



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



DECEMBER 2015

## CHRISTMAS AT TAN SON NHUT

Hi Larry,

This is in response to your request for stories about Christmas at TSN.

I was among the first ground forces into Vietnam. (232<sup>nd</sup> Signal Company, 39<sup>th</sup> Signal Bn.) Things were pretty primitive at that time, but I must say they went all out for us at Christmas. On Christmas Day (1962) I worked the day shift at the Comm Center at MACV, which at that time was located on Pasteur Street in Saigon. Our company provided a deuce and half to transport us from the Comm Center back to camp for dinner. Of course we all complained because we had to put on our Class A dress uniforms before they would feed us.

I've included a couple of photos of the menu that day and of a couple of Vietnamese Christmas cards.

Sincerely,

Jim Butler



## BILL COUP CHRISTMAS AT TSN

I had been at Tan Son Nhut for less than a month when we celebrated Christmas, having arrived on 30 November 1965. It was a Christmas I will never forget.

I was assigned to the 6250th CAMRON (I think) working for the Maintenance Analysis Section under SMSgt Barefoot and Captain Kline. It was a hectic place to work and I was busier than I had ever been before in my career. I am not sure which squadron it was because the place was growing so fast that I was in three different squadrons in about three months. I started in the 6250th CAMRON, then the 6250th Support Squadron and finally the Headquarters, 6250th Combat Support Group, all the time working in the same place for the same people. Whew! Then a few months later I went to the Headquarters, 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing when it was formed.

Well, Christmas came and I celebrated it by getting Ho Chi Minh's revenge. I couldn't keep anything down. Then I heard that Bob Hope was coming. He put his show on in a field up by the VNAF Headquarters on the left right across the road from the concrete guard post.

I wasn't feeling too good but I was not going to miss the show no matter what. I found that Seven Up would stay down, so I joined the big crowd to watch the show, sitting toward the back with my Seven Up. He had Joey Heatherton with him that year and you should have heard the roar when she came out on stage. I had a great time and, for a little while, forgot how lousy I felt.

I can tell when I see a film that it is that year's show – there was MSgt.

Davidson from our unit, right in the front row.

## AND FROM STAN MORRIS

Christmas 1968 was a special time for me as it represented that my tour of duty with the 377th Security Police Squadron at Tan Son Nhut was coming to a close. Even though there had been an effort put into some decorations at the gate to our compound and the club house, like most short timers, I was on pins and needles and missed the family. On Christmas Eve, about two hours prior to shift completion, my flight chief arrived for his usual post inspection and as he got ready to leave, he turned to me and said, "oh, by the way Morris, you are released from duty the end of shift, your flight back to the world is the 29th." With the exception of my M-16, 38 revolver and my personal ditty bag which held my private stash of 30 plus mags, and homemade Sterno stove, I did all my administrative clearing of the base on Christmas Day. My first Christmas present, if you wish to call it such was the morning following clearing, I heard a loud voice at the front of the barracks holler my name. It was two of the guys I had been stationed with at my previous base and flew to Nam. Luck of the draw was that all three of us were leaving together and were assigned to the same base stateside. Only down side to that was the next assignment was Loring AFB, ME.

Stan Morris  
377th Security Police SQ  
Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN



# Veteran recalls holiday at Amarillo Air Force Base

Posted: December 6, 2014 - 9:22pm



Harold Boone in 1964

Of all the holidays we celebrate, Christmas probably holds the vast majority of our memories, especially those more apt to bring warm smiles to our faces.

The sweet aroma of food cooking in our mother's kitchen, the sounds of traditional carols, and the happiness of children laughing and playing with newly open gifts are but a few of what we often remember about Christmas.

Many of our memories were made jointly in a Christmas

setting with family and friends and that makes them all the more special as they can be revisited and enjoyed together.

