

October/November  
2006



A Memorial to the American Experience  
In Vietnam

# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

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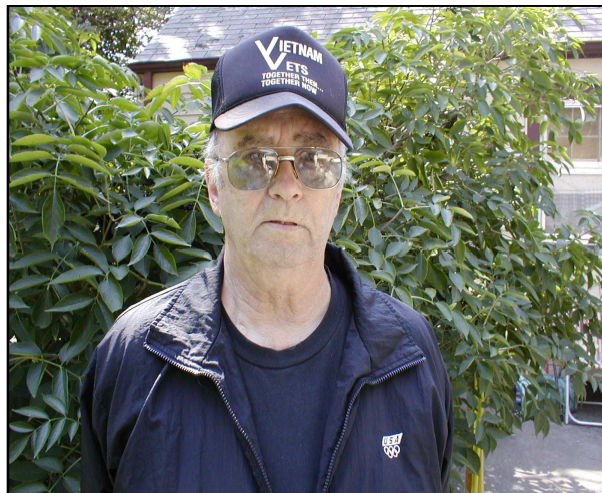
**Happy Thanksgiving!**

## THANKSGIVING DAY, 1967

By the President of the United States : a Proclamation

...Over the years, we have made Thanksgiving a unique national occasion. Thanking God for His goodness, we thank Him as well for the promise and achievement of America. Our reasons for gratitude are almost without number.... Much as we are grateful for these material and spiritual blessings, we are conscious, in this year, of special sorrows and disappointments. We are engaged in a painful conflict in Asia, which was not of our choosing, and in which we are involved in fidelity to a sacred promise to help a nation which has been the victim of aggression. We are proud of the spirit of our men who are risking their lives on Asian soil. We pray that their sacrifice will be redeemed in an honorable peace and the restoration of a land long torn by war...

LYNDON B. JOHNSON



**Life Member Joe Montag**

This picture should have been part of Joe's article in the last Revetments.

The Thanksgiving menu of today remains surprisingly unchanged from those of the past. An analysis of 100 military menus, from 1917 to 1997 and from Boston to Saudi Arabia, show that 100% of the menus offer turkey, 98% offer dressing, 92% offer cranberry sauce, and 89% offer gravy. 96% of the menus offer pie, with 81% offering pumpkin pie. In the grand military Thanksgiving Day tradition, some things do remain the same

Above articles submitted by Jim Dugan



**Graphic by Charles Penley**  
Made for Wayne and Tobey Salisbury

Charles has many talents: the TSNA Web site, TSN history, communications with veterans....the list is endless. Now he is showing his graphic talent. What an incredible guy.

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.

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## My Two Tours In Vietnam

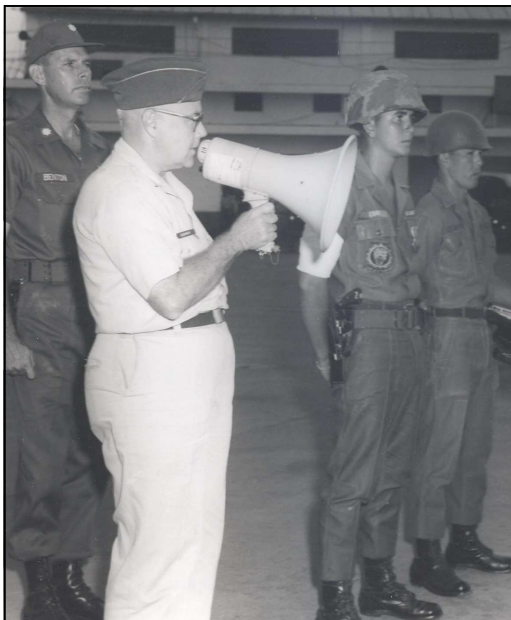
By Life Member Larry Kiepke

My first Tan Son Nhut tour came about when I thought the assignment clerk at Bergstrom AFB was joking when he asked if I wanted to go to Vietnam. This was March 1965. I had only been back in the states for 11 months following an 18 month unaccompanied tour in Libya. Going along with the "joke", I said, "Hell yes, send me". They did. I took my wife and 2 children back to South Dakota where they had been during my tour in Libya, and reported to Travis AFB for my flight to Vietnam.

