

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



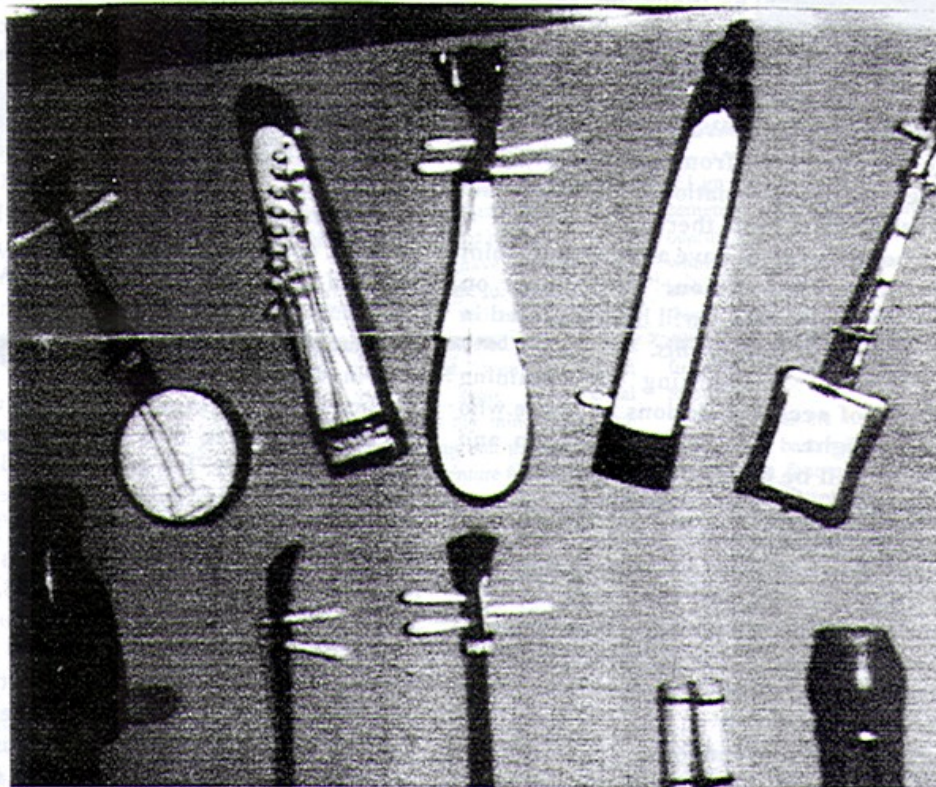
"All Included - Non Excluded"

Volume 3, Number 1

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

October, 2000

The Band Plays On!



Native Vietnamese musical instruments
Hand made replicas of ivory, teak and water buffalo hides
Purchased by the editor in Saigon, 1967

Revetments starts third year!



Association Members are asked to -

Make Your Veterans' Day Plans Now!

No matter where you live, you are urged to make plans to visit Washington, D. C. on Friday, November 10th, and participate in a wreath-laying ceremony by the Tan Son Nhut Association at the Vietnam Memorial "The Wall," on November 11th, Veterans' Day.

East Coasters Targeted

There are over a hundred members living either in the immediate vicinity of Washington, or are not more than four hours drive from the capital. These are the people who the Association would really like to make a strong effort to be there.

Plans are being made to have an informal "mini reunion" meeting, "happy hour" and dinner on Friday evening. The location will be announced in the November issue of *Revetments*.

The Association is working on obtaining tentative blocks of accommodations for those who will spend the night. Both accommodation and dining expenses will be borne by the member.

Washington Will Be A Madhouse!

True! And that's all the more reason that members of the Tan Son Nhut Association should be there too. If thousands and thousands of other veterans can make the effort to fly their flags and show their respect and pride for their honorable service to the country, we should stand there too, in the very front ranks.

The traffic will be horrendous! You've got that right ... that's why the more of us that come the easier we'll solve that problem. If, during this month we begin to receive a substantial number of members indicating that they are coming, we will probably be able to get a commitment from lodgings in Virginia and Maryland. Then, funds permitting, the Association should be able to charter a bus service to bring us all downtown together without the hassles of driving and parking.

Another alternative would be for members to park at the outlying Metro stations in Virginia and

Maryland and be whisked to the Mall for the ceremonies.

