Revetments

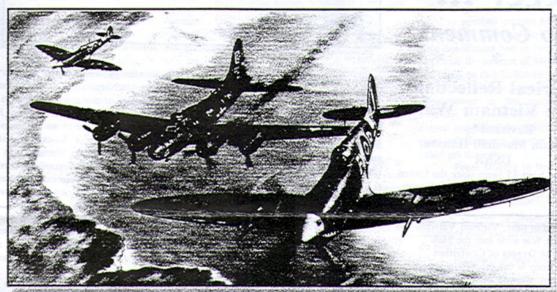
The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



Volume 2, Number 9

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

June, 2000



"You Can Make It, Friend"

England - 1944, Battle damaged B-17 from the 95th Bomb Group is escorted to Horham, its home base,
by RAF Spitfires from No. 4 Squadron. Original Art by WRR hardy, G.Av.A.

From the front of note cards benefiting The 95th Memorial Fund. (See letter from Lt.Col. Albert Keeler, Page 5

Reunion Days Arrive!

In two weeks, June 15 through June 18, members of the Tan Son Nhut Association will be meeting in San Antonio, Texas, for Reunion 2000!

There is still time to register, so get in touch with Reunion Coordinator, Joseph Montag. Write him at 1512 Northland Street, Carrollton, Texas 75006-1421, and better yet call him at (972) 245-6254 or (972) 245-0845. And ever better e-mail him: montag@flash.net

Last week, in answer to many inquiries, Montag announced that those who can only attend Saturday's (June 17) events will require only a \$100 per person registration fee. For those attending only the banquet at 6 p.m., the fee will be \$40 per person.

If making reservations for overnight accommodations, quickly call The Menger Hotel, 204 Alamo Plaza, San Antonio, Texas, Telephone: 1-(800) 345-9285 or (210) 223-4361 and ask for Ms. Marsha Shinegold.

Thursday (June 15) will be registration day. The Hospitality Suite will be hosted by members of the Lone Star Chapter, TSNA. Friday will see a tour of Lackland AFB. Saturday will have a Breakfast Meeting, Wreath Laying, and the evening banquet at the Rio Rio Cantina, near the hotel.

Vietnam 25 Years Later ...

Two Comments

Historical Reflections: The Vietnam War

Revisited by Captain Marshall Hanson, USNR

It has been 25 years since the United States withdrew from South Vietnam. Some individuals, in both the media and politics have questioned why, after such a long period of time, Vietnam Veterans can not let the War slide into the past.

The Drums of Contrition

The irony is that the Veterans from the era are not allowed to forget. With the anniversary, on April 30th, of the fall of Saigon, news agencies covered the "American loss" and the celebrations of Vietnam's freed people. Talking heads discussed the subject in Sunday discourse. Public Television, Arts and Entertainment, and the History Channel continually broadcast an analysis of this "conflict." The media continues to beat the drum of contrition into the ears of the Vietnam Vet.

This presentation by the Press and Hollywood is factually and historically incorrect. The "Vietnam Conflict" has been presented by many members in the media as a war of liberation for Vietnam, where the U.S. soldier, marine, sailor, or airman was the aggressor. It is also trumpeted by these elements that Vietnam was the first war lost by the United States.

This is a rewrite of actual events.

View from Outside

To truly understand how the Vietnam War should be actually viewed, perhaps we



should seek sources outside the United States.

I was on a flight from Singapore to Madras, India, in May 1981, where I read an article by an English author in the Singapore Airlines' Flight Magazine. The author stated that "the United States won the War in Vietnam."

As a Vietnam Vet, this article caught my attention. My only regret today, is that I can not give the author the credit due, as my copy of this article has since been lost.

The author's position was that the United States attained its national security objectives in Vietnam. In the 10 years that we fought "in country" the United States weakened the military strength of North Vietnam, and we delayed its domination over the Saigon Government. During this period, the United States bought time that was precious to Thailand, Indonesia, and other surrounding nations. These governments had a chance to stabilize and strengthen themselves enough economically to reproach any North Vietnamese aggression.

During our time in Vietnam, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) became a regional alliance between six independent nations. It provided an economic coalition, which contained North Vietnam. ASEAN denied membership to Vietnam while the Vietnamese continued military offensiveness. In the later 1980's and early 1990's ASEAN played an important role mediating the civil war in Cambodia.

