



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



APRIL 2021

## NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

Supervised a crew that removed and replaced jet engines on RF4C aircraft. 12-hour shifts from 7 PM until 7 AM. Worked for Pan Am after Military hours mostly cleaning R & R planes. Also volunteered as helicopter door gunner on flights to retrieve soldiers for R & R.

Tet was amazing, what can I say. Spent a few nights in the Jet Shop because of VC incursion on Base.

David G. Facey  
460th Field Maintenance Squadron  
Jan 67—May 68

### Chaplain's Corner-Salt

Salt is an amazing thing. We use it for flavoring our food and for many years in many places it was the primary way to preserve meat or fish for later consumption. It is still used for that purpose today around the world.

Many places around the world do not have the refrigeration we use without a second thought and they also cannot go to the grocery store on a whim, to buy virtually any foodstuff from around the world. They have to preserve what food they have with the means available and many times that means salt. Salt, at times in history, has been more valuable than gold because it preserves life itself, for without salt in our bodies we die.

We use salt on our roads in the winter; it is also used in a myriad of industrial processes as well. If we think about it long enough we would likely be amazed at how many uses that would come to mind.

Of course there are different kinds of salt as well. We can buy rock salt for water softening or use it to melt ice on sidewalks. We can buy sea salt from all over the world. It actually may have different chemical configurations but in general we just refer to it as salt.

Salt has another side. It is corrosive and can harm materials and prevent plants from growing. Before I retired I would visit Hutchinson, Kansas on a relatively regular basis. Driving into the southeast side of Hutchinson you pass a rail yard. What immediately gets your attention is all of the very rusty bulk railcars in the yard. My first thought was why they don't take care of the rolling stock.

As you look closer you realize that everything is not as you first observe. Hutchinson happens to be the location of a large underground salt mine. These cars are used for transporting salt. The corrosiveness of the salt constantly degrades the paint and metal. (As a side note you can tour the older parts of the mine which is fun.)

The scripture talks about salt in various ways as well. Matthew 5 and Luke 14 talk about the goodness of salt, and the uselessness of salt if it has lost its savor.

Jeremiah 48 talks about Moab with a reference to salt. Moab was a constant irritation to the nation of Israel. There was fighting between the two nations for some time. The background history of Moab is interesting and its relationship with the Israelites occurs over a long period. But finally God had enough and Moab was destroyed. Jeremiah 48:9 says "put salt on Moab for she will be laid waste". This land is still not able to raise crops.

So how does that relate to us today? Are we the salt that is useful and good for ourselves, our acquaintances, our country and the world? Or are we the salt that corrodes and prevents life from flourishing? Are we part of the church that is useful or are we part of the church that has lost its usefulness? Remember the people are the church of our God, not the buildings and staff. Let's be useful members of that church, especially in these troubled times.

Andy Csordas-TSNA Associate Chaplain

From Jerry D. Jenkins:

Jun 68 - Jun 69

1st Civil engineering Group (Red Horse)

Although I made many attempts to anticipate community care transition issues from the CHOICE Program to Mission Act, I had maddening bureaucratic runaround at SFVAMC for the past few months regarding continued community care. When I returned from TSNA Reunion LR, I received notice no more treatments would be authorized (Max 53) until re-evaluation by SFVAMC Pain Management Team (next available appointment Dec 4, 2019). I hung up and called the 855#. I received My Healthy Vet messenger that 12 Chiropractic visits are authorized, that was within 3 hours after making a call to the WH # 855.948.2311.

Hopefully future discussion will lead to more awareness of PL 106-475 Veterans Claims Assistance Act, and how VA docs can help vets document medical records, or provide nexus letters from Specialty Clinic doctors (Surgery, GI, Orthopedic), to show an element of a 50% more than likely chance of the condition claimed being caused by the service injury at the level requested for disability. This should help VSO personnel create a fully developed claim with a better opportunity for first try success. It may cause the VHA to focus a bit more on the overruling condition/secondary condition creating symptoms for vets too. For example, Agent Orange, combat, JP4/8, or injury during surgery.

Veterans Experience Office (VEO)

<https://www.va.gov/ve/whvaHotline.asp>

White House VA Hotline

[1-855-948-2311](tel:1-855-948-2311).