An Historic Event

One of the events scheduled will be the dedication of the World War II Memorial, in the center of the Mall. Long over due in recognition of those who fought and won in one of the most violent wars of all times.

On this first Veterans' Day of the new millennium, there is a strong aura of history glowing over the Mall.

At the western end of the Mall stands the gleaming monument of Abraham Lincoln, setting the mind to reflections of the Civil War that held this great nation together. And visible across the Potomac are the endless rows of the heroes who sleep in Arlington.

But Veterans' Day is a tribute to all those who defended and often died for freedom during the Twentieth Century. It was established as more than just another military holiday. It was established by an outpouring of fervent prayers for eternal peace from all over the world as the guns fell silent at eleven o'clock on November 11, 1918, bringing the War To End All Wars to a close.

But hate and tyranny are nearly impossible to eradicate. That's why the Twentieth Century proved the words, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." Americans accepted this admonition repeatedly for the rest of the century, in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm.

We kept Tan Son Nhut Air Base safe and secure for the millions who passed through it for eight years. It was successfully defended time and time again against the savage onslaughts of a violent enemy, and was never defeated or surrendered.

Let's meet on the Mall this Veteran's Day. It should not be considered a long arduous journey. Rather it should be considered a pilgrimage of honor and pride we richly deserve.

Letter to Dave Koopman



Mark Reveaux

(Editor's Note: Last issue's Page 2 story, *Combat Warriors of the 460th FMS* by Member, David Koopman of Little Canada, Minnesota has evoked considerable response. Member, Mark Reveaux, from Stony Creek, Connecticut sent us the following letter and asked us to forward it to Koopman. We are proud to do so now.)

Dave,

I was at Tan Son Nhut on May 5, 1968 (tour was May 20, 1967 to May 18, 1968). I was in the Air Force and was quartered in one of the hooches you spoke about, not far from the old French cemetery. I don't remember exactly what we were doing that night, but do remember arguments about our not getting M-16s from the conex, located where the rifles were passed out to us a few weeks earlier to prepare us for what they said would be the last line of defense if they got through.

Our firing zone was from where they used to show 16 mm. films during the week under an open roof, set on a concrete platform. They said we'd report back to the conex if and when we were in Red Alert, Condition II (enemy infiltration imminent or in progress).

But when we had a red alert, no one with a key to the conex was to be found.

So we gathered what edged weapons we could find. A shovel against an AK-47 wouldn't have fared well, but that's what we had.

Anyway, I'm glad you got through it okay. We did hear about the hooch that got it, either from an 80 mm. mortar or a 122 mm. Kalashnikov rocket. A rocket killed someone on either side of that date, when it went through the roof, then through two mattresses and took out a troop underneath the bunk.

What I'd like to ask you is for some memory about locations. I went back to Saigon last year but was told the old French cemetery is no longer there. And that I wouldn't recognize anything about the base except the old concrete revetments that protected aircraft at the time, and a few guard posts.

What I should have done was hired a driver to take me to where the old French cemetery had been, and also where the main gate had been. If I had done that, at least I would have been able to make some geographical references. But my mind must have gone south during that three day visit because I didn't venture further than the hotel and the Catholic church that you may remember seeing whenever you taxied down town.

My goal was to somehow get back to the warehouse where we worked. I remember that if you were at the main gate, you'd catch a pedicab that drove up a road about a mile, with barbed wire on either side. Then, after that mile, there was a road running off ninety degrees to the right. That road bordered a concertina-wired fenced area where armored vehicles were parked.

A little further down the road and there would be some metal buildings on the right, that was our supply depot, and across the road from the warehouse was the U.S. Army mortuary. I was told I could never get near there because that area is now restricted.

Others told me the buildings aren't even there anymore, long since leveled



David Koopman

and now housing is there. I'd sure like to know.

Anything would be helpful because if I go back, if I can at least get to the cemetery, I'll have a sense of my bearings and be able to look out over what I remembered was our hooch area, where there were quite a few of them. Ours was a single story, but I remember some two-story hooches further near the middle of the base and to our left.

There was the main street running through the base where there was the BX, a soda fountain (that month the juke box was playing *Day Dream Believer* by the Monkees), and then there was the NCO Club where I was offered a bartending job.

Well, take care, good to have you back and keep in touch, will you?

Mark

We Used To Call Heroes

Just finished the September issue of *Revetments*.

