



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

## The "Major Mom" story—Part Two

**Editor's note:** This is a continuation of the "Major Mom" story first published in the December 2009 issue of Revetments. The story continues based on emails between members of the TSNA Board of Directors and others.

From: Ray Rash 9/17/2009  
Subject: Waving at the Nurses

Charles,  
You most certainly have my permission to use any comments I make about the nurses. I was assigned to Brian Lighthouse's V-100 and we would make a special trip by their BOQ after guard mount to wave and get a smile from some 'Nice Ladies'. Somewhere, (if I can ever find them) I have several pictures of a Capt..? (Don't remember his name, only that he was blond headed and had a red-dish mustache) who was only interested in getting his picture taken while the plaque was presented to Mom. Right off, I can't recall who all was assigned to Brian's V-100, but I think Robert Joy was also in the photos, along with several others. If anyone recalls, Brian had 'Vini Veni Vici' stenciled on the V-100, and he said it stood for "We Came, We Saw, and We Conquered". Of course, I never learned Latin.

Your Friend,  
Ray Rash

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From: Carol Bessette 9/17/2009  
Hi, Ray--

Thanks for the information. I didn't expect to get so much feedback, and so quickly.

I think I only participated in this "tradition" once, possibly twice. I worked at Hq.7AF and we didn't leave the office until at least 1800 or later, so I only would have been in the right place, right time on a day off. And I usually didn't hang around my room on a rare free afternoon.

Someone mentioned that "Mom" usually wore a uniform, whereas the other women were not in uniform. That makes me think that she had just come off shift (1500?), whereas the other women would have been like me, "happening to be there"--and I sure didn't wear my uniform around my room! (We "at the headquarters" had to dress the part--per official order, and it meant, for me, stockings and high heels--in that heat! Later, "Washington" devised a test uniform (slacks and sneakers) and I was one of the ones to test it . . . and was much happier in the slacks.)

Someplace we have a photo of me "helping" the guys in my 7AF intell office to fill sandbags. They are all bare-chested, in fatigues, and I am in my drip dry uniform, stockings, and high heels. I don't think I set any records for the numbers of bags filled. .

If you find some photos, that would be great. I wonder what happened to

her? Since I never knew her name, it's rather hard to investigate. It'd be a coup to get her to one of your reunions. (And I think she'd be enormously pleased to attend.)

Thanks for contacting me . . . I am sharing this with Charles Penley and with the TSNA guy who is collecting these thoughts and reminisces. Interesting how one thought seems to spark another--

Carol Bessette

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From Charles Penley Oct 6, 2009

Subject: Major Ruth Sidisin is the nurse who was known as "MOM"

Joan Gray, Carol Bessette, Ray Rash, Don Segraves and Jack Smith,

I have found Major Ruth Sidisin, also known as "Mom," on the internet. (Now I will see if I can locate her in person.)

Please go to URL:  
[http://www.son.jhmi.edu/jhnmagazine/archive/winter2005/pages/fea1\\_letters.htm](http://www.son.jhmi.edu/jhnmagazine/archive/winter2005/pages/fea1_letters.htm)

Scroll down about two thirds of the way on that page and you will see:

Vietnam, and a photograph of Major Ruth Sidisin. Then look specifically at the last paragraph.

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*"My most treasured memory of my tour in Viet-Nam is of the valor and courage of our American Servicemen--their selflessness, comradeship and brotherhood. My special favorites were the enlisted men and Officers of the 377th Security Police. I became the "Mom" to the 368 men guarding the base perimeter at night. Every night, I would wave them off to work either perched on this Rat Bait Box outside my room or from the 2nd floor veranda, sometimes with the help of other nurses or WAF. My sons would ride by in their trucks, jeeps, tanks or Armored Personnel Carriers in fair weather or Monsoon rains to protect us... On Mother's Day they presented me with a beautiful bouquet of pink gladioli on their way to work. One night they surprised me by naming one of the mini-gun tanks after me..."*

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I found her by searching Google for "Tan Son Nhut nurse wave mom".

Persistence definitely pays off. I feel like "Superman."

