



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



SEPTEMBER 2021

The Straight Path By Andy Csordas-Associate Chaplain

I was looking at a desktop picture generated by one of the large computer companies that showed a coastal cliff with a beach far below. On the top of the cliff was a fairly level plateau that also had a path across the top. The path was not straight, it meandered slightly as it crossed the top of the plateau, even though the ground appeared to be mostly level. It occurred to me life and our relationship with God is like that path.

Do we head straight to God as we negotiate life or do we meander aimlessly around until we are in a spot where we have to focus on and go straight to God because nothing else worked? We, especially men, tend to think and react to things with an "I've got this" mindset. Sometimes we have to go to plan B, plan C or beyond and still we are struggling with the solution.

As we mature (that is get older), little things that were bigger issues in the past tend to not become a big deal. However that does not mean we have nothing going on in our lives that is important. Perhaps there are family concerns, medical issues or just decisions we have to face in life due to the season of our life.

Do we turn those things over to God or do we just meander around thinking we can figure this out by ourselves? God can be the last place we turn after we are no longer able to cope or figure things out for ourselves.

We are all getting older, I know that is not a surprise, but I thought I would still point it out. Every day that passes brings us closer to the end of our time here on earth. With that in mind have we given our life over to God? Earlier in this discussion we talked about going straight to God with circumstances in our life, but what about giving our life to God?

Matthew 11:28 tells us; ***"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*** Consider where you stand with God today. Go straight to Him and He will give you rest. I can vouch for it; it is a great place to be.

Chapel "0"
Tan Son Nhut
Air Base.
January, 1962

(Photo by
Larry Fry)



FROM OUR TSNA PRESIDENT

"What you get is gone when you're gone, but what you give is your legacy and that lives on."

Maybe thinking about a donation to TSNA? Then think about our Scholarship program.

That is a legacy that lives on for all of our Veterans.

Thanks.

**Randall W Brown
President-TSNA**

A Moving Day at a Delta Airlines Gate By Andy Csordas, Tan Son Nhut 1970

Before I retired (last time) I spent a great deal of time on planes and in airports. One day I was changing planes in Atlanta and while I waited for my flight the gate agent announced the plane would be full and anyone who wanted to gate check their carry-on bag could do it for free. I approached the gate agent and from a considerable distance she noticed the small pin (by the way available at the TNSA BX on the website) I always wore on my blazer lapel.

She, with tears in her eyes, asked if I was a Vietnam Vet. I answered yes and she told me she was one of the boat people who escaped after the fall of South Vietnam. She thanked me profusely and repeatedly for trying to save her country from the communists.

By that time I had tears in my eyes as well. She then asked for my boarding pass to gate check my bag, looked at it and said, "I can give you a better seat than that!" It truly was a moving day.



JIM AUGERI'S TRAVELOGUE PART 4 (SPECIAL TO TSNA "REVETMENTS")

Greetings again fellow travelers. I hope you are enjoying this virtual trip with us.

Last time we were preparing to return to Saigon and to leave for the central part of the country, up in the Da Nang & Hue area. Even though there is a big international airport in Da Nang, we were surprised to find out that we would be flying into – of all places – Phu Bai! I guess the choice of Phu Bai was because our first place to visit in central Vietnam was to be the city of Hue, and Phu Bai is the International Airport that services that area and is built in the same exact location as the original Phu Bai Combat Base. This was the only airport we flew into that still used roll-about stairs (instead of jetways) to board and exit the airplanes. It also brings to mind another accommodation for Winnie's getting around that I have not yet mentioned. Every one of the airlines made provision for a lift vehicle to take her off the plane in the event that her chair had not been able to be "gate checked" as was our expectation. Nowhere was this more needed than at this small airport in Phu Bai, where a light drizzle greeted us upon arrival. A small truck with a scissor lift body and enclosed compartment came up to the side of the aircraft opposite the stairs, and she was wheeled in one of the airlines small wheelchairs into this contraption. Then the vehicle drove away from the aircraft, lowered the lift body and drove us to the airport terminal. This was done in several places, even ones that did use modern jetways. This was also the one and only time we flew much later in the day, arriving in Phu Bai at about 9:30 or so at night. So our hook-up with the guide and driver here was a quick meet and greet, a short ride into Hue and drop off at the Eldora hotel; we would meet up again early the next morning. (If you are curious about the hotels we stayed in, look up the Eldora Hotel in Hue. You will see that this place, like most of our hotels, was pretty darn nice!)



This was one of the really nice hotels we stayed in; Eldora Hotel, Hue City



Dragon Boat retail section; note the Dodgers shirt. Perfume River, Hue, Vietnam

Our guide, Nguyen Phuc Dang – who went by the nickname "Sugar" – was perhaps one of the most animated we had of the entire trip. He always had a smile, and a ready quip for us about just about any topic that came up. The driver, "John" was also quite a character.