Consider it one of the finest yet, particularly. Dave Koopman's revelation of his part in the May 1968 assault on Tan Son Nhut, in which he wonders "did we keep the VC from making a breakthrough onto the base? I can assure

(Continued, see *Heroes*, Page 5.)





"All Included - None 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 chartered under appropriate statute and law.

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Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot

by
Chaplain
James M. Warrington

What is excellence?

Just as there are fashions in clothes, and cars, and hair styles, so there are fashions in words and phrases. A very popular phrase, especially in educational circles is "the pursuit of excellence." Some very sound words on this subject were spoken by Dr. John W. Gardner:

"Excellence is where you find it. There may be excellence or shoddiness in every line of human endeavor. We must learn to honor excellence (indeed to demand it) in every socially accepted human activity; and to scorn shoddiness however exalted the activity. There may be excellent plumbers and incompetent philosophers. An excellent plumber is definitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher."

I had a friend, a salesman, who in my judgment is an example of excellence. He saw that excellence was a way of life. I



Ferry crossing the Song (River) Saigon, between Saigon and Nha Be, 1964
Contributed by John Peele, source unknown.

asked him on one occasion what was the secret of his success. He said he could answer in three words: "and then some." "I discovered at an early age," he said, "that most of the difference between average and top notch people could be explained in those three words."

"The top people did what was expected of them - and then some. They were thoughtful of others, they were considerate, they were kind - and then some. They met their obligations and responsibilities fairly and squarely - and then some. They were truly good friends to their friends, they could be counted on in an emergency - and then some."

It occurred to me that there is a close connection between excellence and extras. The person of excellence in any area of activity is the one who sees and does the extra things, over and above what is expected. Is it not written in the Book of Proverbs, "He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit."

Chaplain Warrington is available to all members for pastoral functions and counseling. Please make request to Public Affairs. Phone: (757) 627-7746.

Did You Read Page 2?

If not, then go back and read it; if you did - go back and read it over again!

We're serious about wanting to see you on Friday, November 10th, and even more anxious to have you join us on the Mall on November 11th.

If you are planning to come, please contact us as soon as you can!

Washington Vicinity

Call: John Peele - (301) 277-7474

Nationwide

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The Communications Center

Member Spots Glaring

Inaccuracy in Pix ... Dear Guys, Major McKinnon said the XC99 (*Revetments*, September, Page 4) was a turbo-prop under the picture. It was not. (They were) 4360 engines.

George A. Gandelli
Canaan, Connecticut
(Editor's Note: Don't blame McKinnon for the mistake. The Editor wrote the caption and we told you it was some dumb corporal speaking. Hardly an authority on the finer points of aircraft engines, who was only a lowly clerk in the Adjutant General's division.)

* * *

Seeks Information ... I am trying to locate Major John E.C. Paepcke, who was the Officer In Charge, Air Freight at Tan Son Nhut Air Base between January 1, 1971 and March 31, 1971, or anyone who worked Air Freight between October 1970 to October 1971.

(Information needed) to verify a V.A. claim. I need to verify that we handled pallets of body bags coming into the morgue and coffins coming back to the States. Thank you for your help.

E. F. Tucker
326 Hampton Avenue
Calhoun Falls, S. C. 29628

* * *

New Member Reveals TSNA Mentor ... Thank you for publishing my letter in the August 2000 edition of *Revetments*. It was a great welcome to the TSNA.

I wanted to thank Dave Grieger of D&G Enterprises for bringing the TSNA to my attention. Dave is a Vietnam

veteran who publishes a great product catalogue which has items of interest to all veterans. But the most valuable part of his catalogue is a list of over 200 or so veterans' organization and associations to help all vets stay in touch, regardless of where they served. It is from his list that I found the TSNA.

I would like to say, "Thank you, Dave Grieger, and bless you. You continue all vets a great service."

James Dugan
Lindenwold, New Jersey
(Editor's Note: Thanks for the information, Jim. Members can contact Dave Grieger at P.O. Box 180, Salem, Alabama 36874-0180, or call: (334) 749-9222.)

* * *

"Tent City" Alumni Speaks Out ... I found your website while surfing the Vietnam search links. What a great site!

I served in the 1964th Communications Group (later changed to the 1876th Communications Squadron from February 1965 to February 1966. As a wide-eyed 19 year old, and first time overseas, it was quite an experience.