Some memories were made outside the circle of family and friends and as such, must be recalled by the telling of a story. Go with me now as I recall and share with you a Christmas memory of mine from 50 years ago in Amarillo. For most folks, Christmas 1964 is a faint and distant memory often recalled by looking at old, grainy photographs. Usually when we look at such old photographs we usually laughingly point fingers at the long forgotten hair styles, clothing our children would never wear, and especially our once youthful appearances. Those moments captured on old photographs are often no longer a memory having been lost to the passage of time. Seemingly, we can no longer remember the details leading up to the photograph as time has taken its toll on our memory. Photographs aside, there are some memories of life found in the far corners of our mind that seemingly refuses to be dimmed by the passage of time. Some persons and some events somehow etch themselves forever into our memory and become part of us, part of our being.

On Sept. 26, 1964, I arrived at Amarillo Air Force Base, located in Amarillo, for training. Tech School, as it was commonly referred to, was classes to teach you how to do your job in the Air Force. For the most part, the daily routine at Amarillo Air Force Base centered around three things — going to class to learn your career field, performing tasks and marching to improve your military bearing, and being yelled at by the training instructors. Not surprising, we could never get things done correctly and quickly enough and hence, more yelling which was followed by doing it again and again. As a unit and as individuals, we were all the better for having our training instructors push us as they did.

As time progressed, we found December upon us and it was apparent our unit would finish our classes around Christmas. My hope, and probably that of many others, was to be finished with classes and be home on leave at Christmas with my family prior to my next duty assignment. I very much wanted to be home for the Christmas holiday because of the uncertainties that lay ahead with my future duty assignments. In particular, there was a place called Vietnam that was probably on the forefront of many of the guys' minds.

Even my friend Charles kept telling me there was a project called "Operation Santa Claus" that would be invoked and allow us to be home for the Christmas holiday. All those hopes were quickly dashed when I was given my scheduled departure date. My unit had one day of training to do after Christmas and, worse yet, Christmas Day fell on a Friday. So, here I am spending my first Christmas away from home not understanding why the Air Force could not

advance training just a day or so and allow me to be home for the Christmas with family. In today's vernacular, it was "not fair."

Just as the disappointment of not being home on Christmas with my family began to sink in, an unexpected request was asked of my unit. We were told of a group of children in downtown Amarillo needing a little help for Christmas. Our unit was asked to sponsor a Christmas party for them. Essentially, I was being denied what I wanted for Christmas, with that being home with my family. At the same time, I was being asked to give some unknown children's group what they needed to make their Christmas special.

Sometimes life has a way of giving you unexpected twists and turns and this was one of them. In today's world, we call that a "teaching moment," and I was to be the unsuspecting student.

The plans for the children's Christmas party were fairly short and simple. Members of our unit would each contribute a few dollars towards the cost of party foods and drinks. More importantly and on a personal level, each of us would choose a name from a list of children being treated to the party. I chose a name of a young boy and purchased a Christmas gift for him at the base store. The gift I chose was a 1950 Ford model car.

On the appointed day and time, we boarded a bus and traveled to the party wearing our dress blue uniforms. So, here I am all dressed up and headed to a party with a Christmas gift for a child I did not know and had never met. I had no expectations since I had never been to a party for children I did not know.

What I discovered at the party was warmth and happiness with smiling faces all around. Some things never change, especially Christmas parties, as they always makes you feel better. Seemingly, everyone enjoyed the party, and yes, including myself. I also discovered those training instructors who yelled so much had a humane side to them as they too, could smile and enjoy a children's party.

The giving of the gifts to the children was made special for all as it should be. One of the guys dressed as Santa, and he called each child forward one at a time to receive their gift. Those were some special moments hearing all those names being called while listening for your child's name.

As the party wound down, one of the guys took a photo of me standing beside my "adopted" child. As I write this article, I am looking at that 50-year-old photograph showing a young boy standing beside me holding the Christmas gift I gave him. I have looked carefully at this old photograph hundreds of times over the years and recalled those events leading up to our standing together. I look at this photo-

graph often so I can refresh my memory so as to never forget going to a children's party and receiving so much for having gone. Some experiences and some persons are just far too important and meaningful to forget.

What I had wanted for Christmas was to be home with family but instead, I received what I needed so badly and that was to be in Amarillo at a children's Christmas party.