## MEMORIES OF TET '68

By Hal Hunt  
Civilian Contractor  
Oct 66 - Feb 74

Each year in January I have “pop-up” memories of the January 31, 1968 “Tet Offensive”. This year I thought it might be of interest to share a few of those memories with some others who were also at Tan-Son-Nhut (TSN) during that hectic event. The following account is based on my best recollections. Please excuse any memory lapses or inaccuracies.

In January 1968, I was one of a team of civilian contractors assigned to design, develop, and implement automated systems to support the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (MACV-CORDS). MACV had taken over the responsibility from the Agency's Office of Civil Operations (OCO) to operate and manage a variety of activities assisting Vietnamese government civilian agencies. These eventually included the Territorial Forces (TFES), a nation-wide radio communication network (VHRS), the Peoples' Self Defense Force (PSDF), the Terrorist Incident Reporting System (TIRS) and the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). HES had previously been operated in punched card mode by the Data Processing Unit (27<sup>th</sup> DPU?) at TSN.

On January 30, not much was going on at work. We understood that a “Cease Fire” mutually agreed to by North and South Vietnam would be in effect during the Tet Holiday period so while we would continue to work as usual, our Vietnamese counterparts would be celebrating with their friends and families. Several of us decided to live it up that evening by getting together for dinner and the floor show at a popular local night club (La Cigale?).

I took advantage of the Vietnamese holiday and slept late the next morning. I was awakened by the sound of what I assumed to be fireworks celebrating the Lunar New Year. I rode my Yamaha to work but when I approached the TSN Main Gate, the road was closed with concertina wire and a light tank was parked beside the guard shack. The guards vigorously waved me away from the gate.

Assuming the Main Gate was closed for the holiday, I decided to circle around and enter by the side gate at Golf de Saigon. However, I rode into a confrontation between an ARVN unit in the ditch along the airfield (left hand) side of the road and some Viet-Cong (VC) in the residential area on the other side of the road. I may have set a new world's record for the time to execute a 180 degree turn on a motorcycle.

Later we heard that there had been quite a few recent funerals held in a Buddhist temple across from the golf course with coffins containing AK-47s and B-40s brought in by VC “mourners”. There were some neighborhood boys who knew where all the mines were in the mine fields between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> fairways and the road. For a nominal payment in Piasters, they retrieved golf balls when golfers sliced them into the minefields. We heard they also were helpful in guiding the VC through them.

When I arrived back at the Cach-Mang intersection, there was one of our MP junior officers at a radio jeep and four MPs positioned along Cach-Mang Street confronting an unknown number of VC. The officer had called for tank support but a tank moving from Phu-Tho Racetrack in response was held up on Plantation Road.

There must have been several dozens of officers and senior enlisted personnel from nearby BOQs and BEQs (Columbia, Newport, Billings, BOQ 2, Medford, etc.) gathered in the street in front of the USO location to observe and critique the MPs. My understanding at the time was that by the end of that day, our Army and Air Force police as well as other personnel had effectively cleared the base and surrounding area of enemy combatants. The team I worked with returned to work the following day.

Even so, the HQ Commandant issued sidearms or shoulder-fired weapons to Headquarters personnel for self-defense. Later that day, we heard a shot fired down the corridor beyond our workspace. The sensible response was to shelter in place until an investigation had been conducted and an “all clear” sounded. So naturally we all went down the corridor to find out what had happened. What we discovered was that in an engagement between a field grade officer “cleaning” a newly acquired .45 caliber sidearm and his office desk, the score was now 1 for officers and 0 for office desks. We learned later that in a similar confrontation between a civilian contractor armed with a 12-gauge shotgun and an overhead hot water tank, the score became 1 for the contractors and 0 for the water tanks. The aftermath of that one was not a pretty sight.

Although I have related a few personal experiences about Tet '68 and some of them might be considered humorous, the overriding facts are that the defenders of Tan-Son-Nhut during Tet '68 suffered and endured some severe casualties but performed magnificently in response to a cowardly surprise attack.

Note: For those who might still have a VHS player, several years ago I came across a full-length VHS tape entitled "Attack on Tan Son Nhut Vietnam" and published by Traditions Military Videos in their "Hard to Find Military History Videos" series. The publisher's website is now closed but it might be possible to find a copy of the tape elsewhere on the web.

