



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam

NOVEMBER 2021

Patrick Henry's Sealed Envelope
Andy Csordas-Associate Chaplain



We should all know who Patrick Henry was from our study of American history. Some say he was America's greatest orator among the early fathers of our country. He wrote extensively about freedom. We likely all remember his greatest quote ***"give me liberty or give me death"***. Do you know the rest of that quote, here it is: ***Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"***

Patrick Henry loved this country and its opportunity for all people, was it perfect, of course not but it was and has been the best thing going for over 200 years. How about another of his quotes: ***"The eternal difference between right and wrong does not fluctuate, it is immutable."*** There is an absolute right and wrong, we certainly can discuss ideas and processes and how to accomplish a given goal, but Patrick Henry believed in right and wrong.

He loved this country and was willing to sacrifice all for it to succeed. He did live until the age of 63 and died in 1799. He was adamant that it was important for people and the country to turn to God for direction and receive the resulting blessings. He also believed that if we, the people or the country, turned away from God we would be stripped of God's blessings. He also understood that no matter our spiritual position in life there was always room for improvement, both individually and as a nation. We have never "arrived" in this life.

When Patrick Henry passed away a small envelope sealed with wax was found near his last will and testament. In it was found a single sheet of paper which included these words about America's independence:

Whether this will prove a Blessing or a Curse will depend upon the Use our people make of the Blessings which a gracious God hath bestowed on us. If they are wise, they will be great and happy. If they are of a Contrary Character, they will be miserable. Righteousness alone can exalt them as a nation. Reader!, whoever thou art, remember this; and in thy Sphere, practice Virtue thyself, and encourage it in others. P. Henry.

Proverbs 14:34 tells us: ***Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.***

So where do we stand individually, do we strive for Righteousness or are we of Contrary Character? If you are like me you likely have had times of both types of behavior. We need to continue to strive for righteousness individually and as a nation. Do we want to be great and happy or be miserable? The fate of free people around the world just may be at stake.



JIM AUGERI'S TRAVELOGUE PART 5 (SPECIAL TO TSNA "REVETMENTS")

This is the final installment in our trip to SE Asia. We continue here with the remainder of the Northern Vietnam leg of the trip.

The return drive back to Hanoi would involve a different route than we took getting to the falls and included an overnight stop in the quaint village of Cao Bang. This off the beaten path little place was situated right on the banks of yet another small river. It was a quite different experience staying here compared to the big city experiences we had so far in Saigon & Hanoi. The local people were also very friendly to us here as well. The next day found us heading back to Hanoi and a return to our room at the Lapis Hotel. While en route, we crossed a lot of farmlands, most of which is dedicated to – imagine this – rice paddies. We stopped at one of these farms



Terraced rice paddies are seen everywhere here in the north due to the hilly landscape.

and watched a group of Vietnamese women planting rice plant seedlings. They would go grab a bunch of them an armload at a time and tore off individual plants and bury them into the muddy paddy. Guide Quang pointed out that these women often experienced lower back problems later in life (most of them were fairly young) due to bending over pushing plants into the mud all day long. It is grueling work at best. Some of the most stunning of these rice paddies are the ones that are terraced along the hillsides. The industriousness of the Vietnamese still astounds me to this day; they seem to make use of every possible bit of arable land for their plantings. We also drove past many roadside spots where there were thin sheets of sandalwood laid out on drying stands for future use in many handmade knick-knacks.

After just one overnight stay in Hanoi, it was off on the road again, this time headed east to the famous Ha Long Bay, and an overnight cruise. This was another time when we parted company with our guide and were handed over to a guide provided by the cruise line. Along the way, we drove past another artists colony where many artists works were on display, mostly marble carvings of religious figures, and various animals indigenous to the local culture. Ha Long Bay (the name means “descending dragon”) – yet another UNESCO World Heritage site – is the famous place you have probably seen in a movie or two that is “populated” with nearly 2,000 small (and some not so small) rock island outcroppings. The mostly limestone outcroppings formed when the sea floor rose up during multiple tectonic plate shifts going back as far as 250-400 million years ago! Some of these limestone karsts are rather small, but we visited one in particular that was quite large and had a really extensive cave system contained within it! I'm not talking Carlsbad Caverns huge, but considering these caves are inside a big rock in a bay, they are more than respectable in size. And these intriguing caverns contain all the usual cave-like formations you would expect to see anywhere else. Curtain formations, stalagmites (floor positioned), and stalactites (ceiling positioned) spires abound, as do other familiar formations. Truly an interesting experience when one realizes that you are inside a big rock, in a HUGE bay, just off the South China Sea.