Echoes of Dominos

While the premise echoes of the old

domino theory, which former Secretary of Defense MacNamara still tries to discount, the position of the article's author is not invalid. While motivation may not have been a worldwide monolithic communism, the domino theory in South East Asia is still valid. North Vietnam had the ambition to expand beyond its borders. Their invasion into Cambodia and Laos is evident, with Thai soldiers becoming involved in skirmishes along the western border of Cambodia.

The author's point is positive reinforcement that many others don't share with what is put on the air by American media.

I personally take pride in our accomplishments in Vietnam. While generals may not have been allowed to correctly fight the war, the soldiers in the field did their jobs well. The United States never lost a battle in Vietnam. Even the Tet Offensive was a United States victory, despite media presentation otherwise. At Tet, the Viet Cong were broken as an organization. The war then shifted to an adversarial force dominated by the North Vietnamese.

So Much for "Victory"

If the left wing cannot acknowledge the U.S. victories in Vietnam, they should not credit victory to the North. If anything, the Vietnam War was a lose/lose situation. While the United States carries psychological scars, Vietnam's economy has been stifled for twenty-five years.

The losers of World War II have done far better than the "victor" in Vietnam.

(Please see Vietnam, Page 3)

(Vietnam, continued from Page 2)

The economic strength in Vietnam has centered around Saigon, where black marketeers continue to practice the United States legacy of capitalism. The Communist North still is pocked with the damages of the war. Ironically, Vietnam's economy is only now improving with the injection of Western investments, including venture capital from the United States.

The Lessons Learned

What was wrong in Vietnam was that the war was micro-managed by politicians. From this experience, the military has even learned. The mistakes made in Vietnam have been studied over and over. Curricula at military schools, like the Naval College, were revamped to train the current and future leadership of all four commissioned services.

The lessons learned from this political war benefited the veterans in Desert Storm and are being used as standards in future conflicts.

The Vietnam Veterans can take pride in their accomplishments, and in the sacrifices made by their friends and colleagues.

While certain individuals still claim that the United States did not send its "Best or its Brightest," the Vietnam Vet championed our nation in war, changed the course of history, and left a lesson and endowment to the leadership of the United States Military. It's a shame that some of our politicians and many in the media haven't learned the lesson, and begrudge the military veteran any credit of accomplishment.

While the "brightest" may have avoided duty to their country, and squirreled their way into business, media, and government management, the BEST of that era did military service, many volunteering for duty in Vietnam.

(Editor's Note: This article was passed to us from the internet by friends of Revetments.)

MEMO Send your Reunion 2000 pix & stories to

Revetments!

Relight The Torch And Tell Them Why

Thomas Jovce

(Editors Note: TSNA Member Joyce, Major, USAF (Ret.) has kindly shared a portion of his correspondence with a comrade who was asked to speak at a Dining-In by junior NCOs at Osan, Korea, as they dedicated their day room to Battle of Tan Son Nhut and the examples of the 0-51 Bunker heroes. We couldn't be more proud to publish his comments.)

While I applaud your interest in seeking the warrior history of our career field (Joyce had been a security police squadron commander), I must tell you in all candor that I'm continually amazed and frequently exasperated at how little you and other senior officers and NCOs of our career field continually demonstrate you don't know.

I've given the "historical briefing" to over 100 different audiences ... several thousand NCOs and officers. I always begin by asking if anyone knows anything about the Battle of Tan Son Nhut. Less than two percent know anything about it, and when I press them they will usually say, "Isn't that where we got our tails beat?"

The Necessity of History

After a lifetime of studying military history, the blunders and the victories, and firsthand understudy of people like (USAF Chief of Staff) Fogleman and Estes, I've learned that all successful professional warriors share a common trait. They understand their history. It isn't a hobby or a trite conversation tactic, but an absolute necessity. Everyone in the 82nd Airborne knows the standard bar was set high for them by those magnificent heroes who jumped behind enemy lines prior to D-Day to pave the way for the largest invasion that mankind had ever seen and for the purpose of ridding the world of tyranny.

Sailors know the history the names on their ships represent, and if pressed will die before they dishonor them.

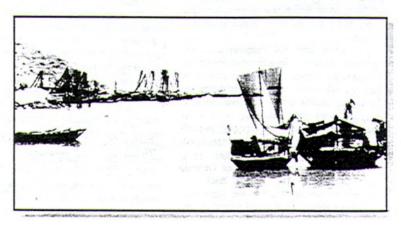
I've watched anxious Marines line up at the MAC Terminal in Okinawa for a once-in-a-lifetime hop to Iwo Jima so they can climb the summit of Mount Surabachi and stand on that hallowed ground.