## **TET 68**

By: Allen Chandler  
Nov 66-Feb 68 and Jan 70-Apr 70  
Maintenance - Air Crew

On January 31, 1968 I was working on the flight line, at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. The 19th Air Commando Squadron had C-123's and I worked the night shift.

Sometime around the middle of the shift someone came by and said they were pulling all the maintenance people off the flight line. "finish up what you are doing and get back to the barracks". I should've listened. There was very little left to do but I decided to finish up all the little jobs on my plane. About an hour later the shooting started. I looked around for a safer place. All I could see was one of those security police bunkers. A pile of sandbags set up in the circle about three or 4 feet in diameter and rising about 3 feet off the ground. I headed for it and found an SP there guarding the perimeter to our flight line. He was quite surprised to see me but since there was shooting, he told me to get in and get down. So there we were hunkered down (me on the ground and him sitting on top of me) not knowing what was going on but pretty sure that we weren't happy about it. He had an M-16 and a huge pile of ammo. I had a survival knife. As the night went on the shooting increased more and more and he kept firing, dropping the empty clips and I would re-load them and stack them by his knee. It turns out that I got good at stuffing those bullets into the clips and could keep up with him. (I did have some motivation) Anyway as I lay there, I tried to imagine what would happen if we got over run and me with my little knife fighting off the entire VC. Luckily, I never had to find out.

Finally, sunrise came and a Jeep with a couple of SPs showed up to relieve us. When they saw me there, they went ballistic. It turned out you were not allowed to have a guest in your bunker, even during a fire fight. They yelled at both of us for a while, then put a new SP in the bunker and took us back to SP headquarters. After they were done yelling everybody calmed down, and accepted that under the situation "what the hell." So, someone took me back to my barracks, where I joined the rest of my squadron to wait out the rest of the Tet Offensive. As an aircraft mechanic they didn't think I'd be much good manning the perimeter and I was just told to stay in my Barracks, out of the way. Other than the fact that some sort of rocket blew up the latrine at the end of my Barracks I was just a bystander for the rest of the offensive.

My barracks was right next to the helicopter pad. The new Cobra helicopters had just arrived, and they were flying out of this helicopter port. Basically, they loaded up, lifted off, emptied their ammo, and landed again. We could see them the entire time. The battle was right there. They were not flying off to some jungle, this was right there in Saigon.

I already had my PCS orders for February 14. And as I sat there, and the war raged on around me I wondered if I'd be leaving or not.

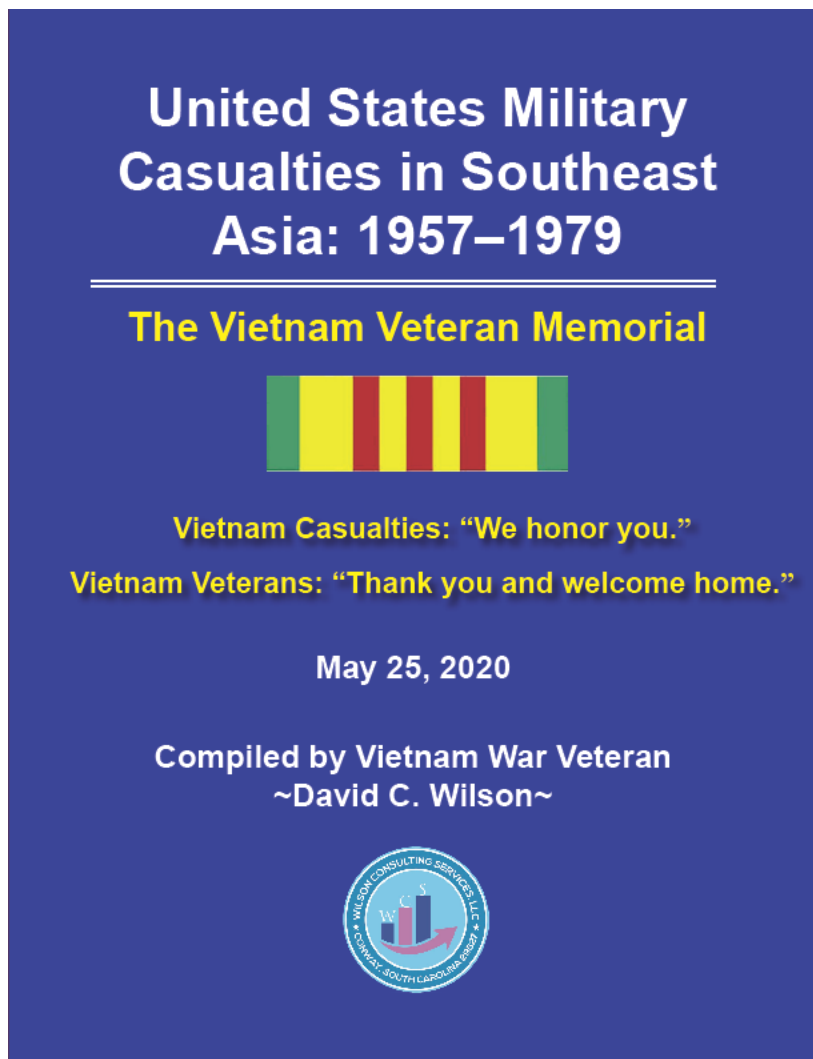
As I heard the story, the NCO club at TSN ran out of beer during the fighting. The chief at the club, called the chief down at the Navy supply center and asked him to send some more beer. The conversation went something like this. "Yes, we got beer, no we're not delivering today, if you want to come and get it." Anyway, that afternoon we saw a helicopter flyover with one of those great big netting things hanging beneath it filled with pallets of beer and it landed in the NCO club parking lot. Was that the psychological punch to end the Tet Offensive? I don't know but it certainly seems like it to me. How can you fight somebody, who sends out for a beer during the battle?