The overnight stay on the boat was a wonderful experience, with a great and friendly crew, and a fabulous meal (which again, was all traditional Vietnamese fare). We were told there are something like 600 of these tour boats that serve the tourists in this huge bay. There is also quite an extensive “amusement park” like ambience built up all around the Ha Long Bay area, which even includes a quite large Ferris wheel (designed by the same company who built the famous London “Eye”), and an aerial tram that spans the entire width of the bay itself. In all, it makes for quite an interesting destination. There were also a handful of activities available in the afternoon right from aboard the boat, such as kayaking around some of the smaller “islands”. Winnie and I opted to sit out on the upper sun deck and just soak in all the sights around us. While chillin’ on the boat, I struck up a conversation with one of the young boat hands. His English was passably good, and we had an interesting conversation about his wishes for the future. It seems that their duty on the boat is quite arduous, often with 14-hour days. And there are few jobs that afford them any real opportunity. Basically, there in the

village of Ha Long, you worked long hours in the tourist business, or didn't work. He confided in me that his greatest wish was to save enough money to be able to go south to Saigon where his opportunities would be much greater. Our talk was an interesting insight to the great differences in opportunity available to these young people between the cities of the south, like Saigon, versus up north, and even in Hanoi. Our conversation left me a bit saddened for this young man, who obviously had much bigger dreams for his future than he had opportunities. If there was anywhere on the trip that the Communist government influence could be seen or felt, it would be here in the far north. We spent a quiet night on the boat moored way out in the bay and in the morning headed off to cruise some more around the bay before eventually heading back to land in the afternoon. Our guide and driver picked up at the boat launch area upon our return and off we went on the drive back to Hanoi for our last night there.



Ha Long Bay



Hotel at the intersection of Dong Khoi & Le Loi St's in Saigon. I believe today this is called the Hotel Continental Saigon



Our last night in Hanoi had finally arrived! We spent a mostly quiet evening having a cool refreshing drink in the Lapis Hotel lobby bar followed by another nice dinner. The following morning after breakfast we would bid farewell to guide Quang and driver Mr Hoa one last time as we were delivered to the Nội Bài International Airport in Hanoi for our flight back to Saigon. This is one of the final accommodations I had asked our travel agent to make for us. I wanted us to go back to Saigon/HCMC so we could have a couple days to explore a few additional sights on our own. The hotel I had chosen for our final stay was the famous Hotel Continental right in the heart of downtown District 1. You may recall this hotel as the formerly named Continental Palace, which is adjacent to the Saigon Opera House and the equally well known Caravelle Hotel. Built in 1880 by the French, it was named in honor of the hotel by the same name in Paris and is the first and oldest hotel in all of Vietnam. We could not believe the room we were given there! The front desk manager actually changed our room assignment when he saw Winnie in her chair, to place us closer to the elevators. We ended up in a huge suite with two beds, a separate sitting area and furnished all in period antiques. I knew this would not be a cheap overnight stay, but as the final stay of our trip, it really didn't matter. The center courtyard of this amazing three-story hotel contains three Frangipani trees that also date back to its 1880 origins. They are truly impressive trees too.

Our brief 3-day stay allowed us to cruise around the area by Tuk-Tuk and walk a lot on foot (and Winnie's chair) visiting some off the beaten path places. I tried – unsuccessfully – to find the location of the original Saigon USO, where on Christmas of 1968 I called home to Connecticut to talk to my family. And of course, I also found yet another nearby brewpub – the Heart of Darkness – which ended up living up to its name by having the lights go out (electricity failed) just shortly after we arrived there. We had a pretty decent lunch, and I scored yet another t-shirt commemorating their Merciless Phantom Reserve Imperial Stout.

At one point we took a drive back out toward Tan Son Nhut to see if I could spot any familiar sights, but the entire area is so vastly different today than it was in 1968 & 69 that nothing looked at all familiar. Where the TSN Main Gate once sat is now an elevated multi-lane highway going into the International Airport. Virtually nothing looked familiar, and I believe the area where our Army compound (69th Signal Battalion, Camp Gaylor) was located is now populated by high-rise buildings! As some of you may recall, that compound was just a short distance inside the main gate on the left side, right near the radar domes. Oh well, so much for the nostalgia tour!