We had 70 enlisted and 3 officers on the C-135 that departed Travis with scheduled stops at Hickam and Clark. One hour out of Travis, our itinerary was rudely interrupted. An engine caught fire and we made a 180 - back to Travis. Four days later they still couldn't make the bird airworthy, so another 135 was sent from McGuire to get us on our way. By this time, you couldn't scrape together \$10.00 from our whole gang.

The leg to Hickam was uneventful and we stayed overnight, thinking we really didn't need money anyway. We took off the next morning and guess what; thirty minutes out, an engine caught fire again. Back to Hickam we went. Between waiting for a replacement engine and crew rests, we spent another four days in Hawaii. One of the officers did manage to get us a partial pay and avoided a revolt.

We then flew to Guam where another night was spent. The next morning we had the longest take-off roll I've ever experienced and proceeded on our way. We were supposed to have a 3 day lay over at Clark for indoctrination and AR-15 training, but the pilot told us he had that thing in the air and we were staying there until we got to Tan Son Nhut. Then he pulled that little trick of dropping the flaps and gear - and went straight down. Apparently he frowned on long approaches. So, a one day flight turned into ten days.



Colonel George Budway

I was assigned to the administrative section of Base Headquarters with Colonel George Budway as Base Commander. I wasn't crazy about the headquarters location. Walking out the door, you looked directly through the bat-wing doors of the mortuary just across the street. The build-up was just starting and casualties were relatively light.

I lived in a tent for about a month and then moved up to a hootch. While living in the hootch, I had the pleasure of befriending two transportation drivers who made daily runs between TSN and Bien Hoa, hauling equipment on a 40' flatbed. I rode shotgun with them numerous times, praying I wouldn't have to use the AR-15 I was provided (never had that training at Clark).

After a few months, I had the opportunity to move to the Metrople BEQ in Saigon and jumped on it. Life was good. We had a barbeque on the roof and beer flowed freely. We would sit up there at night and watch the flares around the perimeter of TSN. My transportation friends somehow acquired a jeep

for my use between TSN and the Metrople. At that time, unless on duty, uniforms were discouraged in Saigon. It was also a no-no to have a firearm off base, but this policy was not strictly enforced. We had non-issue weapons in our room and I carried a .45 to and from the base (mama raised a fool - not an idiot).

There were two events in June 65 that brought me to the reality of where I was. The VC detonated a satchel charge in the terminal and a TOY NCO I worked with lost his hearing. He was in the terminal on his way back to his unit in Japan. The other was the first B52 strike in the Iron Triangle, 30 miles north of Tan Son Nhut. I thought the sheet metal buildings around the headquarters were going to shake apart. There were numerous VC actions around Saigon (I refuse to call it H- C- M— City) throughout summer and fall.

In October 1965, four NCO's in CE were captured by the VC while returning from a trip to Vung Tau. Only one escaped and returned to TSN. That was SSgt Jasper Page and I did get to talk to him when he came to the headquarters for debriefing. He couldn't discuss the circumstances with me, and I didn't pursue it. I did communicate with him via E Mail a few years ago, but he didn't remember the meeting, which was understandable.

Then came December 1965, and the war got real personal. I had just finished shaving around 0500 when the VC tried to rearrange the Metrople with a truck bomb, estimated to be around 250



Metropole Hotel

Continued on next page

pounds of explosives. There were over 60 casualties, mostly Vietnamese civilians. The clown I shared a room with at the time fell to his knees and skinned



**Metropole Hotel**

one on a broken tile. The tile had been broken when I moved into the room, long before the explosion. He didn't even bleed. He outweighed me by 50 pounds and the concussion didn't move me. He waited 3 days before going to the dispensary so he could get a Purple Heart. I still say he was responsible for the memo that was disseminated shortly thereafter saying if you wanted a Purple Heart, you would bleed. He also immediately moved back on base where he would be "safer". I continued to live in the Metropole until I rotated the following May.