Naval aviators know the significance of airpower in the carrier battle of Midway, or the role Air Corps fighters played in gaining air superiority over the skies of Germany so that the bombers could get through.

From Dogma to Doctrine

To move from dogma ("we've always done it that way") to doctrine ("we've learned something from out past mistakes and are seeking to maintain a constant advantage over our adversaries") we must do two things.

- Recover our rich history and teach it from the top down.
- 2. Write down how we intend to win (doctrine) based on historical precedent, and continually update it with aggressive testing, force on force exercises, and computer modeling so we can know we'll (Please see Pass The Torch on Page 7.)





"All Included - Non Excluded"

Revetments is an official publication of the Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc. 6203 57th Avenue, Riverdale, Maryland 20737. The Association is a non-profit fraternal organization charter under appropriate statute and law. President, Don Parker

Vice President/Treasurer John Peele
Vice President/Secretary John Evans
Chaplain James M. Warrington
Public Affairs Robert Need
Communications Charles Penley
Revetments is published monthly at the
Office of Public Affairs. TSNA. Suite
709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue.
Norfolk, Virginia 23510. Telephone:
(757) 627-7746: FAX: (757) 627-0878:
E-Mail: hercules29@worldnet.att.net



Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot

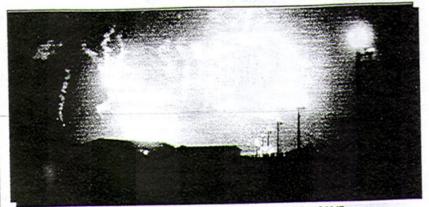
Chaplain James M. Warrington

To Be A Father

A while ago there was a nationwide letter writing contest on the topic of fatherhood. If you are a father, and if you are wondering just what qualities your children most appreciate in you, here are three excepts from prize winning contest

A seven year old Pennsylvania boy wrote as follows: "I love my daddy because he reads me stories. Then he carries me to bed and tickles me. I like it. He drives me to Sunday School and on the way back he gets me some gum. Sometimes he walks me to school. He plays soccer and baseball with me, and helps me to climb trees, too. He keeps on the hall light at night."

A sixteen year old girl from Georgia wrote this: "I often think back and remember the good times we have had. You have always been a real friend to me.



The falling stars of Tan Son Nhut ... Perimeter Road 1967

The Stars at Tan Son Nhut ...

One of the songs from the TSNA CD album, The Victors ...

You used to take me outside at night to count the stars. These little things mean so much to me. They are planted in my heart and soul. Ten years ago my biggest problem was a broken toy piano; today you listen to my problems with my latest heart-throb."

Another wrote of his step-father: "No matter how tired he may be, he never says 'no' to us if we want to play ball, or go somewhere. He is never too busy to study with us if we need him, or to explain any question we may ask."

These excerpts from letters are as significant for things they do not say as for those they do say. There is little about providing the daily bread, or keeping a roof over the family, or keeping the family car going. Perhaps these things are taken for granted.

But the really memorable things are the small daily indications of love and interest; activities that make for companionship and shared experience. It's not enough, our children seem to say to us, to keep the wolf from the door. "Please," they seem to say, "help us climb trees, don't be too busy to study with us when we need you, take us outside at night to count the stars."

When the stars come out at Tan Son Nhut, I turn my eyes to the sky, Drifting down beneath their chute. I breath a grateful sigh. For those who stand. In this foreign land, Under their golden glow. And guard the life of every man, Sleeping safe on the base below.

When the stars come out at Tan Son Nhut.
They gild my pathway gold.
And hang like diamonds in the night.
As the silent hours unfold.
I lay me down and drift to sleep.
In peaceful dreams I roam.
Scure and safe by the men who keep watch over this great airdrome

When the stars come out at Tan Son Nhut.
I'm awakened by a roar.
I leap from bed as the others do, And race to the barrack's door.
More stars than ever blaze the sky, A curtain of tracers flaming red, Pour down like rain as those who die, Defending the base as their bodies bled.

When the stars come out at Tan Son Nhut.
The second night of fighting.
The enemy is pushed beyond the fence, It is victory now the stars are lighting.
The men are battered and tired.
But pride and courage stand them tall.
They have broken all the enemy conspired To defeat us in the blazing hell of Tet.
We can't, the stars of Tan Son Nhut, forget.

ication Center

New Member "stumbles" across us... I stumbled across your website, great beginning, hope to see it develop! And, noticed lack of information concerning Army units at TSN.