Your friend,

Charles Penley

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From Larry Fry 10/7/09

She is a member of TSNA!! I talked with her a year or two ago when she changed rooms at the nursing home she lives in, and they sent her mail back!

Look what is in the original data that Bob Need or Wayne put in – probably not knowing the story: "USAF Nurse-"Mom" to Security Police"

Good work, everyone!

Larry

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REVETMENTS

From Carol Bessette 10/7/2009

I just got a message from Joan Gray-- just asking whether she had the right email for me. I wrote her back and gave her the background on why I wrote that particular story . . . and how Charles put the story on 377th SP websites, and how we went from there . . . diverted temporarily by a wrong name, but how he did what seems obvious now (but it was so "obvious" that it never crossed my mind) and went to Google and found the Major.

I hope all of this detective work may brighten her day. She is remembered, and remembered fondly. (Not many people can think that they are remembered "fondly.")

And as I wrote Joan Gray, I wrote the story because I couldn't think of anything else to write about (actually, things that [a] I would want to share, [b] that would be appropriate), and so that is why I chose that story. And, as I wrote Joan, the story isn't over yet. People have been sharing their memories, etc. That is cool. Perhaps we will hear from other people--more parts of the story. . .

Carol

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From Charles Penley 10/09/2009

Hello Everyone,

Dee Corbett-Reiter, one of the nurses at Tan Son Nhut the same time as Ruth Sidisin, visited with her and took some photographs; they are attached to this email as a .pdf document.

I know that it was wonderful for me to see them, and all of you on this particular email are also connected with Maj Sidisin.

Dee, can you tell me what rank that Ruth retired as? If she retired as a Colonel, we would still call her Major,

as that was the rank that we knew her as, some forty years ago.

It is so nice to see her face, to go along with the voice I heard during a phone call a couple of days ago.

Thank you all the help that you are doing so that we can reconnect with all of you ladies.

Your friend,

Charles Penley

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From: Dee Reiter 10/9/2009

Subject: Ruth Sidisin

Attached are photos that I took today. The first are of the plaque the 377th gave Ruth in 1969. The remainder are of Ruth Sidisin holding the plaque she received over 40 years ago. Hope you all enjoy.

Dee

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From Carol Bessette 10/10/2009

I think that some of you are not aware of this whole, unwinding story. I was asked to write something for Revetments "from the woman's perspective," and I wrote an article about a woman (a nurse major) who lived in my BOQ. I did not know her and didn't even know her name at the time, but I knew she organized any woman who was available to stand on our second floor balcony in the late afternoon and to wave at the SPs as they were heading off for a shift change. (I did participate once or twice, but I worked until 1800 or so, so was seldom in the building when this all happened.)

Anyway, I planted the seed with this article, and Charles picked up the ball and ran with it, and is still running. And other people got involved, like Jim Smith, joining in with their memories and their photos.



Graphic courtesy of:

Major (Ret) Dee Corbett-Reiter  
21st Casualty Staging Unit  
Tan Son Nhut Air Base  
Sep 1969 - Sep 1970

This is the Ruth Sidisin holding the plaque that the men of the 377th Security Police Squadron, Heavy Weapons Section awarded to her prior to her PCS back to "The World."



Graphic courtesy of: Major (Ret) Dee Corbett-Reiter

Graphic courtesy of:

Col Joan Gray  
 21st Casualty Staging Unit  
 Tan Son Nhut Air Base  
 December 1969 to December 1970

Here is a photograph of four of the retired nurses that served in Vietnam with Major Ruth Sidisin:

Sitting:

Lt. Col (Ret.) Maryanne Dellesky

Standing L - R:

Major (Ret.) Dee Corbett-Reiter  
 Lt. Col. (Ret) Diane Hoskin  
 Col. (Ret.) Joan Gray.



These are just a few of the nurses that waved to the 377th Security Policemen nightly as they finished their guardmount and then enroute to their various nightly bunkers. The photograph was taken at the Society of Air Force Nurses National Convention in Branson, MO., Sep 22 - 27, 2009.



