



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



REUNION SPECIAL - JULY 2013

2013 TSNA REUNION

FRIDAY EVENING BANQUET PRESENTATION

By: Rich Carvell
TSNA VP
TSNA Director of Public Relations

Remember what you were doing in 1968? Larry Taylor and Cary King do. They found themselves in the middle of the Tet Offensive at Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

And they remembered some of those experiences at the 2013 banquet of the Tan Son Nhut Association Reunion in Chattanooga as they volunteered (don't these ex-military guys know they are NOT supposed to volunteer?) to fill in for the scheduled speaker who had to cancel at the last minute.

Now, Taylor is a retired Marine Corps Major General. King is an attorney in the Atlanta area.

Today we can laugh at the situation in which Taylor and King found themselves at that time. But like much of the war ... it was hours of boredom broken occasionally by moments of sheer terror.

Taylor was a chopper pilot working at the time for Air America. King was at a base north of Saigon. On a whim, Taylor surprised King by paying him an unexpected visit, flying to Saigon via commercial airliner and grabbing a chopper to Vo Tau. When he found King there, they said, "Let's go have a beer." King got a three-day in-country R&R, and they headed for Saigon.

Taylor and King had decided to take a few days off since a cease fire had been proposed for Tet, the Lunar New Year holiday, in 1968. Surely nothing would happen, Taylor and King thought.

They popped a couple at the Officer's Club at the Pacific Hotel but began hearing rumors of enemy attacks on various bases in South Vietnam in spite of the cease fire issued by the enemy. What was it with these people – the enemy? Didn't they get the word? Taylor asked rhetorically.

After a few brews at the O Club, Taylor said he and King settled in to watch the movie "A Man for All Seasons" when a gunfight broke out near Tan Son Nhut and all troops were called to duty. The projectionist shut down the projector in

the middle of the movie and troops reported to their duty stations. Taylor and King, who were just visitors to TSN, needed to get back to their units.

By the way, how does that movie end? Taylor said it was 35 years later that he got to see the whole motion picture and finally learn how it ended! (Laughter).

Taylor had gone to Saigon via commercial airliner, but when the Tet offensive of '68 began, all commercial flights were cancelled. Taylor tried military transport and went all over the country but always wound up at TSN.

Here, King steps in and tells the story as he remembers from that point. He received orders to report back to his unit but he, too, had trouble arranging military transport. Failing to get out of TSN, he was deployed to the north end of the airfield, where the enemy – hundreds of them – were trying to overrun the base. During the attack, King said, some 600 VC were killed but the Americans lost only one or two troops. As the attacking enemy was stalled, something was reported at the TSN civilian terminal and King was dispatched to find out. Turned out, King said, that it was a false alarm and no one was hurt. Thirty years later, he said, he found out that Taylor was at least there, if not actually involved in whatever was going on. Meanwhile, Taylor, standing to King's right, timidly raised and waved his hand as King tried to describe the situation so many years ago. Yes, the hand wave indicated, I was there.

King tried to explain it this way: "War is confusing. Often you do not know what is going on."

Taylor, meanwhile, was issued an M-1 carbine as he waited at the Air America Terminal. From a private villa just off the base came the unmistakable sound of an AK-47, the preferred weapon of the VC and the NVA. Turned out that it was simply a "friendly" fire fight among Air America employees, Vietnamese Air Force personnel, and USAF forces, none of whom really knew what was going on. Fortunately, no one was injured ... just many bullets flying overhead. It just, Taylor said, "scared everybody to death."

Taylor reiterated his status in country as a "civilian," working for Air America. So, he explained, there was a minor problem with Vietnam's immigration service. Taylor was supposed to stay inn 'Nam only six days but because of the outbreak of fighting and his inability to leave the country he had overstayed his visit to the country. The Vietnamese officer at the TSN Terminal explained that he would have to go to the immigration service office in downtown Saigon to

correct his status.

Taylor flagged down a couple of American military police in a jeep and convinced them to take him to the immigration office in Saigon. But along the way to the building that housed the immigration service, they ran into a road block. Ahead, they could see Vietnamese forces pouring small arms fire into the basement of a building because, Taylor was told, they had VC trapped in the facility. Guess what? It was the building that housed the immigration service.