I do have to tell you about what happened later to this character. If any of you were at TSN in early 66, you may remember it. SSgt \_\_\_\_\_ was the Base Commander's driver and made sure everybody knew it. One night he went to the NCO Club and overindulged, becoming rowdy and argumentative. He was removed from the club several times and kept coming back. Finally, the Security Police removed him and he insisted they call the Base Commander, who would straighten them out. Well, the SP's woke up the Base Commander at 0200 and he did straighten it out. The SSgt wound up at a small desk so far back in the supply warehouse that you needed a flashlight to find him. I think he spent the rest of his tour avoiding the Base Commander. I was in the Metropole during the mortar and rocket attack on TSN in the Spring

of 66. My former roommate found out there really was no "safe" place in Vietnam.

I came back to the states in May 66, and eventually wound up at SAC Hq, Offutt AFB. In 1970 I volunteered for Vietnam again, this time knowing what I was doing. My assignment was with MACV J-2 (Intelligence). It was an experience working in a joint command and discovering how the other services operate. I

gained a lasting respect for the other branches, especially the Army. I served with them from August 1970 to August 1971.

Naturally, the new guy gets the details. One of mine was being NCO in charge of a M-60 squad on the MACV Defense Force. My experience with a M-60 was one half day at a firing range someplace between TSN and Bien Hoa. My first briefing to the squad consisted of telling them I had full confidence in their know-how and experience, and as long as what they did didn't get us killed, I was all for it. We got along great. Our area of responsibility was behind MACV Headquarters with no doors or windows. I don't even remember a bunker anywhere near us. I felt a kinship with those who faced a firing squad; but, there were no incidents around the headquarters during my tour.

I went to Bangkok for R&R, where my brother-in-law and sister were stationed. The Army's idea and my idea of 5 days differed. They had me one day AWOL and I firmly believe the only thing that saved my hide was that I worked with the ranking Army Sergeant Major in Vietnam. Army Sergeant Majors have more clout than Chiefs of Staff.

I believe if the war hadn't ended, I would have volunteered again. Both tours were rewarding and I felt I was contributing

more than I ever did on all of my stateside and European assignments.

I'll end this with a humorous note. I looked up the Metropole on the internet as it is today and made the mistake of showing it to my wife. I had a helluva time convincing her that in 1965 they DID NOT have massage parlors, saunas, valet parking, swimming pool, and several other luxuries in the Metropole.

Welcome Home All - Let's concentrate now on giving support to our brothers and sisters in-arms overseas.

### ***A Bit of History***

Tan Son Nhut Airport was built by the French in the 1920s as Saigon's commercial airport. Flights to and from France, as well as within Southeast Asia were available prior to World War II. During World War II, the Imperial Japanese Army used Tan Son Nhut as a transport base. When Japan surrendered in August 1945 the French Air Force flew a contingent of 150 troops into Tan Son Nhut.

The facility served domestic as well as international flights from Saigon. As the war in Southeast Asia escalated, the airport took on a dual role, beginning in 1953, serving as a military air base for the South Vietnamese Air Force. However, it was not until 1956 that the headquarters for the SVNAF was moved from the center of Saigon to Tan Son Nhut Air Base. But even before that time military aircraft were always in evidence at Tan Son Nhut, mostly C-47 Skytrains.

Starting in the early 1960s, the build-up of the SVNAF caused air units to become very visible on the base. On 4 January 1964 the SVNAF 3311th Wing was organized at Tan Son Nhut, and the number of air units grew rapidly. By the mid-1960s Tan Son Nhut Airport was reported as the busiest airport in the world, with a mix of air traffic that approached chaotic proportions.



## Revetments Motto

By Wayne Salisbury

Perhaps you have wondered who thought up the motto on the front cover of *Revetments: A Memorial to the American Experience In Vietnam*.

In February 2004 I received an email from then-*Revetments* publisher and TSNA Vice President, Bob Need. The thrust of his email was a long explanation of why the TSNA needed a motto. He asked what I thought and I told him I thought it was a excellent idea.

