



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



FEBRUARY 2020

## Chaplain's Corner By Andy Csordas Associate Chaplain

2019 was a really good year for our family. During December we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and I had come home from Vietnam 49 years ago. As I reflected on our blessings, I was reminded that other families were not as fortunate. Many had health problems, some quite significant, and others lost loved ones. This can be a product of us getting older, but it can still be devastating when it happens to us.

I was also reminded of families who lost loved ones years ago in Vietnam, including friends from grade and high school and family members who never had the opportunity for the blessings I have had over the years. For me it was my brother-in-law and kids I hung out with over the years.

So how do we go on and deal with today? One way that works for me is to focus on others. I know when I start feeling sorry for myself I try to really count my blessings and remember others in need. It takes my focus off me and puts it on others. The scripture below reminds us to remember others.

### *I Timothy 2:1-3*

*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior.*

I pray everyone will have a blessed year in 2020, let's remember our brothers and sisters.



**COME ON TO TUCSON!!**

## American Legion Annual Awards Reception

The local American Legion Post that I belong to held its annual awards reception recently. I was looking over the list of award categories and noticed that one name was probably of Vietnamese origin. My buddy, who went to high school many years ago with Trish, agreed.

After the awards had been presented and snacks had been devoured, I introduced myself and stuck out my hand to shake his hand. He had been looking downward at his plate of food. As he looked up and saw my 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force hat, he smiled and shook my hand. His Mother and little sister were seated ahead of us. They turned to look at me, but said nothing. I asked him if he was born here. He said yes, he was a Vietnamese American. I responded that then he was an American, period.

Then, his Mother said that she and her family had fled from South Vietnam when she was 2 years old, spent time in Thailand at refugee camps and eventually reached the USA. They were boat people. She then asked me what I would identify her as – I said a Vietnamese American and if she wanted a better description for her children they could be identified as Americans of Vietnamese descent.

I handed her my hat and she pronounced the names of the places I had been stationed in RVN a little differently than me, lol. Her pronunciation of Tan Son Nhut was much different than mine. She asked why I had spent so much time over there. I replied that I couldn't find the airport. We laughed about sharing some common events in our lives. I gave her my TSNA business card and asked her to check out our web site. The leader of her family is the Father who led the flight from RVN. He is in his mid-eighties now and also is a happy American.

Turning my attention to the daughter who was 10 or 11 years old, I asked her what the family did this past summer. She said that they toured Europe, with Italy and France being her favorite countries.

Everyone has a story.....viet62

By: George Plunkett  
President Emeritus  
TSNA

## TET 71 STORY

In early 1971 we were approaching the Vietnamese celebration of the Lunar New Year ... or Tet. Although 1971 was near the end of the war and American troops were being drawn down, all of us knew what Tet meant in terms of the conflict in Vietnam.

The Tet Offensive of 1968 was one of the largest military campaigns of the Vietnam War, launched by forces of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese People's Army against the South Vietnamese Army, US Armed Forces and our allies. The name of the 1968 offensive comes from the Tết holiday, celebration of the Lunar New Year.

But Tet is considered the most popular festival of the year in Vietnam. Tet is the occasion for Vietnamese to express their respect and remembrance for their ancestors as well as to welcome the New Year.

So, it should have come as no surprise to my boss, Dan Trbovich, and me when Lt. Pham Van Hue, the OIC of the VNAF photo unit assigned to the 12<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, invited us to celebrate the Tet holiday with him and some of his NCOs at a restaurant in downtown Saigon.

While Dan and I remembered the 1968 history of Tet as it applied to the war, and not as the important festival for the Vietnamese people, we accepted Lt. Hue's gracious invitation.

Then, we asked what would be on the menu for this Tet celebration.

"Seven kinds of meat," Lt. Hue responded.

Dan and I had heard about some of the more exotic elements of Vietnamese cuisine, so our imaginations ran wild. We quietly conferenced at the opposite side of our office, away from Lt. Hue, and named all of the different kinds of exotic meat we could think of which might be served at this Tet celebration -- dog, cat, rat, snake, turtle, deer, goat. The list went on and on.

When Lt. Hue became aware of our discussion, he laughed out loud.

"No," he said. "It will be beef, prepared seven different ways."

Dan and I breathed a sigh of relief.

We enjoyed the Tet celebration and its menu in 1971 in Saigon with Lt. Hue and his VNAF NCOs and returned safely to the base afterwards.

