimeter.

The enemy is forced to withdraw

The pressure somewhat relieved, the 377th Security Police and the other defensive forces inside the base counterattacked from the east, driving the Viet Cong off the base, while the 34 Cav units continued to press the attack on the north flank. The Security Police and Vietnamese Airborne forces met stiff resistance, particularly on the south part of their counterattack line and from 051 Bunker, which had been overrun and occupied early in the battle. By 1000 hours, however, most of the Viet Cong had been killed, or driven off, except for the pocket of resistance in the 051 Bunker. The bunker was finally neutralized by grenade fire, assaulted, and taken by Security Police forces at 1215 hours.

Enemy plans foiled at Tan Son Nhut

Post-attack intelligence revealed that the attack on Tan Son Nhut was part of an overall Viet Cong plan to overrun the Seventh Air Force and MACV headquarters and to deprive the Saigon area of fixed-wing airlift support (by taking Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa and the Saigon racetrack) and, at a minimum to force Vietnamese and U. S. acceptance of a political "solution" to the war. The quick response, professionalism and courage of the 377th Security Police Squadron which was the lone defensive ground force during the early critical hours of the battle foiled the most important element of this plan.


Post Script by Revetments

Sergeant Alonzo Coggins was the sole survivor of Bunker 051 and had survived for nine hours under the bodies of his comrades and the debris of the attack, occupied by the enemy. Last year at Lackland he received, at last, the Silver Star.

The fighting in and around Saigon and its military bases continued literally for weeks. Tan Son Nhut would suffer a devastating rocket attack in the middle of February. Saigon was under curfew for months.

We cannot resist closing with Winston Churchill's proud comment, "Never have so many owed so much to so few."

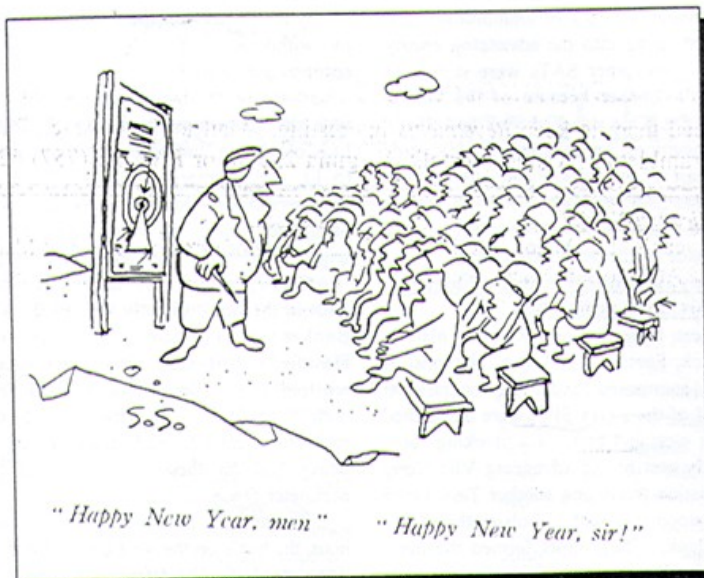
Let us hereby resolve that the Tan Son Nhut Association shall keep this era's memory unassailable, unblemished, and perpetuated to our posterity.



"All Inclusive - Non Excludable"

Revetments is an official publication of The Tan Son Nhut Association, 6204 57th Avenue, Riverdale, Maryland 20717. The Association is a non-profit fraternal organization chartered and registered as required by statute and law. The Public Affairs Office is in Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510. Telephone: (757) 627-7746, FAX: (757) 627-0878, E-Mail: revetments@worldnet.att.net

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A golden oldie by Stars & Stripes' Shel Silverstein



Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot

by
Chaplain James M.
Warrington

Beginning A New Millennium

Life would be impossible without new beginnings! This is true even in the physical world. Nature is constantly going through a process of death and rebirth. The human body is constantly replacing old cells, so that it is renewed about every seven years. In a sense, every healing from an accident or an illness is a new beginning.

This is even more true in the spiritual life. Prayer and worship are secrets of new beginnings. Every act of dedication or re-dedication is a new beginning. The act of accepting God's forgiveness is a special new beginning -- as well as sharing that same forgiveness with others.

Mr. H. R. Hunt once summed up what new beginnings can mean at the start of a new year. "The sun is just rising on the morning of another day, the first day of a new millennium. What can I desire that this day, this week, this month, this year, this decade, this century be presented to me?