We were headquartered there from May 1961 until March 1973. We were direct support for MACV and IIFFV. Ironically, the PRG (formerly the VC) wound up headquartered in our building on May 1, 1975.

A short description of our unit (declassified 1998) follows:

Radio Research Units (RRU) operated in Vietnam under the direction of the U.S. Army Security Agency (ASA) Group. During this time, these operations were classified and operation under the auspices of the 3rd RRU, activated on 23 May 1961. Its ASA nomenclature was the 400th USASA Operations Unit (provisional) until 23 September 1961 when it was redesignated the 82nd USASA Special On 1 Operations unit. November 1964, the unit was redesignated as the 509th USASA Group and as the 509th Radio Research Group (RRG)."

In January 1962, the facility occupied by the 3rd RRU was named "Davis Station" in honor of SP4 James T. Davis who had been killed in Vietnam on 22 December 1961. (Davis, in the 3rd RRU, is considered the first uniformed soldier killed during the Vietnam War.)

ASA was reorganized as INSCOM January 1, 1977.

We did COMINT, SIGINT, COMSEC, and also ran ARDF/SEMA aircraft from Tan Son Nhut and other bases throughout South Vietnam, and

stationed off Vietnam.

Although my web page for the Vietnam years covers very little of the unit's activities (it is not the main website for the group) you can find links to the ASA, SEMA aircraft, and SIGINT boats veterans groups there:

. www.kilrov.com/Vietnam/

Dennis Clouse Clayton, California

TSNA patches are not enough, members want more ... Some time ago, Member Peter Beyette, Springville, New York, wrote and called the Association with ideas regarding a TSNA lapel pin. He never got an answer until he queried us again a few weeks ago. He's got some good ideas and thinks the pin, which can be worn on various garments, instead of sewn on just one, would be very popular. Another recent caller suggested automobile bumper stickers, or window labels like the VFW and the American Legion

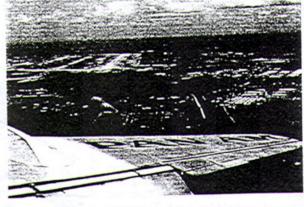
Norman Whitlow, Texas Region Director, is down there producing TSNA wrist watches.

Producing these items takes both a market and money. Please drop us a line if you are interested in any of these items. They all sound great to us, but we want to know what you think.

The Editor Revetments

CORRECTION

Our new columnist, Ira Cooperman's e-mail address was wrong last month please use: icooperman@jcrochester.org



Veterans... Returning from an R&R from Hong Kong in late '67, I shot this picture from a Pan Am

My original assignment at Tan Son Nhut was as Operations Officer for T-39 Skatback courier aircraft, when I flew General Westmoreland many times, and other high ranking generals and civilian V.I.P.s.

I was transferred to Seventh Air Force Headquarters and flew 34 missions piloting B-57s out of Phan Rang, combat tactics officer for General Momyer.

I hope to have a book published before September 1*. VIP Pilot, the story of my service in World War II. Korea and Vietnam.

Other commitments prevent me from attending Reunion 2000, which I hate to miss, but I'll be attending 2001 at age seventy-nine, the good Lord willing.

Sincerely,

Albert T. Keeler Lt. Colonel, USAF (Ret.) Prince Frederick, Maryland



Page 5

Cover for Col Keeler's new book

(Editor's Note: Colonel Keeler currently serves as the 95th Bomber Group Historian.)

TSNA Constitution Ratification

If the good Lord's willing and the creeks don't rise, we hope to have the revised Constitution in your hands next month with a pre-paid return mail ballot.

> Please make your vote count!

Association Library Growing

The Tan Son Nhut Association is beginning to experience "growing pains." Membership is steadily heading upwards, chapters are forming and more and more members are taking an interest in who we are and where we are going in the future.

The Membership is a Gold Mine

Because we have a wonderfully diverse membership, a virtual kaliedoscope of backgrounds and experiences, and most importantly, a generous and compassionate membership that wants to contribute and share their experiences with the rest of us, a library, in fact, a museum is in the making.