The first outing in Hue was to take a boat ride on a Dragon Boat up the Perfume River in Hue. All these tour boats are also small retail shops where either family members or friends sell souvenirs to the travelers. We did our part to buy some knick-knacks for our two daughters and some friends. You can purchase things here using either the Vietnamese "Dong" or US dollars; either form of currency is gratefully accepted. Haggling over price is expected.

One of the stops on the boat ride was to visit one of the 7-story Pagoda's that are apparently quite common in the region. We have seen and visited a few of them on this trip, though most are merely viewed from outside, and visitors are not allowed inside. After the boat ride, we visited the Thiên Mu Pagoda on the western outskirts of Hue. Yet another historic Buddhist Temple, this one has enshrined there the very car in which the Buddhist Monk Thich Quang Duc was driven into a Saigon intersection in a 1963 protest against the rule of the Diem regime and there self-immolated himself. Perhaps some of you can still remember the news articles and pictures of that day.

Following the temple visit, it was off to the crown jewel of this leg of the trip; a visit into the center of the ancient Imperial City of Hue, and the Citadel. While much of the destruction this UNESCO World Heritage site suffered during the TET Offensive battle of Hue from January to March of 1968 has been repaired and/or rebuilt, there are whole portions which have been left vacant, and void of any rebuilding efforts. I would speculate that at least some of this was done intentionally to highlight the massive scope and scale of the destruction which occurred here as a “yardstick” by which history and future generations of travelers like ourselves could measure the magnitude of what happened here during that time. Aerial photos of the ancient city from the 40’s and 50’s bear witness as to what the entire area looked like before the war. It was also quite an experience to walk the grounds of what had once been a major battlefield of the Vietnam War! Seeing the Imperial City as it is today, it is difficult to imagine that war had ever been visited upon this beautiful place. Estimates of losses in this major TET battle are some 5,133 PAVN & VC killed, while the Allied forces (US, ARVN, etc) had some 688 KIA and 3,707 WIA.



Here we are just after having entered the outer walls of the Imperial City, in Hue



After the Imperial City it was off to lunch at a quaint place in Hue City named – Little Italy. As its name implies, it was a small slice of Italy wrapped in Vietnamese trappings. Our meal was still very much traditional Vietnamese fare, all in keeping with the overall vibe of the trip itself. No pizza or calzone for us; not today!

Following lunch, we visited the tomb of the Emperor Tu Duc (1848-1883). This was another on-the-fly change in plans due to it being easier for Winnie to navigate with her chair than the original planned site. As was so typical of all these places, the grounds where the tomb is located were stunning in their beauty.

Grounds of the Tomb of Emperor Tu Duc

Following the visit to Tu Duc’s Tomb, it was off for the drive south to Da Nang and Hoi An, where we would be staying next. Part of this drive would take us up and over the Hai Van Pass (translation: ocean cloud pass) along Vietnam’s major North-South road – National Highway 1 (or QL1 in their naming system). How many of you remember traveling portions of the infamous Highway 1 while in-country? It is a beautiful winding roadway with lots of opportunities for scenic views. At the top of the pass remain many of the embattlements and bunkers from the war years. Because of the treacherous terrain involved, we opted not to try to visit them in person. Hai Van Pass also separates the cooler & wetter northern region from the warmer & drier southern region of Vietnam. It also marks – roughly – where the elevation starts to increase. Elevations in the northern most parts of Vietnam came as quite a surprise to me, as you will see in the later installment that covers Hanoi and points north.



View from highway starting over the Hai Van Pass

Our first stop in Da Nang was at the Cham Culture Museum. This beautiful museum of the Cham Culture, its peoples, and its art, houses an amazing collection of Cham sculpture, much of which dates from between the 7th to the 13th century. Many of the pieces are carved from sandstone and are quite delicate. All are quite beautiful.

After the museum was a quick photo-op stop at the plaza near the Dragon Bridge, which crosses the Hàn River. This bridge is as much a work of art as it is a river crossing. The bridge shape is that of a serpent-like Dragon with its body emerging and resubmerging from the river repeatedly as it crosses the river. The dragons head is on the western end and the tail on the opposite side. At night it is lit up in very artful fashion and is a huge attraction for nighttime visitors. Sadly (or not) we were there at mid-day, so we didn't get to see any of the nighttime lighting effects.

While in this central part of the country, I had somehow come to hear about a nearby bridge, called the Golden Bridge (Google it if you're curious), farther west in the Bà-Nà Hills of the central highlands. I asked "Sugar" about the possibility of taking a side trip to go out there, but after some inquiry, he told us that such a detour would be an almost entire day long trip due to the poor road conditions. Oh well, maybe next trip! By the way, I am SO glad I was not doing the driving here. Vietnamese drivers are still NUTS!