Having had 50 years to look back and reflect on that children's Christmas party, it seems I had simply lost my focus in life. Putting myself in front of others in thought and deed was the wrong thing to do, and certainly not something instilled in me by my parents.

While wallowing in self-pity of having to spend Christmas in Amarillo, I had failed to recognize Christmas for what it really was. Then, and as it continues to be, it is in the giving of ourselves to others that we receive so much.

The very concept of Christmas is to recognize and remember the birth of the Christ child as the supreme gift to mankind.

My time had been spent focusing my attention to my own wants, mostly being home for Christmas. I can only hope the young boy found countless hours of enjoyment playing with the car I gave him. He and his childhood friends gave me an unwrapped gift far more valuable than they will ever know. I was given the gift of humility. I had learned to reach out with my heart opened and not with my hands opened.

Christmas 1964 was different for me and for all the good reasons. Instead of being home with my family as I had hoped for, I spent the holiday in Amarillo. In addition to the children's party, there was a choral concert at the base chapel on Dec. 20.

Christmas Eve night featured the traditional candlelight service at the same chapel. Being the packrat that I am, I kept the bulletins from both services because they represent a period of my life where I learned so much about myself. In retrospect, these lessons of life have served me well over the years. I went from being a young airman putting myself ahead of others in thought to understanding the basic Christian belief of putting others first.

After the Christmas holiday and as scheduled, I completed my classes on Dec. 28 and departed Amarillo on Dec. 29. I went home and spent a few days with my family before reporting to my next duty assignment at Forbes Air Force Base, Kansas.

Amarillo left its mark on me and probably on many others in my unit.

Some 30 or so years after my tour of duty there, I stopped

in Amarillo while on a cross country family vacation.

While in the area, we went to the now vacant air base for a brief visit. Most of the buildings were gone with only foundations still intact.

As best as I could, I showed my family where various buildings once stood and the barracks location where I once slept. I doubt if my wife and daughter understood why I found it necessary to walk around slowly stopping to ponder of a time long past yet so relevant to me.

Tech School at Amarillo Air Force Base gave everyone in my unit training on how to do our jobs in the Air Force.

More importantly, spending Christmas in Amarillo gave me a quick and long-lasting gift of humility, and for that I am thankful.

What could be described as a quirk in the training schedule and just a few dollars of my money bought a Christmas memory lasting now for one half century.

Harold Boone  
Sep 67 - Aug 68  
460th TRW HQ Section



Harold Boon in 2014

### CHRISTMAS 69 AT TSN

By: Joe Lazaravich  
377th USAF Dispensary  
Aug 69 - Aug 70

Three things come to this medic's mind when I think back to the Christmas of 1969.

First and foremost is how fortunate I believe I was compared to the many wounded I treated. I had a hooch with a mamasan, a dry bed to sleep in, a chow hall for food, clubs on the base and downtown Saigon for entertainment.

That afternoon I spent lazily at the base swimming pool getting tanned and wondering how cold and how much snow there was in Pottsville, Pennsylvania.

And I remember how the chow hall was decorated and the meal that the dispensary's cooks prepared for our patients and we medics. Relatively speaking under the circumstances that was a Merry Christmas.

### My Christmas Story

By: Joe Ingram  
Hdqtrs 2nd Air Division  
Jan 64 - Jan 65

Date: December 25, 1964. Time: 1000 hrs. Place: TSN. Gary March and I had just completed chow after 12 hours from the typing pool at the Air Operations Center. Bob Hope was there. We tried to find a decent seat but they were filled hours before. I remember the heat. After much searching I got the big idea to go to the stage corner and try there. Worked like a charm. We watched the show no more that fifteen feet from the stage. Bob made a joke about the VC giving him a big welcome by blowing out the front side of a BOQ downtown with a truck bomb the day before. The program was great. There were too many stars to remember. Although British born Bob Hope was a GREAT American. I often wonder what ever happened to Gary March? Merry Christmas to all of my Brothers and Sisters of our great association.

## REVETMENTS

### BROWN'S BULLETIN

Well we are heading into the Holiday seasons. I want to wish all the TSNA Members a blessed Christmas.