Nothing that shall make the world and

its people poorer, nothing at the expense of other families; but just those few blessings which in their coming do not stop with me, rather touch me as they move on gathering strength:

- A few friends who understand me, and yet still remain my friends.
- A series of tasks to do which have real value, without which society would feel poorer.
- A mind not afraid to travel, even though the trail be not blazed.
- A sense of humor and power to laugh.
- A few moments of quiet meditation with the sense of the presence of God.
- And the patience to wait for the coming of these moments, together with the wisdom to recognize them when they do come!"

Great New Web Site!

Unofficial USAF E-Mail Locator

Find old buddies and put your
address on

<http://www.usaf-locator.com>

From the President's Desk ...



Holiday greetings to all of the Tan Son Nhut Association members and their families.

As we enter a new millennium, we must never forget the ultimate gift given by United States veterans.

We must remain proud of the work we did when we were called upon to leave our homes and our families and fight for the freedoms we have.

I hope this year 2000 will be another banner year for the Tan Son Nhut Association. We all know people who are eligible to join the organization.

My wish is that we can all be together again at this year's reunion.

Have a very Happy New Year!

Don

The Communication Center Send us your letters, stories, announcements, etc., we need them to keep *Revetments* interesting. Mail to: TSN Assoc., Public Affairs, Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510, or FAX to: (757) 627-0878.

Clarification Needed ...

I can't let Major McKinnon's (Days At Tan Son Nhut, Dec. Issue) statement about the elimination of Air Force regulations pass without clarification.

While I agree with the thrust of his comment that this was a grave mistake, it should be pointed out that it was ordered by General Merrill A. McPeck, an ROTC graduate of San Diego State, and not by an Academy graduate Chief.

In fact, General McPeck was followed by the first USAFA graduate to hold the job, General Ron Fogleman, arguably one of the best we've had, at least since the days of General LeMay. One of General Fogleman's first acts was to partially reverse another of General McPeck's less wise contributions -- the airline style uniform.

Colonel Wayne C. Pittman, Jr.
USAFA Class of 1959
Beavercreek, Ohio
* * *

Missouri Reunion Planned ...

The reunion will be the first week in June of 2000, in Chilowee, Missouri. One of our members has a large farm and a beautiful lake on it. Some are choosing to camp there, others will rent RVS and we have made arrangements for a discounted rate at a nearby Days Inn, who is also providing us with a banquet room if need be.

We are going on a tour of Whitman Air Force Base (home of the Stealth Bomber), which is nearby. We will also have a BBQ with Security Forces at Whitman, with some type of welcome by them.

We will also have a canoe trip on a local river one day, and a catered BBQ at the farm another day. We plan on a bonfire nightly to sit and

reminisce.

Three of us started this past March in search of our lost brothers. As of (now) we have located sixty-three former Cobra and 37th Security members of Phu Cat Air Base, including our former commanding officer.

We still have along ways to go and time is running short, so anything you can do to assist us will be of great help. We are finding that this will not just be a reunion of former comrades in arms, but a healing process and for some closure at last.

Again thank you for your help.

Carl L. Chamberlin
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Southbridge, Massachusetts 01550
Phone & FAX: (508) 764-6881
E-Mail: cchamberlin@webtv.net
* * *

Member notes interest in TSNA ...

There is a good showing of interest for people to join the Tan Son Nhut Association in the greater Colorado Springs area.

Plus, several guys that were stationed elsewhere in the RVN are seeking information on the premise that they ALL went through Camp Alpha for their R&Rs. I've explained that our motto is "none denied," this makes them happy.

May you and the entire TSNA have a Happy and prosperous New Year.

Bob Willson
Colorado Springs, Colorado
* * *

A very powerful prayer! ...

(Editor's Note: Member, Colonel Harry Patterson, of Shalotte, North Carolina, sent us the following. We find it quite fitting to publish it at the very beginning of new century.)

When minister, Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate, everyone was expecting the usual generalities,

but this is what they heard:

Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance.

We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good."

But that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values.

We confess that:

We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it Pluralism.

We have worshiped other gods and called it multiculturalism.

We have endorsed perversion and called it alternative lifestyle.

We have exploited the poor and called it lottery.

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare.

We have killed our unborn and called it choice.