Eventually all good things must come to an end. On our final morning there, I asked the front desk to summon us a taxi for our departure ride to TSN, and the long flight back home to Albuquerque. As it turned out, our adventure wasn't quite over just yet. It seems when I processed our travel visa's (recall I did this myself, and online), I screwed up on the exit date on Winnie's visa paperwork. We were departing on 28-March, but her visa said she was departing on 19-March! I still don't have a clue how I did this; Oops. Turns out this is a much bigger deal than you may think. The airline agent refused to process us, stating that Winnie had overstayed her visa by those 9 days. He had us leave the check-in line and move off to the side, where we were eventually escorted to an agent of the Vietnamese government who would review the situation. Initially we were told we would likely have to go to the US Embassy in Saigon to get it all sorted out! Pretty scary stuff at this point in this otherwise extraordinary journey. Fortunately, the Vietnamese official was willing to listen to my story about this all being just an administrative faux pas on my part, and why in the world would I have had her and I traveling home on different dates? Apparently, I convinced him that there was no sinister intent behind my simple mistake, and he wrote a brief note and signed Winnie's Visa paperwork, allowing us to continue on our way. Thank God for small miracles, since it seemed for a while like this could have gotten ugly. Back to the airline counter and we were allowed to get checked in unimpeded. The moral of this story is, be VERY careful if you process a Visa on-line (or anywhere); check your dates, then re-check them, and then check them again! In the end, the long flights were the only down-side to this extraordinary trip. But even at that, I would not hesitate for an instant to go back if given the opportunity. But there are so many other places I want to go see, a return to Vietnam will have to wait a bit. I really want to visit Melilli, Sicily where my paternal grandfather was from before he immigrated to the USA when he was 17 in the year 1905. But that's a story for another time.

And that's a Wrap!

I want to reiterate one last time what a wonderful experience we had on this trip. Not only did we see some amazing sights in all three countries, but the people we dealt with all throughout were just incredible. This was especially true here in Vietnam. If there was any place where human memory could have played a role in any long-held animosity toward us Americans, I would think it would be here. And that just was not the case at all. Everyone we dealt with, young and old alike, and in all three countries, were just great at making us feel welcomed and at ease with our visit. While I also realize that this is not a trip every Vietnam Vet may aspire to, it did fulfill a long-time desire for me. To visit what I had perceived so long ago as a 21-year-old E-4 Army Specialist as a country that held so much potential beauty, if only it wasn't the site of what the Vietnamese Government still refers to as the "American War".

At the beginning, I mentioned that I considered this trip was quite reasonable in cost. Obviously, this will be highly subjective to you good readers. While I won't give a line-item accounting of everything, the major expense categories are worth mentioning. What you need to keep in mind is that this trip was for nearly an entire MONTH; we were gone from March 2nd until March 29th. So, without further ado, here is a brief breakdown of how the costs were distributed. (See the notes below the table)

(THE FOLLOWING CHART WON'T FIT HERE, SO KEEP READING!!)

Odynovo Travel Services	The complete SE Asia travel package (1)	\$7,236.00
Travel Insurance (a MUST have)	trip cancellation, foreign medical & evacuation coverage, etc	\$1,300.00
Winnie's inoculations (2)	For travel to foreign countries	\$1,500.00
Airfares (ABQ to Bangkok; Saigon to ABQ)	We had to provide our own flights to & from SE Asia	\$2,500.00
Foreign Visa's	Thailand & Vietnam (3)	\$400.00
Miscellaneous (4)	Tips, out-of-pocket meals, souvenirs, incidentals	\$4,000.00

1. Keep in mind that this included our guides & drivers; All internal airline flights once in SE Asia; All Hotel accommodations & most meals; All visited attractions and tours in all 3 countries. This was for BOTH of us, not per person!
2. Inoculations are for diseases you could get in these foreign countries; for Jim, these were covered by the VA (Included Japanese encephalitis, Hep-A & Hep-B, malaria, typhoid, etc)
3. Cambodia did not require a Visa
4. Obviously, this category is HUGELY discretionary. The Saigon stay (Continental Hotel) at the end is included in this total.

If you add this all up, it comes out to just under \$17,000 US. Expensive? Reasonable? You would need to choose; I know my answer.