## VIETNAM STATISTICS BOOKLET

Larry,

Some of this booklet, by Dave Wilson, was posted on the 1st Signal Brigade electronic newsletter. It has really interesting statistics that should be of interest to our TSNA members. The author, Dave Wilson has given us permission to post on Revetments. The 1st Signal Brigade put 4 or 5 pages on their newsletter. We do need to attribute the information to the author. 1st Signal Brigade put the cover of the booklet before the graphs they used.

Andy



**Thank You to David C. Wilson, for this great compilation relating to the Vietnam War!**

Here is the link to the pdf: [http://www.tsna.org/view/vietnam\\_casualties\\_20.pdf](http://www.tsna.org/view/vietnam_casualties_20.pdf).

**TSNA Scholarship**  
**By Rich Carvell**  
**TSNA Scholarship Committee Chair**

High school seniors who are descendants of those who served in Vietnam during the war are eligible to apply for TSNA Scholarships ... but only if our members tell them about the scholarship!!

The only way for the Association to get the word out about our scholarships is if our members take the initiative to contact schools where they live and let the counselors at your schools know about the scholarship. I have contacted schools in Arkansas and have already received four applications from high school seniors.

So, please, I am asking on behalf of the TSNA Scholarship Committee, take the time to get in touch with high school counselors in your area to let them know about the TSNA Scholarships. They may have students eligible to apply for one of the 2021 scholarships.

The applicant must be a direct descendant ... either by birth or by adoption ... of one who served in Vietnam for any period between January 1, 1959, and April 30, 1975. Service may be either with the Armed Forces of the United States or the Republic of Vietnam. The TSNA scholarship also is open to the descendants of civilians who worked at Tan Son Nhut Air Base either as an American or as a Vietnamese citizen.

For previous year's scholarships, we already have received applications from the grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans. Our first scholarship recipient, Catherine Clark, completed her bachelor's degree requirements at Virginia Tech in May 2020.

Deadline to apply for the 2021 scholarship is May 1.

The scholarship is awarded in equal amounts over four years, provided the student maintains a 3.00 (B) grade point average at the end of each school term and completes a minimum of 30 semester hours each year. Scholarship recipients must pursue a four-year degree at an accredited United States accredited college or university that grants bachelor or higher degrees but may begin higher education studies at a two-year accredited institution and transfer to an accredited school to complete the final two years leading to a bachelor's degree.

Complete information about eligibility, distribution of benefits, and renewal of the scholarship and the application are available at the Tan Son Nhut Association website at [tsna.org/scholarship/index.html](http://tsna.org/scholarship/index.html) and must be postmarked no later than May 1, 2021 and mailed to:

**TSNA Scholarship Committee**  
**c/o Committee Chair**  
**4214 Brenda Street**  
**Jonesboro, Arkansas 72405**

If you wish to honor a person or to make a donation in memory of someone, please provide contact information so that we may properly advise the honoree or surviving family of your donation. Thanks to those who have already donated to the TSNA Scholarship Fund. Please send donations to The Tan Son Nhut Association, PO Box 236, Penryn, PA.