We have shot the abortionist and called it justifiable.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem.

We have abused power and called it politics.

We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition.

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression.

We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, Oh God, and know our hearts today, cleanse us from every sin and set us free.

I ask it in the Name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen

The response was immediate. A number of legislators walked out during the prayer in protest. In six short weeks, Central Christian Church, where Rev. Wright is pastor, logged more than 5,000 phone calls, with only 47 of those calls responding negatively. The church is now receiving international requests for copies of this prayer from India, Africa and Korea. Commentator Paul Harvey aired this prayer on "The Rest of the Story" on radio and received a larger response to this program than any other he has ever aired.

With the Lord's help, may this prayer sweep over our nation and wholeheartedly become our desire so that we again can be called one nation under God.

* * *



There is no free lunch ...

It's Membership Renewal Time!

For January, 2000 ...

Current records indicate that the following members are due for membership renewal. Please try to remit \$20 by January 31. If you feel there is a mistake and have already renewed, please contact the Public Affairs Office.

List A

Agnew, Lewis B.
Akins, Charles G.
Alm, Eric W.
Anderson, William G.
Andrews, Bruce L.
Austin, Jr. George N.
Bessette, Carol S.
Blackmon, Bill
Boldrini, Nik
Brown, Charles V.
Burckhalter, William M.
Burdick, Robert W.
Carlson, William C.
Chambers, Robert B.
Clifford, Timothy J.
Cox, Jr., Robert B.
Cummings, Jack C.
Damron, Charles C.
Davis, Bob
Doolittle, William O.
Duval, Richard
Dye, George L.
Eckhoff, Jim
Emerson, Thomas F.
Fischer, Ralph E.
Fitzpatrick, Thomas H.
Godfrey, Richard W.
Grayson, William C.
Greenspan, Michael M.
Greehead, Phillip E.
Hanson, William T.
Harbert, James
Hatfield, Harland N.
Helms, Fredrick W.
Herrman, Joseph L.
Ingram, Elmer W.
Joyner, Nancy D.
Kennedy, Jr., Don
Kettenhofen, Dave
Kiechlin, Edmund F.
Krebs, Roland C.
Lavish, Alexander
Lindbeck, Richard W.
Manley, John A.

Maranville, James I.
McClellan, Thomas W.
McCullough, Don J.
McDonald, Robert J.
McKinney, Patrick R.
Moll, Kenneth
Nadeau, Ronald W.
Nordquist, Ernest O.
Pachinger, Charles E.
Penley, Charles E.
Pew, James
Pittman, Wayne C.
Saenz, Hulberto
Schirmer, George E.
Schoenhals, Larry M.
Scime, Joseph F.
Shaud, John
Sherritt, Roy E.
Sherrill, Bryant R.
Shideler, Jeffrey
Skea, Richard B.
Smith, Gregory C.
Smith, John D.
Smith, Paul M.
Stillwell, Howard
Strauss, Alan H.
Sweetland, John J.
Taylor, Walter W.
Tennermann, Herbert E.
Tessier, Thomas N.
Thompson, Joseph E.
Welsh, Paul J.
Wilcoxon, Jerry
Williams, Leland H.
Woods, Charles
Woods, Roy F.

List B

Barnet, Lewis C.
Beasley, Jr. Johnnie H.
Beyette, Peter F.
Blaha, Jr. Michael J.
Bowles, Charles P.
Boyer, Dennis L.
Bruce, Arvel G.
Carter, Randall S.
Chaison, Alexander
Cool, Brent A.
Davis, Arthur L.
Dearing, Dean
Detrani, Guy L.
Duvall, William D.
Evans, John
Fulton, Richard P.
Gandelli, George A.

Glass, Thomas A.
Hagler, John
Hileman, Francis L.
Houck, Ross B.
Ingolia, Richard P.
Jarboe, Robert D.
Johnston, Sidney
Kinnaird, George C.
Layman, Lester C.
Marshall, Jr., Harley T.
McElwee, Rod
Mickle, III, William
Montag, Joseph L.
Noriega, Ed
O'Krusky, III, Paul R.
Padgett, James
Prendergast, Patrick T.
Randles, Fred C.
Sheldon, Doug
Shoemaker, Michael D.
Sidsin, Ruth K.
Smith, James A.
Stewart, James A.
Stewart, James A.
Walker, Don D.
Weiland, Donald M.
Wilcox, Paul A.
Wilhelm, Robert B.
Yardborough, Ray
Zenringer, Ed

**Don't forget
to get a
TSNA Patch
too! Just \$5.00**

That's Why They Are N.C.O.s!

