

June 2006

---



A Memorial to the American Experience  
In Vietnam

---

# **REVETMENTS**

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

---

# *Announcing The 2007 Reunion*

---

*May 3—6*

*Dayton Ohio*

*Location of The Air Force National Museum*

Details in an upcoming *Reunion Special Edition*

## Something to Reflect Upon

By **Johnnie Jernigan**  
**TSNA Director-At-Large**

Last Monday evening my 7-year-old grandson called me. The first words out of his mouth were: Pop, can I ask you a question. Having no idea where he was going with this, I cautiously said yes. He then went on to say, our school (Fairbrook Elementary in Beavercreek Ohio) is having a Veteran Appreciation Lunch next Friday and I would like for you to go with me. Would you be able to get out of work and go with me? Well, the only answer was yes. I didn't think about what I would have to shuffle at work to arrange this time with him, it didn't matter. My grandson had invited me to a Veteran Appreciation Lunch and I was going if at all possible.

I went today and it was fun. The look on his face when I walked in to his classroom was enough to make a grown man cry. (That look is my "Welcome Home".) I stood in line with him and his classmates, we discussed many things, and it was apparent that he was very proud that his Grandfather was a Veteran. After lunch, I got to enjoy recess again. It is still as much fun as I remembered.

This afternoon, after I got home, I started to reflect on the experience. It dawned on me that I enjoyed something today that many many veterans have not been able to experience. All the veterans listed on the "Wall" as well as those who were "killed" in Vietnam but died after they got home don't have the opportunity that I had today. And this situation isn't just limited to the Vietnam Veterans; many before us and after us have paid the same cost. The young men and woman making the ultimate sacrifice from the Revolutionary War to today have paid the same cost.

And what is this cost? I contend that it is not death, but life. The ultimate sacrifice is: **Life Ended!** Life is marrying the woman of your dreams, having children, enjoying watching them grow up, the grandchildren they bear, the day to day grind, growing old and enjoying life, etc. This list goes on and on. Have you ever taken your child and/or grandchild fishing for the first time, teaching them to ride a bike or drive a car, watch them open a Christmas present, giving your daughter away on her wedding day or standing up with your Son when he gets married, getting together with friends for reunions, etc. Then you know what I meant when I said "Life Ended" is the sacrifice made by the young people fighting and dying to preserve freedom. To me, this is the ultimate sacrifice, not the death but the end of life!

So, as we go into the Memorial Day weekend, let's us remember the cost paid so we (and all Americans) can enjoy the freedom we have today. Freedom isn't free; it has a tremendous cost associated with it and it is the young men and women in our Armed Forces that pay the price.

## The Trumpeter

By **TSNA Member**  
**Irving Rice**

He played tapes at the graves,  
 For so many years.  
 When his trumpet would sound,  
 It rang out in tears

Founded 1995  
 By  
 President Emeritus Don Parker  
 and  
 President Emeritus John Peele

Revetments is an official publication of  
 the Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc.  
 2413 Brambleton Avenue, Roanoke,  
 Virginia 24015. The Association is a  
 non-profit fraternal organization  
 chartered under the appropriate statutes and law.

President, Wayne Salisbury  
 Vice President, Larry Fry  
 Treasurer, Jerry Norville  
 Secretary Pro Tem, Jerry Norville  
 Director of Communications, Charles Penley  
 Johnnie Jernigan, Director-At-Large  
 Dale Bryan, Director-At-Large

TSNA Chaplain  
 Rev. Dr. James M. Warrington  
 Rev. Dr. Billy T. Lowe

Revetments is published monthly at the Office  
 of Public Affairs, 2413 Brambleton Avenue,  
 Roanoke, VA 24015. Telephone: (540) 772-1025  
 Email: [TanSonNhut@aol.com](mailto:TanSonNhut@aol.com)  
 Revetments Publisher and Editor, Wayne Salisbury  
 Web Site: [www.tsna.org](http://www.tsna.org)  
 Webmaster, Charles Penley

Membership Information  
 Annual Membership: \$20.00  
 Five Year Membership: \$80.00  
 Life Membership: \$180.00  
 Contact the Public Affairs Office

He didn't have diamonds,  
 Silver or gold.  
 The great man he was,  
 He put his trumpet away.  
 God took his life,  
 On Memorial Day.  
 The trumpet he played,  
 For so many years  
 Was played at his grave,  
 By a friend left in tears.  
 The angels rejoiced,  
 For me it was sad  
 The man with the trumpet,  
 That was my dad.