## TSNA 2009 FINANCIAL REPORT

### CASH INFLOW

Membership	\$7,860*
BX	2,593
Donations	1,185
Interest	95
Reunion	14,764
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$26,497</b>

### TSNA ACCOUNTS AS OF 12/31/2009

Operating Funds	\$12,729
Membership Reserves	6,012**
Reunion Expenses Reserve	3,000
Endowment/Legacy Fund	978
Educational/Award Fund	1,000
Certificate of Deposit	5,000

### CASH OUTFLOW

Bank/Legal Fees	\$ 21
BX	4,184
Discretionary	1,687
Membership Administration	1,752
Office Supplies	68
Reunion	8,367
Revetments	945
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$17,024</b>

**TOTAL: \$28,719**

### NOTES:

\*Includes multi-year and life memberships; these dues will be pro-rated over a set number of years.

\*\*Consists of multi-year and life membership dues which are pro-rated over a set number of years.

Submitted by Carol Bessette, TSNA Treasurer

DIFFERENCE **+ \$ 9,473**

### Thoughts on the VA

By: Ted Dodge  
377th Supply Squadron  
1969 to 1970

Charles and Larry,

It was great meeting both of you 2 weeks ago at the reunion and making many other new friends. I don't know if you remember but I mentioned to you an idea for an article for Revetments and you asked me to send you the information so here it is. I am sending this to both of you Charles and Larry and you can decide which of you will use it either online or in Revetments, or you may not want to use it at all, I hope it can help, if it only helps one person I would be thrilled.

First I would like to mention that Lt. Mike Thornton, Larry, Charles and your sister Janice, and many other new friends that I met at the reunion are as friendly and kind, and nice as anyone I have met for years. Johnnie Jernigan and George Plunket and the list goes on, I could give several names of people that made the reunion, a memorable and enjoyable experience. This was my first

reunion but certainly won't be my last.

The suggested article for Revetments is short and concerns the many people I see writing this web site asking for some way to prove to the Veterans Administration that they were in Vietnam. I see this quite often, someone asking for anyone that was stationed at Tan Son Nhut that may remember being stationed with them in 1966 in the 460th Field Maintenance Squadron, or whatever year with whatever outfit.

The same thing happened to me, I filed a claim with the Veterans Administration and they sent me a letter saying that they needed proof that I was in Vietnam. So I sent the Veterans Administration a copy of a letter I had saved from the Commander of the 377th Combat Support Group. It had my name and a date and it was on the 377th Combat Support Group letterhead and signed by Colonel Frank E. Marek. I also sent a copy of a letter sent to my wife as I returned from Vietnam thanking her for her sacrifice and my service and extending best wishes. This seemed to be a form letter probably sent to all or most families of those who served under the

subsequent Commander of The 377th Combat Support Group, it was signed by Colonel Warren C. Shipp. That letter too was dated and had my name and was on official letterhead.

If you have no letters or communications dated with your name and letterhead showing your outfit in Vietnam, you may have received a citation with any medals you received in Vietnam, I also sent the Veterans Administration a copy of a citation that I had received. Two more suggestions, and I saved the best for last, to prove that you were in Vietnam. Your honorable discharge DD Form 214 has, in block #24, - Medals and Ribbons Awarded or Authorized. On my DD Form 214 the medals that indicated that I had served in Vietnam were abbreviated RVCM which is Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and VSM which is Vietnam Service Medal. Everyone that served in Vietnam should have those medals either abbreviated or spelled out in block #24 of your DD Form 214, the Veterans Administration will surely recognize a document from The Department of Defense. The last thing I sent the Veterans Administration was a copy of NA Form 13059 from the National Person-

nel records center. This is a Military Personnel Records form and it too will show that you are entitled to the Vietnam Service Medal and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. You can contact The National Personnel Records Center online at: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/> They will send you a copy of whatever records you need.

As I said, I sent the Veterans Administration copies of all of the above and they approved my claim, I think the DD Form 214 would have been enough by itself but something worked. I hope this can help anyone that needs some kind of proof that they served in Vietnam, good luck and best wishes to all of my Vietnam Veteran Brothers and Sisters -- and Welcome Home.



### Welcome Home Guys

By: Harold Boone  
460th TRW  
Sep 67—Aug 68

I suppose very few guys ever got any "Welcome Home" statement from anyone other than a fellow veteran of Vietnam. It just wasn't meant to be. I was one of the exceptions and want to tell you about it.