When I arrived at TSN I was taken to the "Tent City" area in the back of a deuce and a half. The truck stopped, and the drive yelled out, "Anyone here for the Comm Group?"

I said, "Yes."
He shouted, "Hop out here and find a place to live," and then roared off down the dirt road.

Now, as a Foreign Service Officer, with several embassy

assignments behind me, I often think about that day when someone in the embassy complains about how their "sponsor" failed to put the type of food they liked in the refrigerator before their arrival.

New arrivals are picked up from the airport, breezed through immigration and customs, and whisked away to a nice, fully furnished house with food in the refrigerator, and their mail on the kitchen table. Times have changed!

I have many pictures taken during my tour at Tan Son Nhut, which I will forward to *Revetments* as soon as I get a chance. Keep up the good work on the Internet and in *Revetments*.

Joe Davenport
Washington, D. C.
(Editor's Note: You have us frothing at the mouth thinking of those great new photos we'll get!)

* * *

First Hand Accounts Catches His Eye ... As a member of the Tan Son Nhut Association for a couple of years now, I must tell you that I thoroughly enjoy each issue of *Revetments*, which I always read cover to cover.

I particularly enjoy the first hand accounts of other members experiences while residing in or passing through Tan Son Nhut. Please keep up the good work and keep the issues coming!

Tom Campbell
Royal Palm Beach, Florida
(Editor's Note: You left yourself wide open, Tom. Where's your story?)

Heroes, From Page 5

you, Dave, that you did. And you and Jerry Fish and you fellow "specialists" are one of that rare breed in this modern world whom we used to call "heroes."

What a shame, that after we return home, we find it impossible to describe those times Dave so accurately described as "like a bundle of snakes crawling around inside me." And perhaps this is the greatest value of organizations like TSNA and publications like *Revetments*. We can tell our feelings to people who truly understand what we are saying. This takes away some of the hurt of not being appreciated.

In recent correspondence with a friend, he told me of his trip into the doldrums after his return from Viet Nam, during which time he wrote a book, *O Judas, Cry!* I remember well, down on the farm, when perhaps over a sip of moonshine, and after a fiddle tune or two, we kids would ask my Dad, Sgt. McKinnon, and his brothers, all of whom served in the 1914-1918 war, to "tell us about the war, Dad!"

And the old men would begin to tell about the rot and the "bunch of snakes" and the poison gas. "Phosgene smells like newmown hay, but by the time you realize you recognize it, you are dead or wish you were. Mustard gas takes the skin of your body and inside of your lungs and your eyeballs and smells exactly like the outhouse out back."

But by the time the evening was over, half the neighborhood was there listening, and it was cathartic and the heroes were worshipped!

But early this morning, at the breakfast table, and before my *Revetments* arrived, my twenty year old boy complemented me with the statement, "Dad, you didn't talk so much in your sleep last night. What do you dream about?" My wife, Ilson, interjected, "About the war!" My Dad would have said, "He's seen the elephant!"

Sleep tight boys -

Taylor B. McKinnon

"The Victors!"
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Voices From The Past

(Editor's Note: Earlier this year, Executive Vice President John Peele, brought to the Public Affairs Office the files of the Association. We have just about completed our classification and categorization of these files. They are a treasure trove of informative, humorous and oft-times poignant commentary from the membership. From this wonderful archive we intend to make *Voice From The Past* a standard feature in *Revelments*. The following is a reprint from an earlier Tan Son Nhut Newsletter.)

Extract from Letter to Peele

4 October 1995

... Just a few lines to tell you how much I enjoyed the TSN Newsletter. It was good to see some of the old names from TSN. I'm sorry we have not made any reunions since the 360th at Andrews AFB in '87, but we always seemed to be tied up in some other venture. We're RV'ers and this keeps us on the road a lot of the time.

I was interested in the letter you had in the news from John Plummer, in which he said he couldn't remember what unit he was in. It made me remember a lot of things about 'Nam, so I sat down at the word processor and wrote up the enclosed bit...

Harry C. Patterson
Shallotte, North Carolina

I Remember

The journey for me began on a cold, blustery day at the airport at Manchester, New Hampshire. Crews had assembled there, awaiting completion of the retrofitting of the aircraft we were to ferry to 'Nam. I had been there since August of that year, 1966, flying calibration for Sperry Corporation, the contractors for the special equipment we carried aboard. But the day of departure arrived for my crew and I to depart. I remember the date well, because October 31 was my wife's birthday. So, as it began to snow, we bid each other goodbye, and thus began our journey.