Richard Carvell  
Captain, USAF  
OIC, 12RITS Photo Lab  
Tan Son Nhut Air Base  
June 1970-June 1971



## Charles Penley to Tan Son Nhut Veteran's Forum

History of the 1876th Communications Squadron,

The squadron was first organized at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, on 1 November 1965, as a dependent squadron under the 1964th Communications Group (Air Force Communications Service). Its mission was to provide command and control communications for United States military personnel engaged in operations against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese enemy forces. While in Vietnam, the 1876th was presented seven Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards and earned six battle streamers. The 1876th was also awarded the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

The 1876th remained in Vietnam until 29 February 1972 when the flag was moved to the unit of the Northern Communications Area (NCA) of the Air Force Communications Service (AFCS).

On 1 April 1972, the 1959th Communications Squadron, stationed at the United States Air Force Academy, was inactivated. On the same day, the 1876 CS relocated without equipment or personnel to USAFA as part of the United States forces withdrawal from Southeast Asia. 1876 CS assumed the duties and responsibilities of 1959 CS. As a squadron belonging to Air Force Communications Service and later Air Force Communications Command (AFCC), the 1876th was a tenant unit at the USAF Academy.

## Sister Giggles & The Orphans

By: Peter F. Beyette  
Det. 5, 6922 Security Wing  
June 1966 – June 1968

Sister Giggles always had a great smile and giggled a lot when she tried to speak English. The fact that she spoke little English and we were limited to “Chou Ung” and perhaps a couple of other phrases did not help our communication. It also did not stand in the way of supporting the orphanage.



First contact was with The Detachment 5, 6922 Security Wing commander Captain William “Bill” Grayson (TSNA Member), First Sargent David B. Stone and I when we drove to the Immaculate Conception Convent turned orphanage.

100 “orphies,” as my sister Susan called them, were the charge of five Catholic Nuns and three young girls to help. We adopted the orphanage through a process operated by a Civic Actions Program. Not all the children were orphans, but their families were unable to take care of them and some were able to visit on weekends. (As an aside, she always said I should bring one home to her. While unknown at the time, when later she was married, she was unable to have children. She and her husband became foster parents to many children, mostly with special needs, and subsequently adopted four of them to raise as their own)

When we visited, the children would sing and perform native folk dances. In turn, we were forced to perform for them. Our singing was terrible, and we couldn't do any folk dances, but the children seemed to enjoy it.

Now the question was, “What could we do for them?” Detachment 5 was a small unit with about twenty people and we all wrote home to solicit donations including clothes, toys (the orphanage had only one doll) tooth brushes etc. along with cash. On perhaps a somewhat humorous note, people back home did not have a sense of the climate, so we received many clothing donations that were appropriate for a much colder climate. The upshot was that we were thankful for the generosity of the home folks and we were able to install screens on the windows, paint the buildings and give the orphanage money for food and clothing.

But that was just the beginning.

The orphanage setting was next to a swampy area which certainly was a concern. In addition, their pigs were right next to the building and it was overcrowded. We decided that we would build a dormitory building at an estimated cost of \$1300.00. Of course, this would take resources that we did not have.

As I approached the end of my tour, I decided to extend my time with Det. 5. This enabled me to take a 30 day leave with a choice of destinations. I chose to go home to visit family in Tonawanda, a Buffalo, NY suburb where I grew up.

Suddenly I found myself in a role for which I was unaccustomed and ill prepared, an ambassador to raise funds as a public speaker and newspaper interviewee. While shakily embracing this task, it stimulated local fund raising by the “Wheatfield Jaycees’ Orphan Fund” and included donations from many local businesses and individuals. The Jaycees were also sending medical aid, drugs and medicine through “Project Concern” under the direction of Dr. James Turbin. The donations made it possible to build the dorm.

Following my return in 1968, Sargent Stone informed me that Sister Giggles had been promoted to the Mother Superior. I couldn't think of a better choice.

**SEE MORE PICTURES WITH THIS STORY ON THE NEXT TWO PAGES!**



## MORE BEYETTE PHOTOS FROM THE ORPHANAGE



Dining Room



Sisters and Priest with children.



Front Gate



Pigs next to kitchen.



Sleeping quarters.



Mosquito breeding area.



Local transportation



Kitchen



Beyette in center, checking out  
area for new construction



Eating and cooking utensils.