Our flight back to California was on a Braniff Airlines plane that made numerous stops as we crossed the Pacific. I don't have to tell you I felt traveling on that plane as you all know firsthand.

Usually an airline crew member would address the passengers as the plane arrived at its destination thanking everyone for flying on that particular airline. When we arrived at Travis Air Force Base, a stewardess (now known as cabin attendant) made the usual speech thanking us for flying Braniff. What was unusual was she concluded her statement by saying ". . . and welcome home guys".

This lady's "welcome home" was certainly not a fancy parade down Main Street but it was received by me as warmly as it sounded. Funny how we sometimes remember the smallest detail of an event forty plus years ago yet forget things only days old. In this case, I guess it is in the sweetness of those words.



### Why Did I Join TSNA? (Answers to that question asked by TSNA Director of Public Relations, Rich Carvell)

I discovered the TSN group on the Internet while browsing various Vietnam websites. I also attended a reunion of the 377th SPS last winter in Florida and heard it mentioned there, as well. I never thought much of my Vietnam experience over the years, but, as I get older, I am starting to reflect on it more and would like to be in touch with the community. It was a unique experience that not many people participated in.

-- anonymous  
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I was at TSN from Sept 69 to Sept 70 with the 21st CSF. I found out about the Association through Ruth Sidisin and Joan Gray. I was stationed with both of them at TSN. They both encouraged me to join.

-- Dee Reiter  
21st Combat Staging Flight, Staff Nurse  
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I found the TSNA while surfing on the net. I was bored out of my mind after having both knees scoped and could not work, so I was putting whatever came to mind in a search and wandering around the net.

We did not join until after we arrived at the (2009) Reunion because I wanted

to make sure, frankly, it was not just a bunch of drunks sitting around telling lies. TSNA is far from that and we really enjoyed the program, the people and, the camaraderie. I am proud to have the TSNA decal on my cars. My wife and I have been part of the WWII outfit reunions her father attended, and I never thought there would be a group I could associate with, since my Crypto unit was so small. TSNA fills that gap very well.

-- Andy Csordas  
Special COMSEC Support Detachment



### TSNA REUNION—2010

**The 2010 TSNA Reunion will be held October 7—10, at the Crowne Plaza Riverwalk Hotel, San Antonio, Texas.**

Our reunion guests-of-honor will be LT Thomas R. Norris, USNR (Ret.) recipient of the Medal of Honor, along with Nguyễn Văn Kiệt, former-PO2, Republic of Vietnam Navy SEAL (LDNN) & Sea Commando, recipient of the US Navy Cross. Also joining us will be TSNA life member LT Michael E. Thornton, USN (Ret.) recipient of the Medal of Honor for rescuing his SEAL squad leader, LT Tom Norris on 31 October 1972 .

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this event!

**Additional information will be forthcoming very soon!**

### THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY!

The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just.

Abraham Lincoln

History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

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**Revetments** is an official publication of the Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236  
The Association is a non-profit fraternal organization chartered under the appropriate statutes and law.

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**Web Site: [www.tsna.org](http://www.tsna.org)**

Annual Membership: \$20.00  
Five Year Membership: \$80.00  
Life Membership: \$180.00



**Editor's Note:** I have recently received a very good story to use in *Revetments*. The only problem is that it is 8 pages long. That, along with other things normally found in *Revetments*, is longer than in a "Normal" *Revetments*, which I try to keep at 10 pages. Soooooo, this February 2010 issue is short, but you will see a "Special Edition" coming your way as a Valentine's present. My thanks to my nephew for the Special Edition idea.

## NEW MEMBERS



Robert B. Medeiros	MA	Nov 71 - Nov 72	310th Tactical Airlift Wing (TAS)
Donald R. Carper	PA	Nov 66 - Aug 67	377th SPS
Jesse R. Watson, Jr.	OK	Sep 69 - Sep 70	377th Combat Support Group
Marvin Thurman	TX	Mar 67 - Mar 68	377th Combat Support Group
Gordon C. Wagner	NE	Jan 72 - Jan 73	310 TAS/21st TASS

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