The work has been ongoing with the TSNA Reunion in Huntsville. Tours being set up, hotel is already set.

Kerry Nivens is our boots on the ground man in Huntsville. He has been working hard in getting everything lined up.

A goal I would like everyone to work on is to get a member to our reunion. It is a good fellowship time about past and present.

September 2016 will be here before we know it. Time has a way of going a little faster as I age lha

Everyone sign up a member, and ask someone to come to a reunion.

Randall Brown  
President  
TSNA



## The Cross in the Screen or the Magic of Christmas 1971

By: Major Joseph E. Thompson, Jr.  
71-72  
CAMS Fuel System Repair

As I traveled into the Fuel Shop in the back of our "5/4" ton shop truck from the 1200 area to the Tan Son Nhut Flight line on Christmas Eve 1971, I had a sense of inner peace that seemed very unusual to me for being so far away from home. Unlike the year before when I had a deep sense of loneliness and isolation on Christmas Eve when I was stationed at Beale AFB, California just looking for something "holiday" to do. When the shop truck arrived at our plywood shack office at the end of the C-47 revetments there was the normal shift change "chatter" about ongoing work orders and any news from the CAMS Squadron Headquarters as well as wishes for a Merry Christmas to each other. As our shift of myself and four other Fuel SYS Mechanics settled in for our 12 hour stay, we all considered ourselves fortunate that evening, as there were not many work orders so Fuel System Repair was slow that night. I thought this ease in workload may be a sort of Christmas gift to the Fuel Shop but then again maybe it was just the "Magic of Christmas". This was the first of several pleasant happenings that evening.

As the evening went on, my friends and I continued making small talk. As was normal SOP each slow evening a couple of the guys would put the non-descript gray government chairs together in a row to make an impromptu sleeping cot. As we used to say we were going to be "flying the chairs". I did not join them, for some reason. I was very alert that evening even thou it was just another 12 hour shift on the Flight line. I was happy to be in Viet Nam and to me TSN was a good assignment. As I sat at the desk, my thoughts went to all the things I had around me here in VN, some great friends, everything I needed was in walking distance. I was an "E-4 over two" and making \$60.00 extra a month in combat pay and it was all tax-free!! Really "raking it in" and I would also be buying a brand new 1972 car when I got home!!! In essence I realize now I was counting my blessings or my non-tangible Christmas gifts. Once again maybe it was the idea of the Magic of Christmas to be able see the gifts in front of you that were hidden in plain sight.

It was shortly after 12 midnight, as I listened to the others snore it was then that I realized it was early Christmas day morning. Everyone back home is at a Christmas Party I thought. However I was not a bit homesick considering the Holiday!

The shop lights were turned down to allow my co-workers to sleep or better said in Air Force flight line lingo to "fly the chairs on a straight & level course". As I sat behind the gray metal desk and looked through the screen windows that surrounded our 10' X 15' office that evening, I watched the nightly launch of "slap flares" into the sky where they would silently drop over top of the grassy area behind the C-47's. It was then on Christmas morning while looking at this seemingly nighty uneventful routine event by the SP Squadron that another peculiar thing happened. As each of the flares dropped, each one looked like a glowing cross falling from the sky. I kept telling myself that was the screens, creating an optical illusion, but then again maybe it just was that "Magic of Christmas" notion. Simply said to each of you I never forgot that night or its connecting early morning!

