



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



JUNE 2021

NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

I wasn't there during TET, but I heard many stories. I lived in the 377 CAMS barracks. It was a two-story building near the latrine, is all that I can recall.

I worked in the Base Operations Building and we tried to obtain avionics equipment for aircraft through local and CONUS sites.

We maintained a status board of NORS (Not Operationally Ready) aircraft and tracked the status of back-ordered equipment.

Before I came to Tan Son Nhut, I was stationed at Cam Rahn Bay AB BEMO (Base Equipment Management Office). I took care of one-half of all equipment accounts in the Central Region.

Gordon Ray Lawrence

(New Life Member)

Nov 71-Nov 72 377 CAMS Sq.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I received these in response to the May issue of Revetments.

I just wanted to let you all know my husband, Gary Totten, is doing well. We have finally gotten done with the final appeal for his AO Ischemic Heart Disease. We finally found someone that listened to what I had to say about his case, I pointed out some areas that were incorrect, he was given 100% as of April 2011. Back pay as well. I am retiring on May 14th so we can spend more time together. I want to let the Association know I really appreciate all their help and encouragement, yours as well to never give up, we didn't and it helped!!

Respectfully,

Brigid Totten

Sgt Brigid K Totten, USAF

EDITOR'S NOTE: Gary was at TSN: May 66 - Sep 66, 377th Transportation Squadron. And another thought!

Great! It would be a surreal experience to join a TSNA reunion via Zoom, especially from my present location in the town of Nghi Son in Northern Vietnam. I'm here teaching (American) English to high school students. I'll be here until the semester ends in about one more month, then it's back to Saigon. Please advise the date and time of the Zoom meeting if/when it happens.

Looking forward to "being there".

Paul A. Allard

Sep 67 - May 69

460th AEMS

Some Things are Not as They Seem

Andy Csordas-Associate Chaplain

It has happened to all of us, something we are told turns out not to be true, something we buy does not live up to expectations or the perceived value, we are wounded by the deceitful actions of a friend, etc., etc. Sometimes it just makes us angry, but it can really hurt on a deep emotional level if it involves a friend. Perhaps we have done things that have the same effect on others, even though it was not intentional, but the result is still the same. We may have left out a few details to "not hurt their feelings" but the result is just the opposite.

We are surrounded by things that are not what they seem to be every day. Have you ever seen an eagle come soaring into a stadium with the accompanied screech? If so, you have been subject to a bit of deceit. An eagle makes a grunting sound but that is not good enough for a majestic entrance. The screech you hear is actually a hawk, indeed it is much more majestic than a grunt.

The same is true of military posers. I have encountered many men who pose as Vietnam Veterans who may not have even been in the military. Perhaps they are not nearly old enough to have served in Vietnam, or if you listen they single handedly saved the day in every unit possible. I remember one guy with a Vietnam Veteran hat (not a Vietnam Era Veteran cap) who told me he did search and rescue in Alaska during the war. Funny I did not think the Vietnam territorial waters went out that far, plus he appeared to be too young.

So what do the scriptures say about being deceitful? **Proverbs 12:20** (New American Standard Bible) tells us: ***The thoughts of the righteous are just, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.***

How do we make sure we are not deceitful? Sin causes us to be deceitful. Sin has been a curse on man since the Garden of Eden. It is a result of not listening to God. But we can change with God's help. **Ephesians 4:22-24** tells us: ***that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.***

With God's help and forgiveness we can become a person of peace. We will still make mistakes, but we need to listen for God's counsel as we go through life each day and become that person of peace.

TRAVELOGUE; THE GENESIS, AND ALBUQUERQUE TO THE FAR EAST.

Over the next few months, I will be describing the trip to Vietnam my wife and I took in March of 2019 (including stops in Bangkok and Siem Reap, Cambodia). In this installment I talk about the genesis of the trip itself, and next installment will cover the first two destination stops.

Several years ago – I’m guessing 15 or so, maybe more – I first floated the idea to my wife of returning to Vietnam someday. Surprisingly, she was “all in”! After all, the only reason we are together is because of my tour in Vietnam in ‘68 & ‘69. My assignment to the 69th Sig Bn at Tan Son Nhut is how I met her brother Dan, and subsequently, her – Winnie. And the rest, as they say, is history. We celebrated 51 years together this past February 17th.