Taylor told the MPs to turn the jeep around and head for Tan Son Nhut. There, he said, he boarded a military flight and assured the pilot that he had gotten everything straightened out, and the airplane took off to fly him back to his operational base outside of Saigon.

The general said still packed away among things in his attic is that passport with the immigration stamp that let him into the country but no stamps indicating that he ever left.

Taylor left Southeast Asia in late summer of 1968.

King, on the other hand, was in Vietnam until November of '68. As he waited at TSN for his freedom flight to leave Vietnam, he passed his last few hours in-country by having a few beers at the O Club. Drinking lasted into the early morning hours, when the enemy started dropping 122mm rockets on the base about 1:30 a.m. And that was King's send-off from Tan Son Nhut.

The author of this article was sitting in the TSNA Hospitality Room when word came that the scheduled speaker had to cancel at the last minute, leaving the Reunion without a noted individual to address the members and guests. King was at the same table as the author when Major General Taylor (ret.) came to the table. King said to Taylor that they ought to tell about their Tan Son Nhut experiences during the '68 Tet offensive. Taylor agreed, and TSNA's problem of the lack of a banquet speaker was solved. With only a few hours of preparation time, the two gentlemen performed admirably at the banquet later that night, mesmerizing the audience as the tale unfolded.



EDITOR'S NOTE: I have usually kept items from reunions in chronological order in Revetments. Space and time limitations this month have meant that I did not do that. The data is here, just not in the same order as it occurred.

THANKS

The Board would like to thank ALL who contributed food, drinks, and any other items for this year's successful "snack shop." And a special thanks to Andy and Rena Csordas and Trish Plunkett for their work in setting it all up and keeping things going. ALSO: Whoever had those delicious oatmeal cookies with raisins and craisins, in those two plastic containers with blue lids, please send me your recipe.

We would also like to thank Dean and Debbie Gard for the pens, and to Jimmy Smith for his wonderful bookmarks.

And thanks to George Bontya, Rich Carvell, Harlan Hatfield, Sue Ellen Parker, and Andy Csordas for photos I have or might use.

RED BANK JROTC

Gentlemen,

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity for our JROTC Color Guard to post the National Colors at your association's recent meeting in Chattanooga. The evening in general and the people in particular provided for a very enjoyable experience for the cadets as well as myself.

The Vietnam War may seem like ancient history to many of our young students, so it was a wonderful opportunity for our cadets to talk directly to some of the people that were there and made that history. It was especially an honor for me as I grew up during that conflict and had a tremendous respect for the men and women of our armed forces. Men and women that placed themselves in harm's way for the people of another nation. That respect was an important part of my decision to join the Army a few years later and become a career soldier.

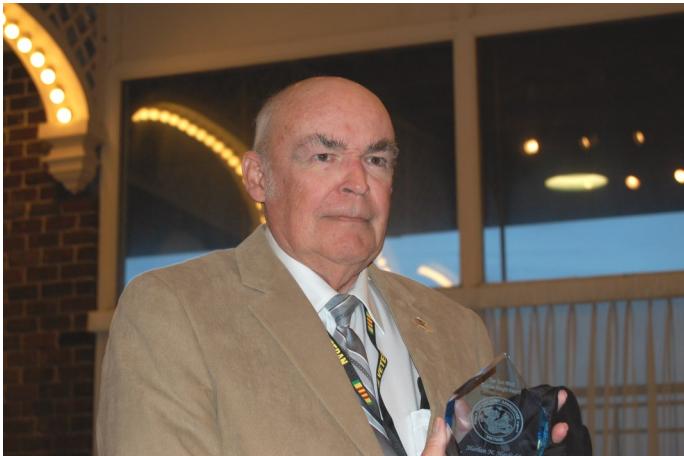
Please accept my sincere gratitude for the service to our nation from all the veterans and spouses of your organization. Also, if possible, we would love to have a copy of a few of the photos that were taken that evening.