## *The Viet Nam “Circuit Rider” Trip February 1962*

**By Larry E. Fry—TSNA VP  
Chaplain Services Specialist, USAF  
TSN December 1961—March 1962**

My boss, Chaplain August Kilpatrick, decided he wanted to get out into the field and try to set up a “circuit rider” set-up for himself or future chaplains to travel to places out in the “field”. Somehow, we got booked onto a C-123 flight out of TSN. I thought we



**Larry Fry trying out the cockpit of a C-123**



**Larry Fry in foreground**

went first to DaNang, but I don't remember the flight being that long, now that I see the distance from TSN to there.

Wherever that first stop was, we then went to Nha Trang. Either that same day, or the next, we went with an armed Army Major escort/ jeep driver, to an Army outpost quite a distance from outside of Nha Trang, named Duc My.

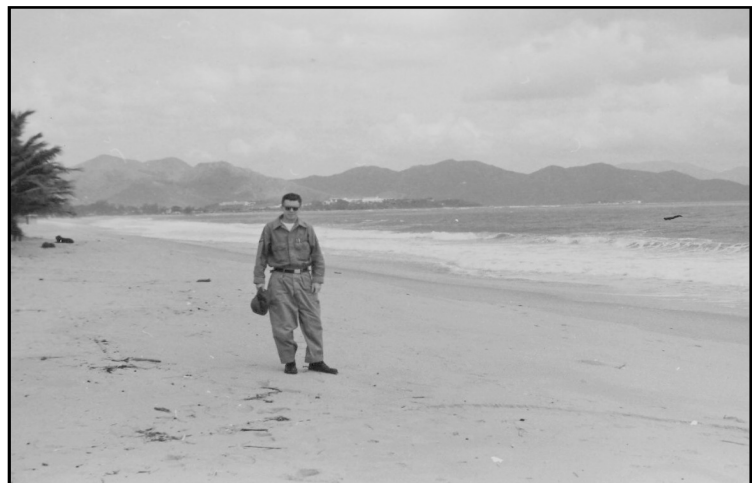


**Entrance to Duc My, outside of Nha Trang**

We met up with some other US Army folks there, worked on setting up a visitation schedule, etc. surveyed the surrounding area for a while, and then headed back for Nha Trang.

Our departure out of Nha Trang was on the MAAG Viet Nam C-47, a beautiful fully wood paneled, fancy seating style plane. We had some “visiting Generals” on board (I'm not sure of their rank, but they for sure were “visiting”), and they wanted to see Pleiku on the way home to TSN. So, we flew towards Pleiku. Upon observing it from the air, and noticing that the runway was nothing but PSP, they dutifully decided there was no sense in landing there after all, so away we went to TSN.

I don't know whether anything ever came of that trip as far as the Chaplain was concerned, but it certainly was an interesting trip for me. I only wish I had been able to spend more time on that beautiful beach and blue waters of Nha Trang. It also gave me a feel for the beauty of the country. I must admit that the trip also showed my



**Larry Fry on the white sand beach at Nha Trang**

stupidity in one sense. As we were coming in to land on that first leg, I was so busy looking out the window at the area that I forgot to fasten my seat belt! Fortunately, I was seated right next to the bulkhead, so I turned and braced myself. When they put the props into reverse, I thought I was going to go right through that bulkhead!

## It's A Small World

By Charles Penley  
Life Member

TSNA Director  
of Communications

May 18, 2006 I received an email from one of the Tan Son Nhut Association members. His name is Richard Carvell. Richard wanted to submit two photographs to be used on the Photograph of The Month on the TSN web site. One photo was of TSgt Williams and SSgt Lee R. Phillips.

The name Lee Roy Phillips hit home with me. I have an uncle who was stationed at Tan Son Nhut. When he was stationed there my uncle was a SSgt, and his name is Lee Roy Phillips.

The photo submitted by Richard Carvell showed a partial side view of SSgt. Phillips. I emailed Richard immediately, asking if he had another view of this SSgt Phillips. In a few minutes another photo arrived and it definitely was my uncle.

TSgt Williams and SSgt Phillips were at orphanage called Phu My. Phu My was and is an orphanage in Saigon, although at that time it was a walled community unto itself, with its own garden, cemetery, back-up water supply, food preparation facility, laundry, etc. Williams and Phillips were taking a break from fixing an electrical washing machine.