In less than an hour he emailed me offering two different versions of what he thought would be a good motto. He asked which one I liked best. I selected one and wrote back that I thought it would suffice for a motto. In an hour or so he wrote again and suggested that I look at two more that he had come up with.

All of his suggestions were good, but I stuck with what I had selected. He wrote back and said that the one I selected was not good enough. I wrote back and told him any of the ones he had come up with were very good, and I'd leave it up to him to make the final selection.

No. I had to be part of the selection process.

In short order I received yet another email with 3 more motto suggestions. Bob was an extremely good writer with a keen sense of prose and poetry. He was also known as a person that was adamant that things had to be done right.

Exasperated, I finally wrote this email to him:

**Bob:**

**I am but a cog in a big machine. I appreciate that you have sought my opinion on such an important matter, but I must tell you that all your suggested mottos are very good, any of which would do justice**

to the cover of *Revetments*. I still think my original pick was the best you made. So I stick with it.

Colonel Salisbury

-----  
Now you may be wondering why I signed the email as Colonel Salisbury. That is a long story, but the short end of it was Bob and I always made up a rank for each other when we communicated via email. If I felt strongly about a matter and wanted to make a point I'd sign the letter Colonel. If I really wanted to make a point I'd address him as Private Need, and he'd do the same with me.

This was his response:

**Dear Private Salisbury,**

**Your input in the final selection of the motto is vitally important to me. Please review all the mottos I've suggested and give me your final, absolute choice. I do not agree that the original choice you made is my best work. Try again.**

Colonel Need

-----  
I had had enough. I knew this could go on for hours, if not days. I finally had to force the issue with Bob:

**Dear Private Need:**

**My first selection stands. I will not change my mind. My decision is firm. If I receive another email regarding the subject of a motto selection you will be facing court martial.**

General Wayne Salisbury

-----  
Within five minutes I received his reply:

**Dear General:**

**I have made the final choice, and it's NOT the one you suggested!**

**Respectfully yours,**

**Robert S. Need  
President**

-----  
**I laughed the rest of the day**

## New Associate Editor of Revetments



**Walter D'Ambrosio**

I'm pleased to announce Walt D'Ambrosio has volunteered to assume the new position of *Revetments* Associate Editor. Walt has extensive experience that will be of great help to the *Revetments* Editorial Staff.

Thank you, Walt, for stepping up to the plate to help.

## New Contributing Editor of Revetments



**Jim Dugan**

As announced in the last *Revetments*, Jim Dugan has volunteered to become one of two Contributing Editors. He has a vast knowledge of the Internet, plus he is an excellent writer. I've known Jim for several years; he is an excellent choice for this position. Thank you, Jim!

## Sharing A Common Bond

By Harold Boone  
Life Member

Sometimes things happen that causes one to look inward for strength and outward to those in our life that mean so much to us. Family. Friends. We do this for several reasons: we know we cannot deal with the issues of life alone, and other times we only need someone to talk to and to confide in. As I write this note, I am speaking about my own life and quite possible the lives of many Tan Son Nhut members.

My wife has cancer and has undergone surgery and now has started chemo with radiation to follow. Many of you have already gone down this road and others are sure to follow. It is nothing new, unless it is you or someone in your own household.

Sadly, we have discovered in a most hard way the value of conversations with friends and family. Out of those conversations, we have learned about a level of caring that reassures our faith in others. To a person, offers of prayer, words of comfort, and acts of kindness come forth. We have been humbled by people who care.

There was a time long ago in a far away place that we had to care for one another the best we could. We worked together for the common good of all. Now we belong to this organization called Tan Son Nhut Association and when we look around, we see the effects of aging and poor health within our ranks.

Caring did not stop when we left Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Members have reached out to Brenda and me with words of comfort and offers of prayer.

This brings me to the heart of my writing to you. Why not use some space in Revetments to post news of members whose lives have been broken by serious health problems and even death. In doing so, members could offer words of support and encouragement to one another and within ones own faith, a

prayer.

We all share a common bond and it is this bond that has caused us to offer ourselves as members to the Association. While we are separated by distance, this bond is reason enough to keep us close in spirit. This spirit is a spirit of caring and all we have to do is let the need be known. This is a simple concept of remembering others during difficult times.