(Editor's Note: Early TSNA member, Denis Cook, sent us this last month. We hope it cracks you up as much as it did us.)

Once again, NCOs proved to be the most resourceful entity we'll ever have in the military.

There were two groups of people waiting on the platform to catch the train; 10 officers, and 10 NCOs. The officers all had tickets, but noticed the group of NCOs purchased only one ticket. Curious of what they would do, the officers kept a close eye on the NCOs.

A few minutes after boarding the train, the conductor came by to collect the passengers' tickets. While he was busy with the other passengers, the group of NCOs got up and jammed into one of the small bathrooms in the car.

The conductor came by, knocked on the door, and said, "Tickets please." The NCOs slid the single ticket under the door and it was collected by the conductor.

This made a very positive impression on the officer. They discussed the pros and cons and made up their minds to try this technique on the return trip.

The next day the same two groups assembled at the train station. The group of officers bought one ticket and the NCOs didn't buy any.

Puzzled by this, the officers boarded the train and carefully watched the NCOs.

The conductor appeared shortly after the start of the trip and the officers jammed into the bathroom.

The NCOs headed for the adjoining bathroom. But one NCO knocked on the officers' bathroom door and said, "Tickets please." The NCO took the ticket and joined his comrades in the second bathroom.



Days At Tan Son Nhut by Maj. Taylor McKinnon

Day Five (Part 2)

(Synopsis: Quality Control found the 3 spars on a C-118 had developed intergranular corrosion and would have to be flown back to Kelly AFB in Texas. If would be a dangerous mission for any one. But a WWII B-17 jock, Lieutenant Colonel Qwens, the Commander of Maintenance took the job.)

He made it and Carter arrives

It probably didn't hinder his decision, but his family lived at Kelly. Soon after he took off for Texas, Colonel Budway, the Base Commander, found out he was gone. The story is that he tried to get immediate Space A back to Viet Nam but couldn't.

Colonel Braxton Carter arrived almost immediately. I regretted that, since Colonel Owens was the type we needed to win that war, but I certainly enjoyed Braxton Carter. He gave me my first "top of the mark" efficiency report and was probably the reason for an officer with only two years of college making major a dozen years later.

A double tragedy

A story of interest that relates to our transports (not assault transports, but the passenger birds), concerns the C-54 flights to Hong Kong.

A good friend of mine, a captain whose name I will not mention since the story is so sad and still holds the potential for family sorrow, was assigned as an aircraft commander carrying troops on R&R. The policy had been that flights arriving from Hong Kong and Tai Pei, would land at Tan Son Nhut and unload passengers using the so-called "engine running turnaround." I don't think there was anything in writing either, allowing it or forbidding it. It was just done.

When the C-54 arrived at Tan Son Nhut, the sleepy army grunts were briefed by the load master to leave the door and immediately turn left to go to the terminal. As you would expect, there was one grunt who didn't know left from right. My buddy was sitting in the left seat letting the engines idle when he felt a thud which jarred the airplane considerably.

He knew what had happened but hope to god it hadn't. Sure enough, the poor grunt had walked right through the number two propeller and was sliced into about three pieces.

My friend lost his career over that one and

I heard later that he never made major. A shame, since he was one of those natural pilots.

Modernism hits Tan Son Nhut

I mentioned the terminal and it brought my mind back to Day Four (Revetments Vol. 2, No. 2) when I was badmouthing staff officers, those on a senior officer's staff who are able to put policy in writing for the general's signature, but do not have to live with the troops who suffer the consequences.

I served on staff for an Army general for seven years in Seoul, Korea, 1975-1981, and perhaps my sensitivity to this problem, and the fact that I pissed so many people off, was the reason that I hold the record time in grade as a major (12 years).

My happiest service years were when, as a relatively junior enlisted man, I ran the jet engine test cell tests at David Monahan AFB, Arizona, in the 303rd Bomb Wing (1958-1960). I went to OCS in 1960.

Well, to get back to the terminal, we went civilianized in about September of 1965. Abandoning our previous happy system of merely going down to the base operations when we wanted to go somewhere in the line of duty, we were blessed by the staff officers again.