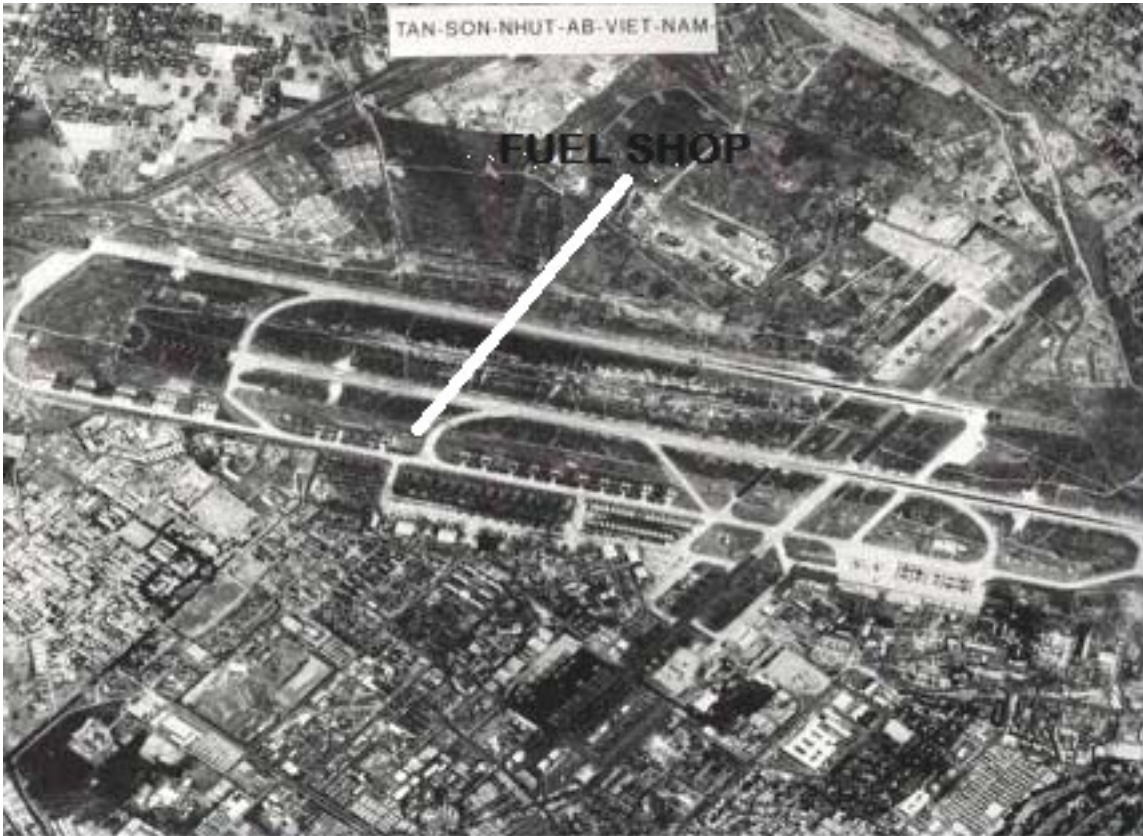
At the end of my shift on Christmas Day morning I rushed back to 1200 area to get on the "Blue Goose" bus convoy headed for the Bob Hope Show in Long Binh, VN. It was a Christmas like no other that I have experienced either in the Military or in Civilian life.

Merry Christmas to each of you!!

**Joe**                    **AKA: "Hot-Rod" in 71/72**

*PS : As I finished the article for Revetments one thing else came back to me. There was another gift from the Magic of Christmas. I realized that TSGT Ford did not play his country music that night. He seemed to torture us all with his Country Western cassette tapes each night. Most of us were from Philadelphia or other areas of the North East United States! So Country Western was a bit foreign to us!*

Photo via  
Joe  
Thompson



### CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

When it comes to the last holidays of a year in our homeland we allow our minds to settle on "HOLIDAYS". One must note that the term holiday is derived from Holy Day! It seems fitting that for the Chaplain's Corner we quote the words of a teacher, Teri Marshall. "The holiday season is a perfect time to reflect on our blessings and seek out ways to make life better for those around us".

A bit of liberty here is taken to adjust a bit of words of an author: "To many people holidays are not voyage of discovery but a ritual to reassurance".

So here we go to the holiday season. Thanksgiving is just past in November; Lincoln declared it a holiday in 1863! Christmas now comes and wouldn't it be wonderful if the words of Hamilton Wright were the rule; "Blessed is the season which engages the whole nation (or world) in a conspiracy of love".

As we come up on New Years and feasted on the holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas remember this "Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul".

For those who thought the chaplain has forgotten or ignored Christmas is the December holidays just get out your New Testaments and read a Christmas gift. Read John 3:16.