## C-123 RANCH HAND PLANE CRASH FEBRUARY 2, 1962

By: Larry E. Fry  
Det 8, 2nd ADVON  
Dec 61—Mar 62

Somehow, I had come to know Captain Fergus Groves. I have pictures of him taken in the “mess hall” area. Chaplain Kilpatrick had been successful in getting some Vietnamese kids from an on base school to come and visit us, sing for us, and have ice cream with us. Captain Groves is the only one on the pictures I have of that time that was actually “passing the hat” to collect money to help do something for the kids

Then came a day when the word came in that a plane had crashed. And then the word as to who was on that plane – someone I had known! So the rest of that day was spent by Chaplain Kilpatrick in notifications, meetings, setting up a Memorial Service, etc. I had a mixed up day helping the Chaplain with the above, as well as doing a run to Bien Hoa as a guard, then cleaned out the Chapel and helped out in the Mail Room.

The Memorial Service was held the next day, with over 300 in attendance, including Gen. Anthis, and Ambassador Nolting, as well as many VNAF Officers and men.

I came to know and respect a lot of Ranch Hand folks during my 69 days at TSN, and Captain Groves stands out among them.

I wish I could remember more, but that is about it. At the time, I'm not sure anyone realized the unfortunate significance in the fact that it was the first USAF plane crash casualties of Viet Nam.

(You can see Captain Groves helping out the Vietnamese kids who sang for us, by “passing the hat” in this picture. He collected \$150.)

After joining the Tan Son Nhut Association in 2002, I began more earnestly pursuing my interest in my time in Vietnam.

I also found the Ranch Hand site on the internet and posted a note there that I had known Captain Groves and had two pictures which included him.

Sometime later I received an email—from HIS SON! His son was only 5 months old when his father was killed.

Captain Groves' father, himself an Air Force Lt. Col. did put together a biography of Fergus, but Hugh Groves was very happy to hear from me; to have me tell him

about his father that I knew, however briefly, and to have two pictures of him as well.

I have since also heard from the son of the enlisted man killed in that plane crash, but I didn't know his father.

2/2/62, USAF 464 TCW . Capt. Fergus Groves II . Capt. Robert Larson . SSgt. Milo Coghill



Captain Fergus Groves II, Vietnamese School Teachers, and Chaplain August Kilpatrick, 1/31/1962, 3 days before Groves was killed in the plane crash

## FROM AN EMAIL SENT TO OUR WEBMASTER:

**Sent:** Monday, January 27, 2020, 3:53:03 PM CST

**Subject:** Sharing website TSN Maj. Carroll Staten's granddaughter created as a resource for Vietnam veterans to learn about Agent Orange exposure risks

Please distribute to the TSNA:

Sharing a Vietnam-related item that was inspired by a Tan Son Nhut veteran. Please see the link below to a website that my daughter Hannah Staten - and TSN veteran Major Carroll M. Staten's granddaughter - created out of her watching the effects of his Agent Orange-related Parkinson's Disease ravage his body. My dad went by "C M" in Vietnam and was a 1st Lt. in the 616th MAS from February 1967 - 1968, based at TSN with some time spent at Bien Hoa too I believe.

THANKS - Richard Staten

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Richard Staten is a member of TSNA in Memory of his father.**

<https://patriotsparkinsonsproject.org/>

## REUNION 2020

Thought that it was time to start getting the news out for our reunion in Tucson this year. I am somewhat behind schedule after my big move from Rochester Hills, MI to Saint Peters, MO, which is north of St. Louis just across the Missouri River. I plan on having additional info each month as events and activities become finalized. Be sure to check out the reunion registration form, and hotel registration options which are posted in this issue of Revetments, as well as on our website.

To begin with, there will be a few notable changes this year.

The reunion will occur over a four-day time period. The dates will be Sep 16 (Wed) thru Sep 19 (Sat) so that everyone will have extra time to enjoy the many sights and events in the Tucson area. Some of these activities will be scheduled yet there will be plenty of free time for you to organize your own schedule.

If you haven't already, I highly recommend that you request both of these items:

### **Tucson Visitors guide**

<https://www.visitucson.org/visit/around-tucson/order-tucson-official-travel-guide>

### **Arizona Visitors Guide**

<https://www.visitarizona.com/visitors-guide>

You will notice some changes to the reunion schedule as well. Reunion registration will begin on Wednesday morning. However, you will have the option of early registration, starting at about 1500 on Tuesday.

The biggest change in the schedule will be the switching of days for the general membership meeting and the banquet. The general membership meeting will move to Friday evening, with the Banquet being the final event on Saturday night. We feel that will be a more logical schedule, with our banquet being a big sendoff to our next meeting.