The new Military Airlift Command had been created. It had started off in 1942 as the Air Transport Command (ATC), which was a fine outfit. Then it became MATS, still a fine flying outfit, but more staffified. Military Air Transport Service, and then the SAC generals got ahold of it and it became MAC (Military Airlift Command). It was staffified to the point that you could hardly do your job without being harassed by their damned staff. (Sorry, Momma)

We got a MAC terminal at Tan Son Nhut. They built a concrete terminal building on the road to the main gate, and strict orders were passed down (remember what runs down hill?) that woe be to the man who simply goes to the ops officer and hops on a flight to wherever.

My little MJO book says here that our C-123 tail number, 379, crashed at Nha Trang two hours ago. My Aero repair guys immediately grabbed their tool boxes and weapons as in the past. They immediately went to base ops as in the past. I get a call from base ops stating that they cannot get on a plane without going first to the new MAC terminal and putting their names on the "Space A List."

Well, needless to say, this is an impossible way to run a war, but it fits right in with what was happening in Viet Nam at that point.

The bases were getting bigger and bigger and starting to sprout bowling alleys, swimming pools and even pizza parlors. Saigon was traffic-jammed with Army trucks spouting smoke, and now we were blessed with a MAC terminal. It was simply not geared for combat with its computerized "Space A Lists."

I went up there one time to discuss the problem and was confronted by a two stripper (used to be an airman second class. But upon complaints to the equal opportunity staff about

being referred to as "second class," the staff at Air Force, in their usual wisdom, changed the rank system so that two strippers were redesignated as Airmen First Class. So there was no one who had to suffer in the demeaning roles of airman third or second class. Jeez!)

The airman was wearing a blue custom uniform which resembled something you would see in a comic opera. I asked him whose Air Force he was in and he replied, "Our OIC allows us to wear these outfits made by a tailor downtown for morale purposes since we are a unique outfit." I got nowhere with him, you know those officious jerks at MAC counters. I guess I am pissing you MAC (terminal types) off, but this was war and we needed transportation!

The U.S. Army got so pissed off that they established a terminal of their own across the road from the MAC terminal. They stacked up some 55 gallon drums end-on-end and covered the top with plywood from shipping crates and put a corporal inside with a loud speaker. They cut an order that any Army pilot going anywhere in Vietnam must, while taxiing to the runway for take off, pause at the Army terminal and announce their destination, and the corporal would announce the flight. All persons wanting to go to that place would sign the flight roster and climb aboard.

This system worked so well, that soon even the Air Force people started using it. But, rest assured, the AF invented a way to maintain mediocrity. They confronted the Army in congress, saying that the Army had violated the "roles and missions agreement" by operating fixed wing C-7 Caribou (a wonderful DeHaviland of Canada, with 2 engines). The Caribou all transferred to the Air Force where they were operated for a reasonable "face saving" period and then scrapped. The only reason for transfer was to protect Air Force "turf" (more important than winning the war, which we lost).

I firmly believe that when all the flying bases are closed and the Air Force becomes the United States Space Force, which the present chief of staff has announced will occur in 2004, that all this ground associated flying we have been doing will revert back to the Army, which today has a bigger Air Corps in terms of airplanes and pilots than the Air Force.

You have academy grads in charge now and they would rather colonize Mars than fight a war on earth. Yes, and of course "staff weinies" always win -- they have the pencils.

Good night you good old military farts, out there, we need one another.

Address Change?

Please let us know when you have a change of address, e-mail, phone, etc. Thanks!



Only Five & A Half Months... 'Til The TSNA Reunion

During December we had a fine response from the Association membership from the Reunion Poll. Over thirty members said they were definitely planning to attend. That's a good start for just one month. But time has a way of running by rapidly, so

let us know soon if **YOU** are planning to attend. Please write the Public Affairs Office, Suite 709, 330 W. Brambleton Ave., Norfolk, VA 23510; or call (757) 627-7746, or FAX: (627-0878, or E-Mail: hercules29@worldnet.att.net as soon as you can. Or write the Executive Coordinator, Norman Whitlow, at 1451 Chapman Drive, Lancaster, Texas 75134; Phone: (972) 227-8075, FAX: (972) 218-9669. We're hoping to see most of you there during the 3rd week in June in San Antonio!

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