University of South Carolina

Ouachita Baptist University

Mississippi State University



Pennsylvania State University

University of Florida

Greetings all,

I just wanted to drop a quick note to say how much I enjoyed Andy Csordas' article "Special COMSEC Support Detachment – Tan Son Nhut" in the March, 2021 Revetments.

As an Army "32G20" crypto repairman in 68-69, I served at the MACV main complex in the Comm Center there. The stories in Andy's article, and the links out to Jerry Proc's web site – I had no idea such a resource even existed – and to the "Crypto Museum" site, all brought back some fond – and some not so fond – memories! I was in "A" Company of the 69th Signal Battalion, Camp Gaylor for my entire time there at TSN. In my spare time" I also volunteered for base security duty with those fine folks in the 377th SPS.

As I'm sure most of you are aware, the main MACV (Pentagon East) Comm Center was the major link to the actual Pentagon, as well as to most major commands in Vietnam. We got to handle pretty much ALL the communications traffic in and out of country at the time. Our site had a bank of I believe about a dozen KW-26 (all the "C" models) and an unknown (to me) number of KW-7's, all of which were the "Plugblock" – aka Patchcord – models. Of particular note with the KW-7's was a comment made in one of the articles (on the Proc site) about the "accessory item" for them; that being the thermite grenade mounted over the top of each. I can indeed confirm that each and every one of the KW-7's we had at MACV when I was there from 6/68 to 6/69 did in fact have such a thermite device placed on top of them in all the many racks.

Apparently I had long ago forgotten the words "Hotel Juliette", but upon reading them again was brought back in time to the many card changes and sync resets we had to do on the KW-26's! For some reason, our link to Hawaii was particularly bad at times.

At any rate, I wanted to make sure that all of you knew that these efforts with regard to TSNA and Revetments were appreciated.

I also thought that while here, I would mention that I took my wife of 50 years (we actually just hit 51 years on this past 17-Feb) on a return trip to Vietnam in March of 2019. We were in SE Asia for the entire month of March, 2019, beginning with several days in Bangkok, followed by 4 days in Siem Reap (Cambodia) – the home of Angkor Wat – and the remainder of the time up to 28 March all up and down Vietnam. We went from the Delta to well north of Hanoi, all the way to the border with China at the amazing Ban Gioc Waterfalls on the Quây Son River. The entire trip was a mind-blowing experience, especially seeing how much Vietnam has changed over those many years. Of the many dramatic changes we encountered, perhaps one of the most mind blowing was the stretch of coastline from Da Nang south to Hoi An! That entire stretch of coast of populated with resort after resort; some of which were as big as any seen in Las Vegas today. The other major standout was learning just how mountainous Vietnam is in the north. Our drive from the hotel in Hanoi up to the waterfalls went through some of the most "white knuckle" driving I had ever experienced. And I wasn't even the one doing the driving; we had a paid driver and English speaking guide everywhere we went in all three countries. Absolutely fabulous trip! (And yet one I know would NOT be for everybody!)

I will close by once again offering my sincere thanks all those involved with TSNA and Revetments for the work you all do. Keep up the great work.

Best regards,

Jim Augeri  
Albuquerque, NM  
TSNA Life Member

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Jim will be writing about his 2019 trip for us—stay tuned. In fact, his "Intro" is on the next page. Some of it is a repeat of the above, but I am including it all as he wrote it, so I don't mess up anything.**



## Travelogue; our trip to Vietnam in March 2019; for TSNA Revetments

While reading the excellent article “Special COMSEC Support Detachment – Tan Son Nhut” by Andy Csordas in the March, 2021 issue of Revetments, I was inspired to write a short email back to Andy (and with a Cc: to Larry Fry) about a few of my own recollections of some of the Crypto gear he discussed in the article. I closed with a brief paragraph of how I had returned to Vietnam in March of 2019 with my wife of 50 years. What you hopefully will be reading over the next few issues of Revetments evolved from those emails. That and several exchanges with Larry about potential reader interest in one Vietnam Vet's personal experience in returning to the country 50 years later, and how it may differ from others who have perhaps taken part in one or the other of many “battlefield” tours offered to veterans. Hopefully you will continue reading and will find something of value in my efforts.