As Revetments is read, others will know of each others hurts and broken hearts. Nothing will be required and everyone will be free to care in their own way. Some will respond with an e-mail, some with a phone call, some will offer prayers, most importantly though, is all recipients will be thankful.

Editor's Note: I think it's a excellent idea to invite members to inform us if an illness has befallen them or someone in their family. If you have something to share, please feel free to let us know. It is not necessary to publish your name with the article. Perhaps you'd rather remain anonymous.

The key is what Harold wrote: "...everyone will be free to care in their own way."

I've always felt that we are family.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Brenda and Harold.



## Incorrect Email Addresses

By Wayne Salisbury

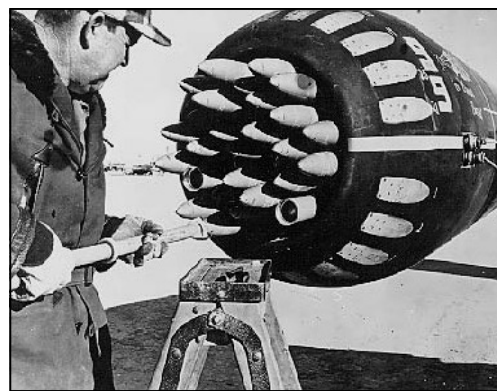
No, it's not always the fault of the member. Often a member informs me of his or her email address change, and the change is made in the membership listing, but I sometimes fail to change the address in the official TSNA email addresses.

If you have not being receiving email from the TSNA office, let me know. I'll make the update immediately.

## Take A Guess

What aircraft had 2.75 rocket pods attached on both wing tips?

(See Page 8)



## Tan Son Nhut Association

REUNION

May 3—6

2007

Dayton, Ohio

## A Hobby After Vietnam

By Paul Smith  
360th TEWS EC-47 Pilot  
TSN 1972—1973

Here's a little input on a lighter vein. Actually only about 6.6 ounces.

What I have here is a Combat Master which I built for a "Musciano Hollow Log Contest" in Kalamazoo, Michigan. These model airplanes are copies of models that were built by kids in the 1954-thru-1962 era. Back in the day, the balsa kits cost between \$1.29 and \$2.49.

40-to-50 years later, the grown-up kids are taking another whack at it. Like most of the others, I normally fly much bigger and more expensive models. This model has been test flown. While it doesn't "fly great", it is better than the originals.

As you can see, I've included the TSNA logo, Betty Page, and the same decals as the Bearcat outside VNAF Hq. The finish is clear dope to save weight.



## I Met A Great American

By Thomas Hildreth  
1876th Communications Squadron  
TSN 1968—1969



Tom Hildreth

By a wonderful coincidence, I met a great American last week. My company conducts a "safety day" every year and all employees get the opportunity to see and in some cases operate the latest in industrial safety equipment. We also partake in a great barbeque and get some face time with folks we normally only talk to on the phone. The event wraps up with a presentation by a motivational speaker and some prize drawings. It's a pretty good event.

The day before, I spent a moment reading the bio of this year's invited speaker. It was time well spent. I had no sooner sat down with my BBQ in the tent, when I was introduced to Mike Mullane, RF-4C back-seater at TSN and later Space Shuttle Mission Specialist. Mike flew 150 combat missions with the 460<sup>th</sup> TRW, and later went on to sit in the right seat of F-111s.

In 1978 Mullane was selected as a member of the first group of shuttle astronauts, and he went on to fly three space missions aboard Discovery (STS-41D), and Atlantis (STS-27 & 36). Mike's talk was one of the best, a highly-charged presentation on team membership and its responsibilities.

My best recollection of the day was when I saw his eyes light up when I asked him if he was with the 460<sup>th</sup>. I wasted no time in asking him what he thought of today's slow remotely-piloted recon drones in comparison to fast-movers like the RF-4C, a subject I would like to see covered in detail.

But I realize now there was something I forgot to say to Mike. It's a greeting that TSN Association members share willingly and I was remiss in not saying it to a great guy:

Welcome home, Mike.