I remember, as we departed McChord AFB, Washington, that all of us gave thought to the fact that, once airborne toward our first stop at Elmendorf AFB, our one-year "clock" began toward our year's tour in 'Nam. This thought stayed with us as we waited at Elmendorf for 17 days for a new right engine; as we waited at Adak for that "plus ten knot wind factor" we needed to depart for Midway Island, some 12 plus hours of flying time away. It was our only consolation for the thirty days and 91 hours of flying time it took us to reach Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon.

I remember the apprehension we all felt as we landed at TSN; an apprehension which was soon displaced by the welcome we received from Jim Jelly, Commander of the 360th. I remember being thankful to see old faces from CCTC at England AFB and Hurlbert Field. I remember the feeling of

being at home when I learned that my roommate all through training, Ed Hosbach, had saved a bunk for me with him again as a roommate. I remember December 4th about 1130 at night, when loud explosions began from the base and we were told that the VC were mortaring the base. I remember us getting on the bus to go to our planes to guard them, and my wondering why the VC had waited all these months before beginning to mortar the base only 4 days after I got there!

I remember Bob Graham as he took our crew through theatre training, and how thorough he was in teaching us what we needed to know. I also remember Bob, Ed Hosbach and I spending three hours assembling the first "49 cc Honda" in the inner court of the billeting area. It only took us 40 minutes to do the others we did.

I remember missions we flew that showed the destruction our B-52 bombers were raining down on the VC. I remember seeing so many villages blazing in fire and smoke as the VC burned them out. I remember the Iron Triangle that the 1st Cav. Bulldozed out of the jungle, leaving a big "One" to tell us who did it.

I remember Malaria Monday and the tablets that tasted so bad. I remember using lots of salt on my potatoes because the salt tablets made me sick. I remember the time I went to the O Club for supper and hearing the familiar voice and laugh of an old friend, Colonel Chappie James, and seeing him in his black flying suit, the mark of the Death Squadron, which he commanded at the time. I thought of the times I had heard him sing and play the piano at Otis AFB, Mass., when he flew for the 41st FS. His was now a more serious business to be taken care of.

I remember New Years Eve, 1966, when our son came over from Bien Hoa to visit. It was his first leave since becoming a member of the 173rd Airborne. I remember the pleasure I got from watching him devour two sirloin steaks at the 3rd Field Hospital Field Mess that night. I remember how hard we tried to catch up on the things that had happened to us since we'd last seen each other. I remember, as he got on the bus to return to duty, that I realized he was not the young man I had seen off to 'Nam, but a grown man who had matured over night in order to survive the duty. I remember how thankful I was that I was flying over 'Nam, and not having to walk through it every day as a part of a Long Range Patrol group.

I remember taking off for a mission on Sunday morning. We had become airborne at

0700, and were turning toward Vung Tau, which was to be our area for the day. As we were leveling off we saw an Army chopper crash into a graveyard near Bien Hoa. I called the rescue choppers and we continued our mission.

I remember the next day as we were attending training on Joint Personnel Recovery at the theatre, and being told that they wanted me at the squadron right away. I remember the feeling of apprehension I had as I went back to the squadron. I remember how everyone seemed to look the other way as I entered Ops. That feeling of apprehension was borne out when an Army Warrant Officer came over the desk where I was sitting, saluted me, and handed me a telegram.

I remember that I knew what was in it before I opened it.

The Secretary of the Army regretted informing us that our son had been killed in a helicopter crash on April 22nd near Bien Hoa.

I remembered realizing it was the chopper I had seen go down the day before. This was borne out six months later in talking to a member of the Golden Knights who had known our son.

I remember the kindness and consideration shown me by the people that night at our billet. Everyone was embarrassed, but there was nothing to be said. I remember asking Ed Hosbach to bring our son back for burial at Arlington National Cemetery, and I will always be in Ed's debt for his kindness. I remember walking through the rotunda at San Francisco International, toward the gate for my plane to Boston, and the young girl who stopped me and asked me if I had just returned from Viet Nam. When I nodded "yes," I remember the hate in her eyes as she spat in my face and called me a "baby killer." It was my first hint that what we were doing was not popular back in the 'States.

I remember when I was reassigned to Otis AFB instead of having to return to 'Nam, that I felt like I had left a lot undone, and hoped that everyone would understand why I did not return.