Respectfully,

Ricky L. Franklin, SGM (Retired)
JROTC Instructor
Red Bank High School

(See Page 9 for pictures of the cadets at the banquet)

2013 TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIAITON REUNION AWARDS CEREMONY



GOLDEN KNIGHT AWARD - HARLAN HATFIELD



GOLDEN KNIGHT AWARD - THOMAS TESSIER



MILITARY ORDER OF THE DRAGON AWARD
CAROL BESSETTE



MILITARY ORDER OF THE DRAGON AWARD
BOB GALES



ANCHOR AWARD - SUE ELLEN PARKER

2013 TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIAITON REUNION AWARDS CEREMONY



ANCHOR AWARD - JANICE JONES



ANCHOR AWARD - SHARON JERNIGAN



SUPREME MILITARY ORDER OF THE DRAGON AWARD
CHARLES PENLEY



SUPREME MILITARY ORDER OF THE DRAGON AWARD
LARRY FRY



SUPREME MILITARY ORDER OF THE DRAGON AWARD
WAYNE SALISBURY

WELCOME

The mission of the Tan Son Nhut Association is to "Assist veterans of all eras and their families, wherever and whenever possible." To that end we have invited a very special person from the local community - a warm TSNA Welcome for the proud widow of Marine Sergeant Clay Prescott, Charity Prescott.



TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION, INC. PROCLAMATION JUNE 15, 2013

WHEREAS, Tan Son Nhut Association member William Coup has previously attended every reunion prior to 2013.

WHEREAS, member William Coup loyally serves as a member of the Tan Son Nhut Association Board of Directors and participated in the 2013 meeting via telecom.

WHEREAS, member William Coup has faithfully served on many Tan Son Nhut Association committees.

WHEREAS, member William Coup submitted application with payment to attend the 2013 Tan Son Nhut Association Reunion and reserved a hotel room.

WHEREAS member William Coup fully participated in the TSNA board meeting held on Saturday, June 15, 2013 via phone.

WHEREAS, member William Coup not being physically present at the 2013 Tan Son Nhut Association Reunion at Chattanooga, TN is due to circumstances not under his control.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors hereby decrees that William Coup is in attendance at the 2013 Reunion, and his perfect record for reunion attendance record shall remain intact.

Approved this 15th day of June, 2013.

George Plunkett

George Plunkett, President

EDITOR'S NOTE: An email from Bill Coup: "I was diagnosed with Esophageal Cancer in April and have undergone and completed chemo and radiation treatment. I am now awaiting surgery once I sufficiently recover my strength and weight. The doctors are optimistic that I will have a complete recovery and should be able to attend the Evansville reunion."

The Missing Man Table Ceremony

Again this year, Johnnie and Sharon Jernigan performed the Missing Man Table Ceremony.

And they were capably assisted by their reader, Jimmy Smith.

And this year there was an addition to the text. Do you "REMEMBER" what it was?

Thanks folks!



First -Timer Comments

As my parents world began to shrink after they retired, I remember wondering what life would be like when I reached that time in my life. Now that retirement is just a question of whether now or a little later, my world unexpectedly grew by leaps and bounds over the span of a few days during TSNA's 2013 Reunion. Through Kerry's association with all of you, I met many new friends from all over our country. You have created a relaxed atmosphere and an inclusive attitude that makes being a first-timer easy. From the first "official" hug from Janice to the goodbye hugs from new friends – I had a great time.

Margaret Nivens
Wife of TSNA Director Kerry Nivens

More Reunion Comments

The 2013 TSNA Reunion in Chattanooga was the first I have attended. What a pleasant surprise! I was going there to please my husband, expecting to be bored with war stories and tales of woe from wives who sat in wait at home. Instead, I met many lovely women most of which also were post wartime sweethearts, and who seemed to me like long lost cousins finding their way to each other at the family reunion. They laughed together, cried together, and welcomed me warmly. I had an emergency call from family the first day and they immediately "circled the wagons", said a prayer, and checked with me frequently for news! We will be back as often as we can because both of us want to be there!