I served in the US Army (regular enlisted) from Sep 1967-1970, and in Vietnam specifically from Jun, 1968 to Jun 1969. During my time there in RVN, I was assigned to the Signal Corps site at Camp Gaylor, Co “A”, 69<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Signal Brigade. For anyone who might not know, Camp Gaylor was just east of the two large radar domes just off the main drag from the TSN main gate heading over to the BX/PX. My duty assignment was at the MACV Headquarters facility in the Crypto Communications facility; the inner sanctum of the entire MACV Comm Center. Specifically, I was a MOS 32G20 – Fixed Station Crypto Repair; and even more specifically, for the massive KW-26 “Romulus”. I know at least a small handful of you are familiar with those beasts. While not being bored out of my mind with the day-to-day humdrum of care and feeding of the KW-26, I found it interesting to volunteer for security duty as part of the 69<sup>th</sup>, and helping the 377SPS to provide security to the larger population of Tan Son Nhut AB.

Aside from the duty assignment, I was somewhat smitten by some of the people I met while out and about. While it was obvious neither the Viet's or us Army & Air Force troops were seeing each other under the best of circumstances, there was something about these hard working and diligent folks that spoke to me. And while I didn't get to see any of the country farther north than III Corp, what I did see around the area told me I was being witness to a great cultural experience; perhaps one of the greatest of my young life. (I was 20-1/2 when I went to Vietnam.) And what I did see of the countryside told me that there was likely a lot of natural beauty hidden behind the façade of the war. This is what led to a long held desire to want to go back some day for a visit. Note I didn't say LIFELONG; because it wasn't until quite some time later that the idea of returning really hit. I, like many others, and no doubt like many of you reading these words today, never wanted to have anything to do with “that place” ever again. I get that! And I will be the first to admit that the trip I took in 2019 with my wife is one that many will never even consider, let alone act on. However, members of a couple of the Vietnam Vet groups I belong to on Facebook occasionally voice the idea of a return trip; much to the chagrin and negative comments of still others in those same groups. To each their own is always my reply; but always with a hint that there is a worthwhile experience to be had by returning to SE Asia. While I briefly considered one of those “battlefield” tours, or other forms of organized group tours for Vietnam Vets, I eventually bypassed all that in favor of a much different sort of experience.

Urged on by one of my younger sisters' close friends who had traveled to Vietnam herself, I chose to work with an independent travel agent based in Guilin, China. (Shameless plug for Odynovo Travel - <https://www.odynovotours.com/> - these folks are amazing!) The agent I worked with there helped me put together a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Southeast Asia that started with short visits to Bangkok, Thailand, and Siem Reap, Cambodia (home to the amazing Buddhist Temples of Angkor Wat, which WAS always a lifelong desire to visit!). The monthlong trip culminated with 18 days visiting all up and down the entire country of Vietnam; from the Mekong Delta all the way to the northern border with neighboring China.

Over the next few months, I will write a short piece on each leg of the trip, starting with an intro as to how this all came together with Odynovo, and agent Alick Peng, and a description of the first two legs of the journey; Bangkok & Siem Reap. I hope you will stick around for the journey.

Jim Augeri  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
TSNA Life Member

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**"South Vietnamese Military Shops"  
Photo from George Greenwood**

### **"IMPORTANT" DATES FOR APRIL**

**APRIL 2, GOOD FRIDAY**  
**APRIL 4, EASTER**  
**APRIL 4, 1949 NATO FOUNDED**  
**APRIL 6, 1917 US ENTERS WWI**  
**APRIL 6, 1991 PERSIAN GULF WAR ENDS**  
**APRIL 12, 1981 FIRST US SPACE SHUTTLE LAUNCHED**  
**APRIL 14 PAN AMERICAN DAY**  
**APRIL 30, 2021 ARBOR DAY (LAST FRIDAY IN APRIL)**  
**APRIL 22 EARTH DAY**  
**APRIL 25, 1898 SPANISH AMERICAN WAR BEGINS**  
**APRIL 30, 1975 VIETNAM WAR ENDS**

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