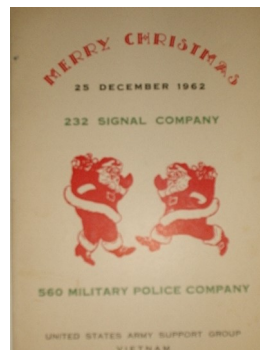
End of sermon (I read it, and I believe!)

Chaplain Bob Chaffee

November and December Holidays:

Nov: Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day

Dec: Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Years



From the Editor: Thanks to Jim Butler for this photo as well as on Page 1

## The Older I get . . .



the simpler my holiday preparations become . . .  
the closer I feel to old friends as I write my Christmas cards . . .  
the more I cherish the oldest ornaments . . .  
the more fondly I remember Christmases past . . .  
the longer I hold on to a holiday hug . . .  
the more I realize Christmas is a matter of the heart . . .  
the tighter my throat gets when I sing "Silent Night" . . .  
the more I enjoy giving than receiving . . .  
the more I try to see Christmas through the eyes of a child . . .  
the longer I sit at night in the glow of the Christmas tree . . .  
the more wondrously beautiful the Christmas story is . . .  
the deeper my awe at God's infinite love . . .  
The More I Love Christmas!



(For the great poem above, the author is unknown, and also unknown is how or where I got it)

### 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police 2016 Reunion.

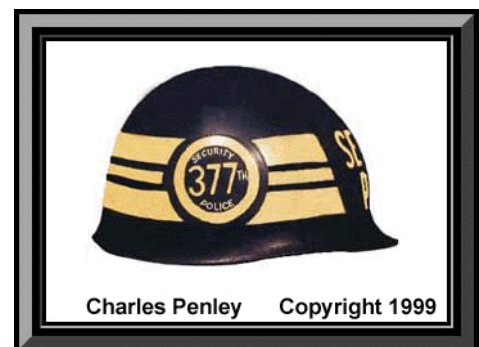
We will be meeting at the Sands Regency Hotel/Casino in **Reno, Nevada** on **April 14 through 16th, 2016**

The hotel is within walking distance of downtown Reno, with many restaurants, casinos and shopping. There is a shuttle from the Reno Airport to the hotel. The hotel rooms are very comparable to the rooms we had in Wilmington at the 2014 reunion. I also think that the amenities and locale is very conducive to our reunion.

Please contact me as soon as you can with your questions, concerns or ideas. We are here to represent and serve, but we need the help from every one of you.

Please contact me at: Ph (530)549-3678 H, (530)604-5589 Cell, [denniscrosby377@gmail.com](mailto:denniscrosby377@gmail.com), or Dennis Crosby 10614 Green Oaks Lane, Redding, CA 96003.

Dennis Crosby  
Squadron Operations Admin  
Sept 67/68



(Graphics courtesy of Charles Penley)

## VETERANS DAY TREAT

November 12, 2015

Greetings:

Yesterday I received a treat. My daughters significant others' children and my step-granddaughter called regarding Veterans Day and they only knew me as a Vietnam veteran. Their ages are 11, 9, and 6 so I kept it simple, and told them about some of the hardships, but unless they asked did not get too graphic. One of the items that stood out was helicopters. My daughter's significant other is an artist and sat down and did the attached painting.

I thought I would share.

Chuck Templeton  
377TH SPS  
Oct 68 - Nov 69



**TSNA  
VETERANS DAY 2015**  
At the National Museum of the U. S. Air Force



L-R: James Grooms, a friend of the Jernigan's, Garry Arndt, Johnnie Jernigan, Joe Kricho, Jimmy Smith

In 2012 during the TSNA Annual Reunion, the Association dedicated a Memorial Bench in the Memorial Gardens of the Museum of the USAF at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. Since that day, Johnnie and Sharon Jernigan have arranged a small memorial service at the bench

each Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Sharon puts together the wreaths and Johnnie arranges for the local VFW Honor Guard to join in the service. This year, I decided to drive down from Detroit and join them.