Mike Mullane on board STS-27—December 1988

**- If you guessed F-89 Scorpion -  
- you are correct -**



I know all of you think I am a young Vietnam veteran, and I probably wasn't even around when this aircraft was in the Air Force inventory. But I was. In fact I was a crew chief on the F-89 when I was with the North Dakota Air National Guard, in Fargo, ND. That was the start of my Air Force career in 1958.

Now, how about those rocket pods?

The forward third of each tank contained a series of launch tubes for 52 2.75-inch Folding Fin Aircraft Rockets (FFAR). These rockets were known as *Mighty Mouse*, after a well-known cartoon character ("Here I come to save the day"). The outer ring of tubes had metal doors covering the rockets, while the inner honeycomb of tube were each covered with individual protective plastic caps. These rockets were unguided and had an effective range of about 2000 yards and were equipped with high-explosive warheads. The rear two thirds of the tank was taken up by 308 gallons of fuel.

The F-89 was replaced by the F-102 Delta Dagger, which saw action in Vietnam as early as 1962.. The planes were typically used for fighter defense patrols and as escorts for B-52 bomber raids. The F-102 was considered one of the most useful air defense aircraft in theater because it had the fastest response time of any fighter stationed in South Vietnam. While the F-102 had few opportunities to engage in its primary role of air combat, the aircraft was used in the close air support role starting in 1965. Armed with unguided rockets, Delta Daggers would make attacks on

Viet Cong encampments in an attempt to harass enemy soldiers. Amazingly, some missions were even conducted using the aircraft's heat-seeking air-to-air missiles to lock onto enemy campfires at night. Though the F-102 had not been designed for this type of combat, pilots did often report secondary explosions coming from their targets. An Aviation Week article of the period credited the 509th FIS, an F-102 squadron stationed in Vietnam, with destroying 106 buildings, damaging 59 more, sinking 16 sampans, and destroying one bridge during 199 sorties over the

course of 45 days.

The F-102 was taken out of the Vietnam theater in 1968.

The F-102 was replaced by the F-106 and the F-101. Many Air National Guard units flew the F-102 until it was removed from inventory. Later, the aircraft was used as drones for jet fighter gunnery ranges.

If you worked on the F-102 at Tan Son Nhut, please let me know.

Wayne Salisbury



**F-102 Delta Dagger**

**S/N FC-987 - Crew Chief: Wayne Salisbury**

**Picture taken at Whellus Air Base, Tripoli Libya, North Africa  
1961**

**My squadron (32nd FIS) from the Netherlands was at Whellus for  
transitional training from the F-100 to the F-102.**



**Tan Son Nhut—Circa 1965 (F102's on the left)  
Photo Compliments of William Johns**



# Master Sergeant Robert Stanley Need USAF Retired



**Master Sergeant Robert S. Need (ret.) passed away July 2004. I lost a personal friend and the Tan Son Nhut Association lost a dedicated, hard-working Vice President, Editor and Publisher of *Revetments*.**

**In the last days of his life he made it clear to his family and me that he didn't want a funeral. He insisted that his remains be cremated and that I "scatter his ashes over a body of water." He also told me that he didn't want a gathering of people—no ceremony. I just nodded my head and gave him a final salute.**

**This week the wife and I will scatter his ashes in the Roanoke River. He knew that the TSNA office would be moved to my home in Roanoke Virginia.**

**His earthy remains will be part of Roanoke—forever more.**

**R.I.P**

**Our Master Sergeant Friend**

**Wayne Salisbury  
President, Tan Son Nhut Association**

# *Tan Son Nhut Association Challenge Coin*

This beautiful coin continues to be a very popular item in our BX/PX. Members and non-members alike have purchased the coin to add to their growing collection of challenge coins. The coin is 1 5/8 inches in diameter. All letters and graphics are raised above the surface.



The coin may be purchased for only \$10.00, which includes shipping and handling. Send check or money order to:

**Johnnie Jernigan  
956 Donham Drive  
Beavercreek, OH 45434**

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