I retired from Honeywell after 30 years in January of 2016. Now we were free to do some of the traveling we had always promised each other we would do “one day”. Several road trips, both on our Harley-Davidson, and in the car of the moment led us to all four corners of the country and into Canada. (We are both originally from the northeast; Middletown, CT and Newport, RI respectively.) Once we had done a few of the typical National Parks and other scenic attractions trips, it was time to get serious about something, well, more serious.

Now is as good a time as any to mention that if you want to travel overseas like this, you must go through a rigorous set of medical inoculations that are specific to the countries you will be visiting. In my case, the local VA’s Infectious Disease Clinic took care of everything I needed, but we had to find a private firm to provide the same for Winnie. In our case, we had to be inoculated against Hepatitis A & B, Japanese encephalitis, tetanus and a small number of other things. We both had to take anti-malaria pills, plus having to take more malaria meds for 4 weeks after returning from SE Asia. This can get a bit costly, depending on what, if anything your own insurance will cover. In our case, we just rolled the added \$\$ into the cost for the overall trip. This added about US \$1500 for the wife; mine was 100% covered by the VA.

Now back to how it all came to be. My younger sister Kathy has a friend who mentioned that she had visited Vietnam a couple years earlier and raved about the experience. One thing led to another, and the friend gave me the name and contact information of the travel agent she had used. I put that information away for a spell, and put my computer to work while I did my own research.

When you first attempt to look for “tours to Vietnam” on the internet, you will realize there are a crazy number of outfits out there offering Veterans various travel experiences. Almost all of these have their adherents, and most of them center around groups of like-minded Vets who are interested in visiting some of their old “stomping grounds”; to wit, the old battlefield tours to places like Ia Drang Valley, Monkey Mountain, Khe Sanh, and the like.

Here I must digress a bit and mention that my wife – Winnie – has some significant mobility issues as the result of peripheral neuropathy. While she can walk more or less OK, she has little in the way of stamina. Walking 100-200 feet, especially on anything other than flat level ground, just about wipes her out. She travels with a small, foldable electric wheelchair that can be “gate checked” by most airlines. Thus, aside from the simple fact that battlefield tours were not really my cup of tea, the whole idea of ANY kind of group tour was really something of a turn-off. Thinking ahead to a group of 50 or so people taking a bus to various spots and being hustled through a fixed daily schedule of stops and attractions was not very confidence inspiring. I could see the travel guides, as well as the other travelers in the group getting increasingly annoyed with us for making everything take longer than it might otherwise. I guess it was time to dust off that friend’s suggestion to see where that might lead.

Enter the travel agent in Guilin, China. (<https://www.odynovotours.com>) Their travel offerings were indeed very different. I went to their web site and looked up one of their standard offerings for SE Asia that seemed like a good fit. Little did I know that almost everything on that initial itinerary was not only negotiable, but customizable. With that as a starting point, I contacted the agent (Alick Peng) whose name I had been given to start investigating options. The first thing I learned about their offering was a truly mind-blowing experience.

Their trips are planned for individual travelers and based entirely around your specific needs and desires. Literally ANYTHING can be changed. So, naturally my first impression was – Whoa! – this is going to be crazy ex-

pensive! At each place we would visit, we would have a dedicated car and driver, and an English speaking guide. Long story short, all we had to do was get to the starting point (Bangkok), and get home at the end from the last place we visited (Hanoi or Saigon). And without yet disclosing the price for this trip, which I WILL DO near the end, I will now say that it was surprisingly affordable. Everything in between our arrival in Bangkok, and our departure from Saigon at the other end was planned and covered by the travel agent and his company. The only other thing I had to do (and they would have done this too if I had wanted) was arrange for travel visas for Thailand and Vietnam. Both countries visas were applied for and obtained on-line. Cambodia does not require visas for whatever reason. That was not the only things that would surprise us about Cambodia during this trip. All monetary transactions in Cambodia are done in US dollars. I'm still not sure why that is either.