Richard Carvell and I have exchanged several more emails and both of us thought this indeed was a small world. He has told his family and a few friends about the above happen stance. I have told my family and friends also. In the first week of June, I will be visiting SSgt Phillips widow. He died on August 3, 2004.

Two of SSgt Phillips had two brothers assigned to Tan Son Nhut in 1966 – 1977 time frame. I was assigned to the 377<sup>th</sup> Air Police Squadron Oct 1967 – Jul 1969. SSgt Phillips was there in the 1969 – 1970 time frame. I proudly put the photographs from Richard Carvell on the June 2006 Photograph of The Month web site as mentioned above.

(See page 6 for a picture of my Uncle Phillips)

## Battle of the Bulge vs Battle for Tan Son Nhut

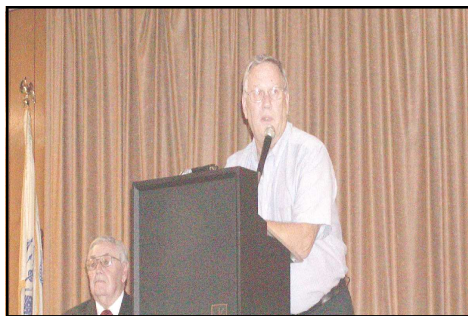
By Larry Fry  
Life Member

TSNA Vice President

Thursday, May 25, 2006 was an interesting day for a couple of Tan Son Nhut veterans in Millersville, PA.

Through a friend of mine who is a veteran of "The Battle Of The Bulge in WWII," I arranged for TSN veteran and TSNA friend, Denis Cook, to speak to the South Central Pennsylvania Chapter of The Veterans of The Battle of The Bulge.

Denis, is a former member of the 377th Security Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air



Denis Cook

Base, Vietnam. He is the Treasurer of the Vietnam Security Police Association (VSPA) and is the Editor of their newsletter,



Denis Cook following his address

"Guardmount." He spoke about the details of being on duty during the Battle For Tan Son Nhut. His talk was very interesting, informative and thought provoking. Also attending to hear Denis speak was my wife, Lois. They

all enjoyed the meal and the camaraderie.

It was interesting to the TSN veterans to hear the comments from The Bulge veterans about the success this chapter is having going around to schools and teaching about WWII during history classes.

It was also informative to hear some of the comments about their experiences during the Bulge Battle. The gentleman who was in charge of the meeting was taken prisoner just before the Bulge Battle started and was a POW for 227 days.

---

## Who Remembers?

By Wayne Salisbury

I cannot be positive—time has erased most of the memories of my time at Tan Son Nhut. I was there from October 1967 to September 1967. I was a staff sergeant on my last year of my second enlistment. I was married with three children in the states.

A few nights after my arrival I walked to the NCO Club to listen to a country western band. The place was packed—wall to wall, lonesome GI's.

With bent elbow I held my beer and listened to the band. They were good. Then they played *I Want To Go Home* recorded by Bobby Bare. That was followed by their rendition of *Mr. Lonely* that had been recorded by Bobby Vinton.

It was to much. I quickly retired to my living quarters.

---

## Time Is Drawing Near

From Your President

As announced on the cover, the 2007 reunion planning is underway. A huge part of the reunion in May 2007 will be the election of new officers. I know dozens of you will want to submit your name for consideration for President, Vice President, Treasurer or Secretary. Be patient—don't rush to the computer or call me. An official notice will be published soon giving you details how to apply.

---

**Richard A. Carvell**  
**New Member**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Intelligence**  
**Squadron**

The past few weeks since I joined TSNA have been quite gratifying for me personally, as I am able to swap stories of our outfit, the 12<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron (RITS), with other men who served there. Women did, too, but I have yet to hear from any of them!

I was not in battle, and really don't even have any "war" stories to contribute because, as I am fond of telling folks, "No one took a shot at me (that I know of), and I didn't have to shoot at anyone."

So, I cannot tell you about battles, rocket attacks, or grenades. Even the list of attacks on Tan Son Nhut on the TSNA website shows that there were no (that's zero, nil, none, zip) attacks on TSN the entire time I was there (June 1970-June 1971). I'm not complaining, you understand. It's just that for me it was more of an inconvenience to be at TSN, but apparently not a serious threat to my safety. But I wouldn't give you anything for the time I spent there .