As you can see James, Johnnie, and Jimmie are dressed in VFW Honor Guard uniforms. They do a firing at the VFW at 11:11AM and again at 2PM at the Beaver Creek Veterans Memorial.

Joe Kricho  
TSNA of Veterans Affairs

## 2016 REUNION, HUNTSVILLE, AL





## TSNA OBSERVES VETERANS DAY 2015

By: Carol Bessette  
TSNA Treasurer

TSNA had a strong representation at the November 11 afternoon ceremonies at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. Four TSNA representatives (Gary Redlinski, Russ Clark, Joe Lazaravich, and Carol Bessette) participated in the annual wreath-laying ceremony, and six other TSNA friends and relatives were in the audience. (This may be one of the largest levels of TSNA participation in recent years.)



L-R: Gary Redlinski, Russ Clark, Joe Lazaravich, Carol Bessette, John Bessette.

And due to the confusion of the day (they completely changed the usual method of finding your wreath, and finding the members of your group), I did not get to meet the other folks other than Gary's wife, Diana. (John Bessette did attend, as cheerleader and photographer.) If you were there for Tan Son Nhut, please let us know who you are!

We were extremely fortunate that we were there on the one sunny and relatively warm day in a series of cold and rainy days--we could not have asked for more.

There were at least a dozen other organizations involved in the wreath-laying, including the Gold Star Mothers and Sons and Daughters In Touch. The Stetson hats of the 1st Cavalry Division were quite prominent, which was appropriate since one of their men (a Medal of Honor recipient) would be the main speaker.

Many of the men who were present had ties to the Battle of Ia Drang, which took place in mid-November 1965, the first major battle between the US Army and the North Vietnamese People's Army. (This was the battle featured in We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young, by Harold G. Moore

and Joseph L. Galloway.)

Perhaps the highlight of the afternoon was the address by Colonel Bruce P. Crandall (USA, Ret), who received the Medal of Honor for his repeated helicopter flights into the battle area at Ia Drang, bringing ammunition and evacuating the wounded.

Many of us have heard similar talks at different events; this one was different. Colonel Crandall was refreshingly self-deprecating, and even more, he used the language (perhaps slightly cleaned up) of the war zone. He did not receive his medal until 2007; he had been nominated for it earlier, but refused to accept it unless his wingman (in the second helicopter) would receive the same honor. And so his award was delayed, but eventually, both men received the Medal of Honor.

Interestingly, Colonel Crandall used the same words on November 11 as Captain Florent A. Groberg (USA, Ret) used the very next day at his Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House: "This is not for me; it is for the men who did not come back."

All in all, a very special day--

Carol Bessette



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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 501(c)(19) tax exempt Veterans' Organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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Five Year Membership: \$80.00

Life Membership: \$180.00



## Veterans News & Events: No. 5

By: Joe Kricho, TSNA Director of Veterans Services  
[67VietVet68@gmail.com](mailto:67VietVet68@gmail.com)

### VFW Donates \$100,000 for Desert Storm Memorial

On Nov 12, 2015, the VFW donated \$100,000 towards the construction of the Desert Storm Memorial to be constructed on the National Mall in Washington DC. This is the first part of the VFW's pledge to donate \$500,000 overall to the project.

As you may or may not know, The Education Center of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which is now under construction, in addition to memorabilia left at the Wall, will also temporarily house artifacts and memorabilia from Desert Storm; Operation Iraqi Freedom; and Operation Enduring Freedom until those memorials can be built.

This is just another example of the VFW supporting all veterans of all wars and how interconnected we all are. Another organization, the Vietnam Veterans of America, has as their motto: "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another." The fact that they are willing to help veterans of wars after Vietnam is proof of this.

To read the full VA news release:

[http://www.vfw.org/News-and-Events/Articles/2015-Articles/VFW-Donates-\\$100,000-to-New-Desert-Storm-Memorial/](http://www.vfw.org/News-and-Events/Articles/2015-Articles/VFW-Donates-$100,000-to-New-Desert-Storm-Memorial/)

To read more about the Desert Storm Memorial:

<http://www.nationaldesertstormwarmemorial.org/>

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