As I mentioned earlier, every detail of the trip after our arrival and up to our departure was handled by the travel company. All hotels; all interior airline flights; most meals; all was covered by the all-encompassing price. We needed to bring cash for shopping, incidentals, and TIPS. Tipping is pretty much optional, and not really expected in most places we visited. But to me, tipping is the only way you can let someone know they have provided services that were up to or exceeding your expectations. The hotels in particular were all of 4-star or higher – yes, you read that right – quality. The lowest quality place we stayed was a small local place way out in the country north of Hanoi, in the town of Cao Bang. But even that little place was still quite nice. Every other place we stayed was way beyond any expectations we had going into the trip, and the service was outstanding. Meals that were provided were mostly very decent hotel food for breakfast, and lunch of local cuisine from either a small restaurant or, in a number of cases, from street vendors. Dinner each day was the only real meal we had to worry about on our own. All the food was quite good, with the daily lunch meals being a fixed menu offering to keep things simple. We had plenty of good food on the trip. Another of those special accommodations came into play with respect to the food too. Winnie is allergic to any kind of SHELLFISH; so, shrimp, clams, oysters, lobster – any seafood that comes out of a shell – are all off limits to her. The English speaking guide would advise the staff at whatever place we were eating at for the current meal of her allergies and the restaurant would manage to come up with an acceptable alternative dish for her on the spot. Simply amazing! By now you might be wondering how we managed to deal with describing Winnie's food allergies when we would go out for dinner on our own in the evening. We had a plan, and a backup. Mostly we didn't have to worry about it, because many Vietnamese today speak pretty good English, and it was never a problem finding someone who could intervene if needed. But mostly we were able to work directly with restaurant staff themselves to communicate the issue. Our "Plan B" was this: we carried a note explaining her food allergies. This note was written in Vietnamese. So worst case, all we had to do was show the note to someone who could pass along the information. We never had to resort to using it the entire time we traveled.

The flights to and from SE Asia are interesting. I'm sure many of you can recall a longish flight to or from Vietnam back in the day; I know I sure can. Our flight from Albuquerque to/from LA was a non-issue. But the flight to Bangkok consisted of nearly 20 hours (including layovers) first to Seoul, and then on to Bangkok. The flight to Incheon alone was 14 hours! We flew to Incheon (Seoul, South Korea) on a Korean Airlines – amazing airline, by the way – Airbus A-380; a huge airplane that seats 800 passengers on two separate decks. This first leg flight was so long we actually got two full meals and a snack in between. And the food was actually pretty good as airline food goes. Every seat on the A-380 has its own in-flight entertainment screen, and you can even watch in flight progress on it. I can't even recall at the moment how many movies I watched during the LAX to Incheon/Seoul flight! The front end and tail end of the trip were two of the changes I had the travel agent make. At the arrival in Thailand, we would not get into Bangkok until nearly midnight! And after the very long flights, we were not eager to start traveling again just a few hours later. So, I had them build in a "down day" that first day in Thailand so we could rest up a bit. Good move! This also gave us an opportunity to explore a little of the downtown Bangkok area near our hotel on our own. As a lover of craft beer, it didn't take me long to find the closest brewpub, which sat atop the nearby Radisson Hotel a couple blocks away. Good beer too! At the tail end of the trip, we would have normally departed from Hanoi for the return home, but I wanted to go back to Saigon for a few extra days, so we had them build that in as well. Easy changes to make.

About that little electric wheelchair! It was gate checked a couple of times, but mostly checked as baggage, but without extra fees because of its status as a "medical device". And at each place we went, it was either ready at the arrival gate, or picked up at arriving baggage claim. Again, all these accommodations were handled for us by the travel agent, and the guides at either end of a given connection. The Lithium batteries did prove an interesting challenge a couple of times, having to be removed from the chair and carried in our carry-on bags.



**Waiting to board the Airbus A380 flight from Incheon International, Seoul, South Korea to Bangkok.
Note the double-decker jetways.**

Fortunately, they remove from the chair easily and pack pretty well too. But it was something we had to adjust to on the fly (no pun intended). It was also a recurring issue on all of the Asian flights. The most challenging aspect of this came about when leaving Siem Reap, Cambodia bound for Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), but I'll save that story for that chapter of this travelogue.

This about wraps up the first “chapter” of our trip travelogue. I hope you will join us again next time for the first and second legs of the trip; our few days spent in each of Bangkok and Siem Reap, before we move on to the meat of the trip, almost three weeks traveling from one end of Vietnam to the other.