I spent time just doing my job at the Photo Lab. As an additional duty I was the RITS Civic Action Officer. Along with many other RITS personnel we did what we could for the people who lived at Sanctuary de Phu My in Saigon. We made weekly trips there to see the kids and other residents.

I lived west of the rated officer quarters and south of the MARS station, near the front gate that opened or was near Plantation Road.

I separated at Travis AFB upon returning to the U.S. I went to work at Arkansas State University in 1971. I am chairman of the Radio and Television Department.

I had the privilege of meeting Adrian Cronauer, the disc jockey on Armed Forces Radio Saigon (AFRS), a few years ago when he visited the campus where I teach. The real Cronauer was even funnier than the Cronauer played by Robin Williams in the movie about the man who made the phrase "Good morning, Vietnam" famous. Yet, he was great with my students, that young generation which thought the Vietnam War was ancient history. Cronauer is a communications attorney in Washington now and, at one time, was quite close to being appointed as a Commissioner on the FCC. We stayed in touch for a while, but, alas, we haven't exchanged messages recently.

Following is a news article I wrote in 1970 ( my schooling and professional experience before entering the USAF was as a journalist) about one of the things we did for Phu My, the Civic Action Project of our outfit, the 12<sup>th</sup> RITS, at TSN. I sent this "news article" to the media of my hometown of Brinkley, Arkansas, a small farming community in eastern Arkansas. The media included two weekly newspapers and a radio station (where I got my start in broadcasting). It

also was used as what we would call today a "marketing" piece to encourage residents of my former hometown to support our project in Vietnam. And support it, they did!

***RUB-A-DUB-DUB***  
***RITS FIXES A TUB***

**Tan Son Nhut AB**  
**July 23, 1970**

**By Richard Carvell**

**What does it take to fix a washing machine? A Tech Sergeant named Williams and a little time.**

**On the initial orientation tour of the sanctuary de Phu My for the new RITS Civic Action Officer, Captain Richard Carvell, another RITS member in the visiting party, SSgt Lee R. Phillips, discovered that one of the three Phu My washing machines was out of order. How long the "out of order" sign had hung on the machine was an unanswered question. Mission: Fix the machine.**

**TSgt Joseph P. Williams was betting on a faulty timer switch after preliminary observations at the scene. But because he had more testing equipment and better repair facilities at the RITS, the maintenance NCOIC suggested bringing the machine here for a thorough check-out. And before the afternoon was over, the bugs were out of the washer. Literally!**

**Neatly tucked between two relays in the timer switch, TSgt Williams found a grasshopper. After the insect was evicted, the machine went through its cycles like a dream.**

**"They've got themselves a washer in good-as-new shape," commented the RITS Maintenance Chief.**

**SSgt Phillips returned the washer to Phu My today.**

**Fixing it was a real international "incident". An American GI working on a Japanese model washing machine in a Vietnamese sanctuary operated by French Roman Catholic Nuns.**

(see page 6)

While at TSN, I took on the extra duty as Civic Action Officer for the RITS and through the efforts of the good folks of Brinkley, Arkansas, and other contacts back home, provided more than 22 boxes of clothing, school supplies, and personal hygiene items to the people who lived at Phu My.

Phu My was an orphanage, a place for senior citizens, a quasi-hospital, and a TB sanitarium, all rolled into one. It was a walled facility (in 21<sup>st</sup> century parlance, we would call it a “gated community”). Phu My had its own laundry, its own farm, its own cemetery, its own back-up water supply (a rain water collection system), and its own food-preparation facility.

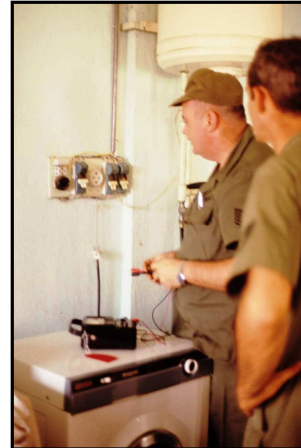
Historical records indicate that the work of Civic Action in Vietnam was winding down during my tour – June 1970-June 1971. Most of the historical records about Civic Action projects deal with building and construction projects – hospitals, schools, etc. -- as part of (or as an off-shoot of) the Vietnamization policy adapted by then-President Nixon.