Barb Templeton
A New TSNA Sister

BOOKS & BOOKS

For something new this year, we had two author's bring their books and stories to our Reunion. Ross Lewis also did a special presentation about his book on Saturday morning.



Ross Lewis talks about his book.



Jerry Childers talks about his book.

CHATTANOOGA RIVER CRUISE

By: Kerry Nivens, Co-Director of Membership Development
TSNA

Over 100 TSNA members and guests enjoyed a Tennessee River luncheon cruise on the Southern Belle riverboat. Our Captain pointed out many interesting points along the river. We turned around at Moccasin Bend, which is the steepest curve in the river. Moccasin Bend got its name from the Indians.

One of the more interesting points that the captain pointed out was that the river covers over 650 miles long and flows through 4 states (Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Kentucky). At the end of the river in Paducah KY, its elevation is higher than at its beginning near Knoxville, TN.

The leisurely ride along the river was an enjoyable lunch break on Saturday.



Security Police Recognition

By George Plunkett
TSNA President

Left unsaid for many reunions now is the contribution made by a highly trained, highly motivated and extremely brave group of individuals.

Accurate statistics on the total number of troops who served in this function in southeast Asia are impossible to obtain, but we know that they suffered many killed in action, many more wounded in action and all returned home with the mental scars of PTSD.

I am speaking about the Air Policemen, Military Policemen or Security Policemen who served in all of the military branches. Call them what you will, but their service saved many of our lives.

They were the defenders of Tan Son Nhut and Ban Me Thuot, of Tuy Hoa and Bien Hoa, of Soc Trang and Nha Trang, of Pleiku, DaNang, Cam Ranh Bay, Udorn, Ubon and many other places long ago and far away.

We proudly share many members with their associations.

All here know some of them, but I don't think that anyone here can identify all of these brave troops who are dining with us tonight.

It's time that we gave them the rousing salute that they so richly deserve.

They are Charles Penley, Tom Tessier, Dr. Jim Stewart, Jonathan Lauckner, Renato Della Porta, Larry Gould, Charles Gray, Michael Cain, Gary Bird, Jim Newberg, Mike Howard, Lynn Patton, Charles Templeton, Earnest Wymer, Mike DeTuccio, and Joe Richardson.



WAYNE SALISBURY
Tan Son Nhut Supreme Military Order of the Dragon

By: Larry E. Fry
Director of Membership
Editor, Revetments
TSN Dec '61-Mar '62

It was my pleasure to be the person who presented the Tan Son Nhut Supreme Military Order of the Dragon award to Wayne Salisbury.

Wayne lives close to where I stayed on my way home from the 2013 TSNA Reunion, in Roanoke, Virginia.

Sunday afternoon, June 16th, after leaving a message on their phone, Tobey returned my call and told me that Wayne was in the local VA Hospital. She came to my motel and I followed her to the hospital.

I first presented a book by Jerry Childers to Wayne, courtesy of TSNA Webmaster Charles Penley. Then I went through the reading of the descriptions of the newer TSNA Awards.

I then described the banquet and who the other recipients of the Supreme Dragon award were, and that one of the recipients was not present at the reunion, and the fact that that recipient was Wayne Salisbury!

Needless to say, Wayne was very humble and pleased at being a recipient of this award, and he wants to say hello and thanks to everyone.



Our sincere thanks to the Red Bank High School JROTC Color Guard for presenting and retiring the colors this year.

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



Randy Smith, Cary King, and Larry Taylor

Thank You for your great part in our 2013 Reunion!



NEW MEMBERS

Mr Robert C. Scott, Sr.	PA Nov 69-Jun 71	OL 1500 Postal & Courier Service	rcscott@comcast.net
Mr. Renato P. Della Porta	PA Sep 67 - Sep 68	377th SPS	rdporta@aol.com
Mr. Randy C. Smith	FL Apr 74-Apr 75	American Embassy Saigon	rcbbm3@verizon.net.
Mr. Terry K. Bootle	NJ Oct 65 - Oct 66	377th SPS	terrybootle@earthlink.net

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