At a recent meeting at the Public Affairs Office, in Norfolk, Virginia, Vice Present John Peele, brought files and artifacts that he has been assembling over the past five and some years. There are dozens of audio/video tapes of previous reunions, Memorial Day ceremonies at The Wall, and priceless tapes of Tan Son Nhut and other Vietnam locales.

The P.A. office now has literally thousands of color and black and white photography not only from the Peele files, but contributed or indefinitely loaned to the Association from members like Mark Reveaux, Stoney Creek, Connecticut; Lance Coar, Penllyn, Pennsylvania; and many

NVA helmet, coolle hat, and red and yellow star sweat shirt from Saigon. Courtesy of Mmb. Mark Reyeaux.

others

The Association has an American Flag that was flown over the Capitol for us. We have tapes and documents signed by a number of famous and distinguished people. We have maps, and many out-ofprint books.

Space Vital for Preservation All of these artifacts are increasing in



Just a glimpse at the audio/video tapes that are piling up in the Public Affairs Office awaiting cataloguing and editing.

value, not necessarily in a monetary sense, but more importantly in historical value.

One of the Association's most serious endeavors is to establish a program of public information protecting, preserving and presenting the true experiences of all those thousands of men and women who served in Vietnam and were at or went through Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

Public Affairs is presently editing and cataloguing these materials. It is hoped that a complete catalogue of what is presently on hand will be available for review by the membership in the next couple of months.

Eventually some of our library and artifacts will make their way to the Tan Son Nhut Collection in the Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas. But it is presently felt that the Association should be able to make a lot of our material more readily available to the members and to the general public.

Building Fund Proposed

The Public Affairs Office in Norfolk cannot reasonably house this material, nor can it make it available to the membership and public.

What is proposed is a location in or very near Washington, D.C. What would be ideal would be the purchase of a modest but attractive building with parking facilities, that could house our permanent offices and a museum and library.

A \$30,000 a year lease would call for only \$100 a year contribution per member, at our present membership level. Grants, contributions from others, and the sale of tapes, CDs, and other items should be able to defray annual operating expenses at this location.

No, there will absolutely not be any "assessment" of the membership for an obligatory contribution. What is wanted, as soon as possible, are your comments, recommendations and suggestions. Many of you have contributed or loaned the Association these priceless items. Let's all find a way to give them a permanent home.

Let's hear from you soon.



"Vict Nam" a "map game for adults" by Gamescience Corporation, New Jersey, Copyright 1965.



Album cover from

"Keeping It Country"

presenting a number of songs

by Taylor McKinnon,

including "The Vet."





A
Special Audio Production
for
The Tan Son Nhut Association



Taylormac Productions, Holly Records is now offering their new CD album release -

"The Victors"

honoring Sergeant Louis Fischer 377th Security Police Squadron killed, January 31, 1968 in the attack on Bunker 51.

\$19.95

Includes shipping & handling

All profits from this release are for The Tan Son Nhut Association

Will be on sale at the Reunion 2000!
in San Antonio
or can be ordered by writing Taylormac Productions, Holly Records
Post Office Box 381,
Patton, California 92369
or call
(909) 862-3666

E-Mail: taylormacl(@)juno.com

Taylor B. McKinnon

This CD album was produced by Tan Son Nhut Association Member, Taylor B. McKinnon, Major, USAF (Ret.) on behalf of the Association.

He's been an accomplished musician for all his life and had been taught fiddle, guitar and piano during his childhood in Alabama.



After retirement he began teaching aeronautics at San Bernardino Valley College where he met Professor Ray Cook, a professional banjo/guitar player from Inez, Kentucky. Cook's cousin, Jim Cook (professionally known as Brian Holley) had toured for a number of years with such well known country stars as Ronny Milsap, Tex Ritter, Cal Smith, Barbara Fairchild, the Osburn Brothers and Dwight Whitley. He is also a prolific song writer, sometimes writing three a month.

McKinnon was so impressed by the cousins that he decided to create and produce CDs. The cousins had six songs, but a regular CD has normally fifteen. McKinnon formed a neighborhood band which practiced at a local business owned by Coke Bryant, who agreed to be the sales manager on albums produced. Jerry Swallow, professional guitarist who had toured with Olivia Newton John, Glen Campbell, and others, made his recording studio available.

Their first production was "Keeping It Country." Six of the songs in this album were co-written by Jim and Ray Cook, and six were co-written by Jim Cook and Taylor McKinnon.

McKinnon is now the Executive Producer of *Taylormac Productions* and can be reached at the addresses shown on the previous page.