Although I did not know it at the time (or don't remember, if I did), there was money appropriated for Civic Action projects. I do remember talk about helping Phu My drill a water well on-site to insure an adequate and dependable water supply, but that was not carried out while I was there. We at the RITS never applied for any of the money for Civic Action projects, preferring instead to help Phu My through our families and contacts back home. Frankly, I cannot remember if I reported our Civic Action activities to anyone at 7<sup>th</sup> AF or not; maybe we kept up with the number of boxes we secured and delivered to Phu My and reported that information. But I do not remember.

My Mother, Charlotte Carvell of Brinkley, was the “captain” of the state-side project Phu My project for that little east Arkansas community of about 5,000 population. With help from the First United Methodist Church and other churches in Brinkley, she and other volunteers gathered donations of clothing, school supplies, and personal hygiene products to send to Vietnam and to the people at Phu My. According to her records, folks in Brinkley and elsewhere contributed about \$150 to pay for the mailing of the 22 packages of goods they sent over.

Of course, I was not the only person who involved my hometown in the project. Captain Bill Jones, another Photo Officer at the RITS, was active, as were many other Photo Lab, Maintenance, and Intelligence officers and airmen. They, too, contacted folks back home, who responded with the greatest outpouring of generosity I have ever witnessed to that time in my life or since. Seems like every week, we made a trip to Sanctuary de Phu My to deliver donated goods from home.

Of course, sometimes folks back home didn't fully understand or appreciate the climate in Vietnam, a tropical climate, if there ever was one. We had to weed out some woolen garments that were dysfunctional as clothing in that environment. But most stuff sent was usable. Even when a state-side doctor sent some prescription medicines, we delivered it to a civilian hospital in Saigon operated by a religious denomination.



Here, TSgt Williams and Staff Sergeant Lee R. Phillips (in profile at the right), try to figure out what was wrong. Shortly after I took this picture, TSgt Williams suggested that he could better deal with the problem back at the RITS building where he had better diagnostic and repair equipment. And he did!



This is Technical Sergeant Joseph P. Williams, the Maintenance NCOIC at the RITS, checking the power to the washing machine at Phu My.



A recent picture of orphans at Phu My

## *From A Parachutist To An Airline Pilot*

**By Creighton Pendarvis  
New Member**

I was Army enlisted (E5) with 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne at Ft. Campbell 1958-61. Earned Senior Parachute badge. Discharged May, 1961. Was commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. August 1962 in USAF and attended flight school at Laughlin AFB. I received my wings November 1963. I was assigned to the 346<sup>th</sup> TCS at Dyess AFB December 1963.

I flew as a C130E co-pilot on TDY to Naha, Okinawa. Flew "In-Country" for 90 days, then rotated back to Dyess for 90 days, then back to Naha and more "In-Country" for another 90 days, etc. etc. This kept up until September 1965. During that time, we were in and out of Tan Son Nhut so many times that I could have qualified for a PCS, there.

Most folks think of TSN as a 'quiet' airfield in those days. Well, think again! On about our third trip through TSN, in the summer of '63, right after takeoff, our Loadmaster noticed a 'stowaway' hiding under some tarps on a pallet that was to be off-loaded via a PLADS (Parachute Low Altitude Drop System) delivery at a no name dirt airstrip about 20 clicks east of DaNang. He was 'wearing' a back pack of C-4! We almost tied him to that pallet, after taking his pack (which had no wiring or blasting cap attached), and letting him be part of the PLADS delivery. However, we turned him over to the RVN boys at DaNang.

That was just one of many incidents at TSN. But, the most memorable ones were us hauling the litters into TSN from the small (sometimes PSP) landing strips in the boonies. Most of those had no given names at that time. And, no one spoke of a casualty list in those days; everything was 'hush-hush' Yeah, in a pig's eye! The generals in Saigon did not want to hear about the losses the Special Forces teams were taking, nor the RVN SP teams being wiped out, due to their own people pointing their locations out to the VC. It was not pretty!

But, good 'ol TSN was mostly a breath of fresh air, where we could be fairly confident

we were not going to get shot or blown up by sappers; the APES (sorry couldn't resist) did one helluva job keeping that base secure, except for that one episode with the VC stowaway. Also, we got to be real friendly with the Shadow guys. They took on a dangerous job and saved hundreds of the good guys with their fire-power on those missions. God Love 'Em! They were intrigued that I was a former paratrooper and had jumped from many a C-119 back at Ft. Campbell and Bragg. And, got a kick out of how afraid all of us jumpers were when in hot weather, that 'ol bird took almost the entire 12,000 feet of runway at Ft. Campbell in order to get airborne. They said, "You should have seen the view from the cockpit! It was balls to the wall and praying that neither of those underpowered engines ever coughed!"