Jim Augeri
Albuquerque, New Mexico
TSNA Life Member

NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

I arrived at TSN Christmas Eve 1968. I lived in the 1200 area. Our office was near the flight line. We maintained all the records on aircraft assigned to the 460 TRW. C-123K, RF-4C, RF-101, RB-57, and all other aircraft.

Two other guys in my unit were Robin Heide of OR, and Glen Flurry of MO.

Thomas R. Carlson
Dec 68—Jul 70
460th TRW Hq. Sq.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This page is about a new book that one of our members, and past Reunion Speaker, Colonel Wolfgang Samuel, has written.

"Wolf" was our Guest Speaker at the 2014 Reunion, in Evansville, IN

Flights from Fassberg - How a German Town Built for War Became a Beacon of Peace

My new book covers Fassberg from WWII to the end of the Cold War in 1992 through the eyes of my family. My father was stationed there while serving in the Luftwaffe in 1944 to 1945. I lived near Fassberg in a makeshift refugee camp from 1946 to 1950 and went to school there. My son in later years flew his A-10 out of Fassberg as part of a Brit/US/French strike force should the Soviets ever try a second Berlin airlift scenario. The book also addresses what none of the other Berlin airlift related books talk about. How Fassberg and the airbase came about, part of Hitler's war scenario. Although it was largely a Luftwaffe training base, which it is to this day, its aircraft also flew one of the most devastating missions against the 8th Air Force, destroying nearly 100 B-17 and other aircraft at Poltava, Ukraine, in 1944. Fassberg then served as one of two critical coaling stations for Berlin during the Lift. Berlin of course was not only the home of over two million German civilians, but also the home of families of senior American officers and diplomatic personnel. The wives of these men had their fears in the winter of 1948, having heard all too often of what the Russians did to German girls and women in 1945. General Bradley had his son-in-law stationed in Berlin, an Air Force Lt/Col, and had him reassigned out of Berlin not wanting to subject his daughter to the chance of a terrible imagined outcome. His son-in-law did not appreciate what his father-in-law did, but then he was only a mere Lt/Col and followed orders. Bradley, one of our great WWII Generals, actually recommended to Truman to withdraw from Berlin while the getting was good. Truman of course said, "We stay." Well, the wives of the Berlin contingents had to do something - so they decided to come out with a Berlin Airlift Cookbook. I was lucky to get a hold of a couple of copies, one even signed by Mrs. Clay. General Clay, then the governor of Tri-zonia, and to this day greatly admired and revered by Germans of that generation. So, I included a number of their recipes in the book, direct copies of pages from the cookbook. And, of course, Sergeant Schuffert eulogized the Lift with his right on the mark cartoons - and I gave him the credit he deserved. All of them of course were part of that great airlift, not just the pilots who flew the planes. I met Colonel Halvorsen for the first time while stationed in Germany after Vietnam in 1970. I tell his story, and his incredible humanity, as well as some one of a kind of poetry by our own Lucky Lizard. An MP stationed at Fassberg in later years read one of my books, German Boy, and as he lay dying of cancer, he asked his wife to send me all the pictures he had taken while stationed at Fassberg. She did, and I included many of them in the book. Finally, I tried to tell how the lift came about in clear and concise terms and what it resulted in - for one, the German state; also, NATO, etc. I hope you enjoy the book as much as it gave me pleasure to write it.

**Flights from
FASSBERG**

How a
German Town
Built for War
Became a
Beacon of Peace



WOLFGANG W. E. SAMUEL
COLONEL, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE (RET.)

I tried on the old flight suit, it's a little tight 😊🐱



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Hi Larry - The aircrews on TSN rotated doing the undercarriage and landing gear observation at the BEGINNING OF THE RUNWAY (to insure that the wheels were locked into place and there was no sign of fire on the undercarriage of plane). On this swap over I was asked to fill in for the Sgt who drove the new crew there and brought back the crew that finished. As I waited (in the squadron pickup truck for the crews to debrief) I snapped a couple of photos of the C141 STARLIFTER which was landing. It was a beautiful sight and the sound of the four jet engines was incredible. My best TSN adventure by far.

[David Link, 12th TRS \(Sept 1967 to April 1969\)](#)

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