A A A A A A A

Reverments, June, 2000 (Pass The Torch, Continued from Page 3)

win the next battle before it's ever fought.

To gain membership to this professional warrior class, one must stand firmly on the foundation of historical precedent and constantly leap forward from the springboard of technological innovation and perpetual cycles of critical introspection. To do otherwise is to ride a rudderless ship cast adrift in an endless sea of reaction and defeat.

Most Significant Battle of the War

I recently visited Washington, D. C. and spent several days in our National Archives researching the rich history of simple airmen who gave their all on the ground to protect air power from total annihilation in the most significant battle of the entire Vietnam War. Here's an example of what I found:

- + Numerous pictures of the battle and participants.
- + Several complete after-action reports with detailed 1-10,000 maps and accurate order of battle information, and interviews.
- battle.
- + Over 30 reels of archived 16 mm. film documenting various aspects of the battle.

Now, after three years of intensive research I've become an expert on the subject. But, just like the tree that falls in the forest, it isn't sound unless someone can

My friend, you're fast approaching the twilight of a highly successful career. In my opinion, you did make a difference to all of us who had the privilege of knowing and serving you.

I made my choice and took my stand. but you've raised the question and I now feel compelled to answer it.

The success your generation of senior officers and NCOs has enjoyed was paid for by the blood and sweat of those who came before you and served an ungrateful nation Those force in an unpopular war. protectors made their mistakes, learned from it, and eventually perfected their doctrine.

documented their After they

experiences, they hung up their sabers, and entrusted you with their torch and the responsibility to pass it on to the generation that would follow you.

Relight The Flame

When you stand up at that combat Dining-In and look into the eyes of those eager young officers and NCOs (who don't know where the bar has been set, what's expected of them, or how they'll perform when their time comes). I suggest you explain why your generation chose to focus on a successful career instead of tending the

Then I recommend you them to relight the torch and tell them why it's so important for them to hoist it up and proudly carry it into an uncertain future.

Good luck!

From Our Friends at The

+ Captured enemy film of the (Editor's Note: For nearly a year now, Annette Amerman, Assistant Corporate Communications, Worldwide USO. Washington, D.C., has been a fan of the Tan Son Nhut Association. We are always grateful for all she sends us. Here's her latest letter.)

> Once again I have found material that made me IMMEDIATELY think of you and your fellow Tan Son Nhut veterans.

I was "volunteered" to go to our off-site facility a couple of weeks ago. Once over there I found a wealth of historical material. Much of it was damaged by years of neglect but some was valuable and I had it brought back to my office. I am pleased to say I am putting my history training to use in organizing and preserving the history of the USO.

I have "USO Newsletters" from 1951-1970s (not fully through the material yet) and in the 1960s I came across your Air Base, and had to send copies to you! My days with USO draw to an end after nearly 3 years. I leave 19 May, but before I leave. I hope to send you some more copies so that you may use them in your publication.

I know Vietnam vets have been pushed

aside for many years, and that as the generations are born the veterans of the Vietnam War slowly disappear from memory. Please express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude to all your members for their service to our country so many years ago. THANK YOU.

Annette

and here's a sample, December 1965 ...

What American G.I.s in Vietnam Want for Christmas

If you were an American GI on active duty today in Vietnam, 8,000 miles from home, what would you want for Christmas?

The USO asked the question at its three clubs in Saigon, DaNang and Tan Son Nhut and released the results of the survey just completed.

Here's the GI Christmas check list from Vietnam:

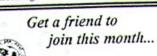
- > More letters from home.
- > More pictures and snapshots of loved ones and friends, home-town and neighborhood activities.
 - > More home-town newspapers.
- >Current and popular magazines, even if they are out of date on arrival.

>An increased demand for tape recorded messages which are played back in the "Tape" room now found in USO Clubs overseas.

Still high on the list of preferred presents overseas are still homemade cakes, candy and cookies - but please, not store-bought ... repeat

Low on the list of wanted for Christmas are personal jewelry, bill folds, cameras, all of which are available in the military PXS in Vietnam at lower retail prices.

Specifically on the not-wanted list are cumbersome gifts and civilian clothes.



Annual Dues: \$20

Five Year Member: \$80

Life Member: \$180 Make it a birthday gift and we send a colorful TSN card in your name!



1 an Son Nhut Association Public Affairs Office 330 West Brambleton Avenue Norfolk, Virginia 23510