However, I got out of the Air Force in January '66 and went to work for Braniff International Airways. So, in November '66, there I was again, back in TSN. But this time in a B-707, as an airline pilot, hauling guys into 'Nam (and....some out of Nam both in the passenger seats and in the cargo bays....). We landed on January 30, 1968 with a load of troops from Travis AFB. We went into Saigon for our crew rest; three pilots and six flight attendants.

We were awakened about 0200 by the firing and the hotel staff. We told the hotel van driver we'd give him all the money the nine of us had (probably around \$1200) if he'd drive us to TSN. He drove like a mad man but we somehow made it, got aboard, got all engines started, and then got a "Not cleared for take off" from the tower. We said, Bull S—! And went balls to wall out the taxiway, onto the runway and got the hell out of there, all the while pissing down our pants leg (or panties) and climbing like a F4 in burner!

We got to 8000 ft in less than 90 seconds (we were empty) and headed for the coast. The great AFB ground crew at TSN had fueled us prior to midnight, so we had plenty of fuel and we headed for Clark AFB. Funny thing; we could not pressurize the aircraft.... When we got to Clark we found out why. Our aft cabin area was littered with shrapnel and we had about 4 holes two or three inches wide in the fuselage. The airplane was a blue one, for anyone's information that might have flown on one of Braniff's MAC flights. It was patched up by the AF guys at Clark

and flown back to Dallas, TX (Braniff's home base) for final repair, repainted and put back in service in about 6 months.

I joined the Marine Corp reserves in 1966, and was flying F-8E's out of Olathe, Kansas, but never got called back to active duty, due to my "Priority" status as a PACMAC pilot. It made not too much difference since we flew into and out of TSN for four more years, during some hellish attacks, but never as bad as that first one on the first day of TET. When Braniff folded I went to work for Northwest Airlines and retired in 1996.

My wife and I now live in Corinth, Mississippi and enjoy and spoil our nine grandkids when they come to see us. I am 100% service-connected disabled due to Agent Orange exposure which resulted in Diabetes, Parathyroid disease, and End Stage Renal Failure; all diagnosed in 2001. Obviously, I came in contact with a humongous amount of that stuff when we hauled it in and out of TSN and other bases in 'Nam. It is mean stuff and if any of you feel ANY kind of funny tingling in your feet/hands/legs, get to the VA hospital and get tested. I had no idea I was as sick as I was until I collapsed in April of 2001.

Good to be a part of the TSN group!

---

## *My Tour In Vietnam*

**By Roy R. Hays  
New Life Member**

The following is, to the best of my recollection, a summary of the major events that occurred while I was in Vietnam as a 19-year old grunt. These events will be etched in my memory forever. Some of the dates may be approximate because from the beginning of Tet on January 31, 1968 through the Mini-Tet in May of 1968, it seemed an almost continual blur of attacks on Tan Son Nhut.

I specifically remember the start of Tet on January 31, 1968. I was working night shift on the flight line. Sometime after midnight I watched a "freedom bird", a civilian 707, taking off. Once it cleared the runway and got air borne, all hell broke loose. Thousands of tracer rounds were arcing up toward the

plane. Tan Son Nhut was under attack by what I understand were 2 NVA divisions and thousands of VC. The attacks seemed to go on for days. The base was penetrated, but in the end, not overtaken.

On February 17 or 18 in the early morning, TSN was attacked and received 140 122 MM rockets. The VC supposedly had spotters on the base and the rockets were being "walked in". One single rocket explosion seemed to me like two freight trains colliding head on at high speed and TSN had over 100 of these hitting all over the base that night. An F-4 Phantom took a direct hit while it was sitting inside a revetment. A JP-4 jet fuel truck was hit and exploded like an A-bomb; a 101 Voodoo was hit. The base chapel was blown apart. A refrigerated photo lab was blown up. This lab was being used as a temporary morgue because the regular morgue was full of our dead troops. Following the loss of the photo lab, the chow hall refrigerators were used to store the dead. A barracks, or hooch, not far from mine was hit and a dozen or so fellow airmen were killed. That night the black of night turned into a burning inferno with the fire and flames and smoke in a 360-degree circle around me. I thought I was going to die and there was nothing I could do but sit in the bunker.