I hope this gives you some idea of just what an experience this was, and how this once in a lifetime trip came to be. I also hope you have all enjoyed following along here in the pages of Revetments. It has been my privilege and honor to be able to provide those of you who may never get a chance to experience a trip like this an opportunity to take part in this special trip that meant so much to the two of us.

Jim Augeri

Albuquerque, New Mexico
TSNA Life Member

(SEE THE SPECIAL NOTE ON THE BOTTOM OF PAGE 8)

NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

I was in USAF, teaching future Vietnamese Pilots English, as well as Mechanics, etc, so they could go to CONUS to take courses only available in English.

Gerald E. Dehoney

MACV Training Directorate
June 1970 - June 1971

RESPECTING THE VETERANS

By: Harold Boone

460th TRW HQ Section
Sept 67 - Aug 68

Sometimes the roads we travel carries us to places of majestic beauty and inspiration. Seemingly this inspiration comes when we least expect it and often in the most unlikely of places.

About a year ago I stopped at a fast-food restaurant to get a "to go" lunch as I was traveling to western North Carolina. It was a simple day trip to get out of the house. (In other words, it was a jail break to escape from Covid Prison.) Since the dine-in area was closed to the public, I went through the drive-through. Then something caught my eye. So unexpected I drove around the restaurant once again just to confirm my sighting. It was a Missing Man Table set against the dining area window for all to see.

Well, a year later I made the same trip again and remembering that restaurant, I purposely stopped there again

for a takeout lunch. This time the dine-in area was open and I went in. The Missing Man Table was still set in all its splendor along with a written description of why each item was a part of the table setting.

I later called the manager and inquired about the history of this particular restaurant's use of such a table. It seems this owner has multiple restaurants and each has a Missing Man Table within the dining area. I was then directed to the owner for additional information.

In talking with the owner, I learned he has many veterans gathering daily for their morning coffee and social time. In honor of them, he set up a Missing Man Table in observance of Veterans Day each year. It was so well received by the veterans he decided to leave the table up year-round. And non-veterans will also see and know the purpose of such a table setting.

This restaurant owner is not a veteran but he has clearly shown by actions his respect and admiration for his customers having served in the military. Hats off to such a caring man.



Johnnie and Sharon Jernigan at the conclusion of
"The Missing Man Table"
Presentation at the TSNA 2013 Reunion.

IN MEMORIAM

Georgette E. Bontya, aged 69, passed away peacefully with her loving husband by her side on September 27, 2021. A longtime resident of both Murrells Inlet, SC and Bordentown, NJ, Georgette was born in Teaneck, NJ

Left to cherish her memory is her devoted husband, George; her children, Michele (and Kevin) Thiel and Andrea Bontya; her grandchildren, Austin and Alexis Thiel.

Georgette was a lifetime member of the Murrells Inlet Post 30 Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary. She enjoyed her weekly game nights and traveling the country with her husband.



And, since 2014, Georgette was a Life Member of the Tan Son Nhut Association, and was a frequent TSNA Reunion attendee.

MILITARY ORDER OF THE DRAGON

On Wed, Sep 29, 2021, 20:14 Randall Brown <browncigar1965@yahoo.com> wrote:

Today, Rita and I met with Paul & Amy Mortensen for lunch in Tucson.

Then I gave Paul a surprise.

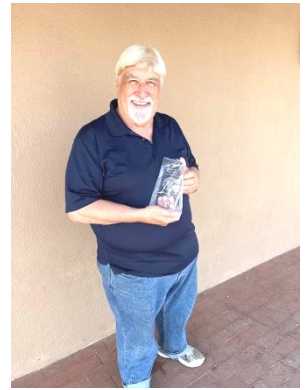
I presented Paul with the TSNA Military Order of the Dragon.

Paul is very deserving of this award. Paul has always stepped up when asked by the organization. We had asked Paul to be Joe Kricho's Assistant. Then with the failing health and passing of Joe we asked Paul to become our Reunion Director. He has jumped in with both feet.

He has traveled to destinations and planning meetings for our group. Paul is so deserving of this award.

Congratulations and well earned.

Randall W Brown
TSNA-President



Subject: Military Order of the Dragon

WOW, I think I'm still in shock. I was so surprised yesterday when Randall presented me with the award, and because I'm such an old softy, I had to hold back a tear in my eye.