I remember the first reunion of the 360th at Andrews AFB in '87, and how we had all changed. We were older, maybe wiser, but a lot more serious. I think we each reflected on what had taken place in 'Nam, and I think each of us hoped that we might not ever again become embroiled in another 'Nam.

These are some of the things I remember about those days. Some memories are pleasant, some are sad, but I remember them because it is important to me.

Tan Son Nhut 1970

One of the great things about editing *Revetments* and maintaining the Tan Son Nhut Association internet website (<http://www.tsna.org>) is that we are always being contacted and supported by many of the wonderful members we have. They tell us stories and send us pictures and other materials that we feel are priceless, and we can't wait to share them with the rest of you.

Case in point: John R. Galvan, of Riverside, California, responded to Webmaster Charles Penley's request for material for the This Month's Photographs section of the website with these pictures taken around Tan Son Nhut in the early 1970s. *Revetments* couldn't resist copying them for publication for those of you who can't get on-line.

Galvan was in the 377th Civil Engineering Squadron from May 1971 until May 1972. He was an electrician working with the special group that maintained the base water supplies.

We regret that we can't reproduce them in high quality, but you know what they're all about and your memory fills in the details.

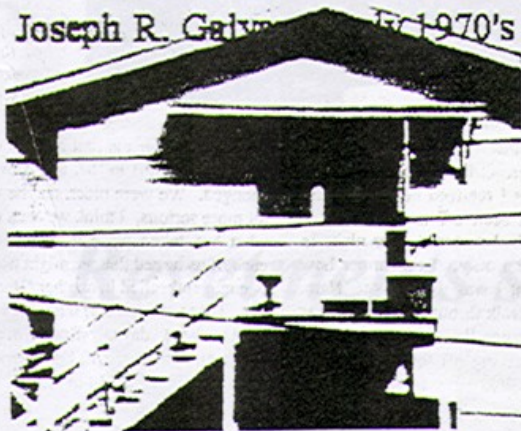
Joseph R. Galvan early 1970's



Old French Fort



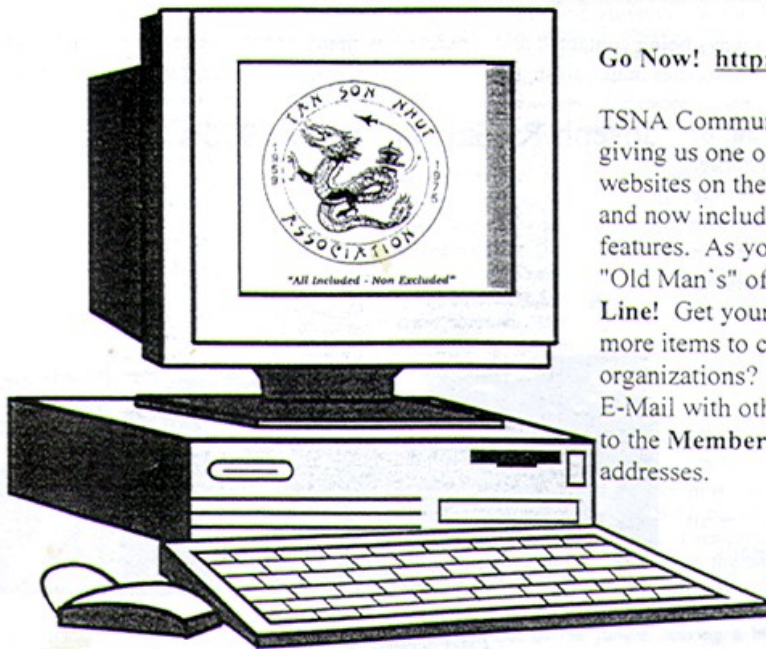
Joseph R. Galvan early 1970's



Joseph R. Galvan early 1970's



Tan Son Nhut Talks To The World!



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TSNA Communications Director Charles Penley is giving us one of the most exciting and interesting websites on the internet. The site is updated daily and now includes many great new and growing features. As you did on active duty, duck by the "Old Man's" office and head out for the **BX On Line!** Get your CDs, patches, maps, and many more items to come. Want information on buddies, organizations? Go to **Links**. Want to chat via E-Mail with other members of the Association, go to the **Membership**, and hit on their e-mail addresses.

Go TSNA!

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