All during this period of time, February to May 1968, it seemed to me the war was a big factory producing nothing but our dead soldiers. My hooch was near one of the main helicopter landing pads. Day in and day out, green body bag after green body bag was unloaded from the helicopters. And day in and day out, next to where I worked on the flight line, an endless stream of flag-draped silver coffins on low-boy trailers went by and were loaded onto C-141 Starlifters on their final journey back to the "world" and their loved ones. It seemed to me that during that short span of a few months, I must have seen pass before me at least half of all our dead whose names are on the Wall. I cried for them then and I still cry for them today.

In the middle of May 1968, TSN was attacked again in the mini-TET. About 1,000 VC were holed up in a French cemetery just across the perimeter road from the barracks area. This attack was more unusual because it started during the daylight hours. Usually attacks on TSN came in the middle of the night. This attack went on for several days

and the base was penetrated again, but in the end the attack was foiled. Shrapnel and several AK-47 rounds ricocheted off the bunker near me. Again, many rockets and mortars were hurled at our base. In addition to our tanks and troops, three A1E Skyraiders were flying in a constant circular arc over the cemetery and strafing with 20 MM cannons and dropping 250 pound bombs and were able to stop the invaders. The planes were flying so close and low to where I was that I could see our pilots' faces.

We were all cheering for them even though the bombs' concussions almost knocked us down. Also during this period of time, my buddy Craig Waring and I went around the perimeter road near our flight line. There were so many dead VC that bulldozers were used to pile up the bodies. The crunching sound made while walking on the perimeter road was not gravel - it was thousands of spent ammunition rounds. I could see a huge flattened area in the constantina wire where it was blown up to allow the VC entry into TSN. Around the other side of the perimeter road, as a warning to other "potential" VC, lay two dead VC.

One night sometime between February and May, I was working the night shift on a U3-B, a twin-engine prop plane. It was in the hangar needing major work. It was about midnight and we were NORS-G, meaning we were out of a necessary part to complete the job and would have to wait for the part on order. So I left the hangar and headed back to the hooch. Upon returning to the hangar the next morning, I learned a rocket that hit by the hangar entrance had blown up the U3-B. A guy told me I was lucky because the rocket bit about a half hour after I left. Another airman in the hangar had been killed. We subsequently lost another U3-B to a rocket while I was on the flight line.

During the same time frame, Craig Waring and I were walking on the flight line's PSP when shots rang out and ricocheted on the PSP near us. We took off running for cover when we realized a sniper was firing at us.

During these months there were countless B-52 raids near Saigon and TSN and I could hear the rumble and roar of the "rolling thunder". There were also many nights when "Puff the Magic Dragon", a C-47 gunship, would fly in a circular route over TSN lighting up the black sky with a waterfall of

tracer fire while sounding like a fog horn. Another night between February and May of 1968, a rocket or rockets hit the main terminal building at TSN, killing several soldiers and airmen who had completed their tours of duty and were waiting for flights back to the "world".

Footnote: One day after finishing my shift on the flight line and entering my hooch, someone said to get packed because we were going home that night. Wow! What a surprise! So the next thing I know I was on a plane heading home after a nervous wait at the main terminal.

It was as if someone had turned on a light switch; it happened so fast. One day I was in a hellhole and the next day I was in a taxi going down a freeway in the U.S. on a typical Saturday evening looking at cars and people as I rode by. People were acting normally and enjoying themselves as if nothing else was going on. I wanted to scream at them "don't you know there's a war going on".

In all the years since then, no one except my family, ever said "welcome home". Not until this past month at a Vietnam veterans reunion in Melbourne, Florida, where a small replica of the Wall is displayed. One of the other vets and I were talking about our experiences in Vietnam. Upon leaving he said, "Welcome home, brother". All I could do was sit in my car and cry.

---

**Editors Note: In the preceding article, Roy Hays wrote about seeing a 707 taking off from TSN at the start of Tet and tracer rounds headed up towards the aircraft. Little did Roy know that two months before he joined the TSNA, another member, Creighton Pendarvis, joined.**

**Creighton was the pilot flying the 707 that night!**

**Small world—indeed.**





## One, One, One, One

By Benny Goodman

### Life Member

Like any other veteran who served in Viet Nam my personal memories are numerous, too numerous to recall at any one time. And like any other veteran, I have a very select few that are recalled seemingly without any prompting or any other association of events experienced in Viet Nam. One such memory for me is one that I refer to as "One, One, One, One."