Our hotel will be the Doubletree Suites by Hilton, Tucson Airport. This is an all-suite property so everyone should have plenty of room. This is the same hotel used for the Tuy Hoa reunion. TSNA member George Bontya wrote that it met all their needs and then some. I'm trying to schedule a visit in the near future and I will write a full report.

**JOE KRICH**

**DIRECTOR OF REUNION PLANNING**

# **TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION 2020 HOTEL REGISTRATION**

## **DOUBLETREE SUITES by HILTON TUCSON AIRPORT**

7051 S. Tucson Blvd.  
Tucson, AZ 85756

**TSNA Room rate: \$127.26 (Includes all taxes and fees)**

### **Option 1: (Preferred)**

Click this Direct Booking Link :

[https://secure3.hilton.com/en\\_US/dt/reservation/book.htm?inputModule=HOTEL&cityhcn=TUSTADT&spec\\_plan=CDTTSN&arrival=20200914&departure=20200922&cid=OM,WW,HILTONLINK,EN,DirectLink&fromId=HILTONLINKDIRECT](https://secure3.hilton.com/en_US/dt/reservation/book.htm?inputModule=HOTEL&cityhcn=TUSTADT&spec_plan=CDTTSN&arrival=20200914&departure=20200922&cid=OM,WW,HILTONLINK,EN,DirectLink&fromId=HILTONLINKDIRECT)

### **Option 2:**

You may also use the hotel website by clicking here:

<https://www.guestreservations.com/doubletree-suites-by-hilton-tucson-airport/booking?msclkid=7d1bf6b2be561e47e6b2a89dfe33878f>

Use the code: **TSNA**

### **Option 3:**

You may call the hotel at:

**(855) 680-3239**

Use the code: **TSNA**

**Cutoff date for hotel reservations at our reduced rate is: August 13, 2020 at 5:00PM**

**If anyone has a problem booking a room prior to Wed Sep 16, or after Sat. Sep 19, they are to contact the Sales Manager, Ariann Hewitt @ (520) 225-0813**

Any questions regarding hotel reservations should be addressed to:

**Joe Kricho**

Director of Reunion Planning

Email: [67vietvet68@gmail.com](mailto:67vietvet68@gmail.com)

(Please put "TSNA 2020 Reunion" in the subject line)





# **TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION 2020 REUNION REGISTRATION**

**Tucson, AZ  
Sep 16 - 19, 2020**

**NOTE: This year's reunion starts on Wednesday and ends with a Saturday night banquet.  
(Changes are underlined.)**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ GUEST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TEL ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL NEEDS (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

**Choose one of the following:**

## **1: FULL Reunion Registration**

Number attending \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$85.00** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-order Reunion Video: QTY \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$15.00** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Remittance: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## **2: PARTIAL Reunion Registration**

Access to Hospitality Room (includes snacks & beverages):

Number of days: \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$12.50** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ x No. of people: \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Banquet Only**

Number attending \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$37.50** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-order Reunion Video: QTY \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$15.00** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Remittance: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this form with payment (check only) to:**

**TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION  
P.O. BOX 236  
PENRYN, PA 17564-0236**

**REGISTRATION FORM WITH PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED**

**NLT AUGUST 30, 2020**

Questions regarding Reunion Registration should be directed to:

Larry Fry

Director of Membership Email: [lfry2@dejazzd.com](mailto:lfry2@dejazzd.com)



**Tan Son Nhut Association**  
**P. O. Box 236**  
**Penryn PA 17564**

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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



**Took friends over to Titan Museum. When you  
are at Tucson for TSNA Reunion, you can put  
this on your list to visit.**

**Randall Brown**  
**TSNA President**

### **NEW MEMBER**

Robert C. Everitt    Grandview   MO   maryeveritt1988@gmail.com   May 71 - May 72   1876th Communications Squadron

### **NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS**

Writing for my husband. He is now 82 and said the following to me: "I was in South Vietnam where I worked in ACP Comm. Ctr. On the flight line. I was Asst. NCOIC for about 6 months. When the NCOIC left I took over the ACP Comm. Ctr. until I went back to the US. I also worked in VAN (Crypto) at the end of the runway inside the perimeter. Also worked at the NCO Club as one of 12 night managers for 4 to 5 nights a week." (Bob is 70% Service related disabled because of profound hearing loss.)

**Robert C. Everitt**  
**1876 Communication Squadron**  
**May 71 - May 72**

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