I want to thank each and all of you for thinking of me for this award. I know it will be something I treasure for the rest of my life. It is indeed an honor to receive this.

Thank, you, Thank you, Thank you

On another note. Randall and I reviewed and discussed several options for mini reunions in 2022. I am working on those today, and will keep you informed as to the status. Basically we will look for an East/Northeast and a West/Southwest mini reunion location for 2022 reunions. The dates and location will be determined on hotel availability, rates, COVID (rising, falling or stable) enthusiasm for a reunion, and travel distance for our members.

If you have any input, please share that with me as well.

Paul Mortensen

Dale Bryan Receives Award

With great pleasure we announce that Dale Bryan has been awarded the **Supreme Order of the Dragon** by the Tan Son Nhut Association for his many years of service to the organization.

Dale has been on the Board of Directors since 2006 and has been the Secretary of the Board since 2007. Dale was typically in the background and did not seek or receive public accolades as Secretary of the Board.

His actions always kept the organization in compliance with regulatory requirements and made sure the association was protected from liability. In addition he always ensured the board actions and meetings were properly executed and in compliance with our bylaws. Dale has always provided the counsel needed as the Board made decisions and he always volunteered to help as needs arose. We appreciate Dale and his longstanding commitment and service to the Tan Son Nhut Association. This award is just a token of our appreciation of him over the years and is well deserved.



Trish Plunkett Receives Award

We are very pleased to announce that Trish Plunkett has been awarded the **Anchor Award** for her many years of service to the Tan Son Nhut Association. Trish was a mainstay in the organization for many years as she coordinated so many different things to make the reunions a great experience for all who attended. There is so much work that happens in the background related to the reunions that many members do not understand, but all of these activities are required to make a reunion successful.

If you had a snack or a beverage over the years Trish was the one that made it happen. Trish was part of the group that made the organization what it is as she served alongside her husband George who was President of the Association. In many cases people who serve in the background are not recognized for their contributions because the extent of the work and effort involved is not obvious to most people. Trish served all with distinction and made it fun at the same time. This award is to just say thank you to Trish for all she has done for our organization over the years.



Trish, with her husband George, being presented with the Anchor Award by Andy Csordas

EDITOR'S SPECIAL NOTE: Jim Augeri and I are completing ALL of his recent "stories" in Revetments, into one PDF "Book" .

It is 24 pages, and a little over 6 mb in size.

If you would like a copy of this, I will gladly send it to you. Please write to me at: lfry2@dejazzd.com.



THE BROTHERHOOD

Author Unknown

I now know why men, who have been to war yearn to reunite.

Not to tell stories or look at old pictures,

Not to laugh or weep.

Comrades gather because they long to be with the men

Who once acted at their best;

Men who suffered and sacrificed,

Men who were stripped of their humanity.

I did not pick these men.

They were delivered by fate and the Military.

But I know them in a way I know no other men.

I have never given anyone such trust.

They were willing to guard something

More precious than my life.

They would have carried my reputation,

The memory of me.

It was part of the bargain we all made,

The reason we were so willing

To die for one another.

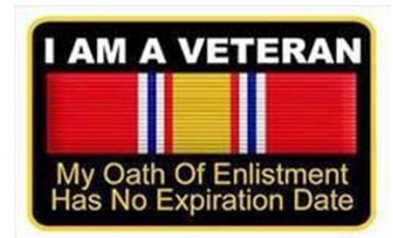
As long as I have memory,

I will think of them all, every day.

I am sure that when I leave this world,

My last thought will

Be of my family and my comrades.



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Web Site: www.tsna.org
Annual Membership: \$20.00
Five Year Membership: \$80.00
Life Membership: \$180.00



**Doug Emch & Fred Benda & Crew working on
PVC Matting and drainage for the 8th Airport
taxi way.**

**NEW
MEMBER**

Gerald E. Dehoney, Flower Mound, TX gedehoney@gmail.com

**EDITOR'S NOTE/EDITOR'S PLEA!! My stock of stories and other items for publishing in
Revetments is at an all-time low. Please consider helping me change that!**

**AND, I will be reusing some "Christmas at TSN" notes from Revetments, December 2008,
in the December issue. But I need more of them. Please send in your notes and thoughts
and recollections of your Christmas at TSN. THANKS! Larry: lfry2@dejazzd.com.**

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