In mid September 1965, SSgt Eldon Stewart and I were deployed from the 8<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port Squadron at Tan Son Nhut to An Khe to provide arrival support for the advance party of the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Calvary Division, approximately 700 personnel. We anticipated a two week operation, but that was quickly dispelled as the entire division arrived within a week. All of the Division's support equipment and supplies that could be moved by C-123 and C-130 aircraft began arriving even before the arrival of the advance party. This was enough to keep the two of us busy 14 or 15 hours a day.

As soon as the Division began arriving, they began establishing their base camp, approximately 3 kilometers from the airfield at An Khe, established camp security and began operational planning, and training scenarios. In early November 1965, an element of the Division deployed out on the first all U.S. engagement of the war. Almost immediately, we began to hear fragmented reports that the deployed unit had run into a real buzz saw. Finally the Division was able to gain control of the situation and began returning to their base camp. Later, much later, I learned that the deployed unit was the 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary under the command of Lt Colonel Harold Moore.

On the day the 7<sup>th</sup> began returning, I arrived at our office by the aircraft parking ramp, (a conex), built a small fire near by and had the first pot of coffee brewing by 0700. As I was busy preparing manifest for passengers out on the first available aircraft, an Army 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant suddenly appeared and ask if he could use a phone to call his unit for transportation. I directed him over to the mobile control tower as they had the only phone in the near by area.

As the Sergeant walked toward the control tower, I marveled at the man. He stood about 6' 5" and I estimated that he weighed in the neighborhood of 240 pounds, all muscle and bone. He returned a few moments later to wait for transportation back to his unit. After accepting an offer of a cup of coffee, the Sergeant sat on a wooden crate near our conex to wait for his ride. His uniform, boots, face, hands and arms were coated with grit and grime. Without giving him another thought I returned to preparing manifests and other daily tasks while listening to AFN on the small radio I had in the conex.

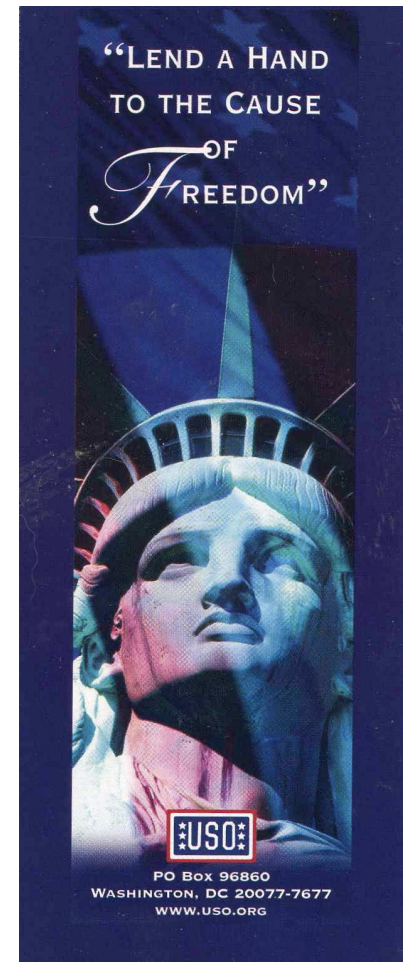
As I turned to offer the Sergeant another cup of coffee, I was absolutely stunned to see this mountain of a man who appeared to have walked through the valley of death, sitting there, gazing at the ground with tears streaming down his face.

As I tried to fathom the reason for the tears, my attention was suddenly focused on the radio and I heard the crystal tones of Tony Bennett and the words "My love waits there, in San Francisco." At that moment I understood the tears. Almost as soon as Tony Bennett finished singing, the Sergeant's ride arrived. Unashamedly, without any attempt to clean his tear stained face, and without any change of facial expression, the Sergeant stood, returned his still full coffee cup, thanked me, and got in the jeep and drove away. Where the Sergeant came from, or where he went, I'll never know, but I can guess.

Three days later I returned to Tan Son Nhut and my home in Texas without ever seeing the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant again. After arriving home, I finally realized that I had witnessed an event that very unlikely be repeated. For that one moment in time, one artist delivered a one song concert for an audience of one. Witnessing the emotional impact of that one moment in time was absolutely awesome and gave me a most memorable moment in Viet Nam.



USO



Thanks to member Janice Jones for sending this



**Tan Son Nhut Association  
Public Affairs Office  
2413 Brambleton Avenue  
Roanoke, VA 24015**