Next up was a stop at the infamous Marble Mountain, which is actually a complex of five separate marble and limestone hills on the southern side of Da Nang. The five mountains are named after the five elements: Kim (metal), Thuy (water), Moc (wood), Hoa (fire) and Tho (earth). The hike up the 156 steps (there is also an elevator, but the wait was quite long to go up) to the top of Thuy Son is well worth it, as the views of the surrounding area are pretty amazing. A large quantity of marble is still quarried and carved by stone masons here, and they do produce some amazing pieces of art. Also at the top are a number of small Buddhist grottoes, and several related sculptures. The dramatic view of the coast here at Da Nang shows how much this area in particular has changed in the past 50 years. The entire coastline from Da Nang south on to Hoi An and beyond is lined with huge resort hotels, and there seems to be new construction everywhere. There is even a rather large Las Vegas style casino – the Crown International Club – in Da Nang that is there for mostly Korean and other visiting foreigners. (The Vietnamese are not allowed to gamble, or so we were told, and therefore are not allowed to take part.)



Some of the marble artwork; Marble Mt; Da Nang, Vietnam



View of Da Nang coast from Thuy Son, Marble Mountain.



South China Sea
Palm Garden Resort,
Hoi An, Vietnam

We were soon headed south to our next place of residence, the Palm Garden Resort in Hoi An. During this roughly 25 mile drive, we passed some of the biggest resorts to be found in Vietnam, most with familiar names like Hyatt, Sheraton and so on. Once again, we were amazed at the accommodations found at the Palm Garden Resort, where we were but a short walk from the beach and the South China Sea. (Remember “China Beach”?) Beautifully manicured grounds and a huge pool set the stage for a pretty nice visit, and the food and drinks at the beach-side restaurant/bar made for an easy choice about how to spend our first evening there.

The next day continued our lucky streak with the weather, as the sun was once again bright and warm. After breakfast, we were soon off to visit a couple more temples, and then on to the International Market in the center of Hoi An. This is a pretty vast open air market (permanent structures, not carts) that sells just about anything you might need. Got the wife a couple of sun dresses and a scarf, and a polo shirt for myself made from bamboo fibers (it’s very comfortable, too). While walking through this market, we struck up a conversation with a woman from Chiang Mai (Thailand) who was interested in finding out more about Winnie’s chair. One thing led to another and before long we were having our guide – “Sugar” – hand over his business card to the woman so she might look into planning her next trip using our travel agency. Those referrals are always appreciated by the guides and the travel agents.

At one end of this International Market area is an ancient wooden bridge called the Japanese Bridge dating back to the 18th century, which crosses over a small local river into the largely Japanese populated community located there in Hoi An. We didn’t really venture into that area, but I did take a quick walk across to the other side just to complete the experience. This stop pretty much wrapped up our sightseeing for the day, so it was off to the hotel for some “down-time” on our own.

Since the food and drink choices at the Palm Garden Resort were so plentiful, and good, we decided to just stay in again for dinner, and enjoy our final night here enjoying the beach and the ocean waves of the South China Sea. After all, we don’t get a lot of opportunities to enjoy beach ambiance and sounds living in Albuquerque!

The next morning, we would be heading to Da Nang International Airport for the flight to Hanoi, and on to the final – well, sort of – leg of this part of the trip. While the airport at Da Nang has been thoroughly modernized today, there is evidence of the old era, and there are still signs of the original aircraft revetments visible to the careful eye.

Jim Augeri
Albuquerque, New Mexico
TSNA Life Member

TSNA 2021 SCHOLARSHIPS

By: Rich Carvell
TSNA Vice-President
Chair, TSNA Scholarship Committee

The three 2021 recipients of the Tan Son Nhut Association scholarships hail from all over the USA ... one from Utah ... one from Pennsylvania ... one from Arkansas. The TSNA Scholarship Committee proudly recognizes Quaylin Dang and Katherine Lee Hunter as the recipients of the 2021 George Plunkett Scholarships and Sarah Elizabeth Russell as the recipient of the 2021 Carol Bessette Scholarship.



Quaylin Dang of Salt Lake City, Utah, plans to attend Georgetown University in Washington, DC. She plans to major in culture and politics at the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown and will pursue a foreign service career after her undergraduate studies. In addition to her studies at Skyline High School in Utah, Quaylin learned the Korean language during her 2019 summer study abroad program at Ewha Language Center in Korea. In addition to Korean and English, she also has studied Spanish and American Sign Language. Her community service includes volunteer work with the Humane Society and with Ronald McDonald House Charities. She is a Girl Scout and worked with junior high students as they studied the future problem solving process. She was president of her school's National Honors Society during her senior year and served as vice president of the American Sign Language Club for four years. She participated in the Model United Nations and played center field on the Skyline softball team.

Quaylin's grandfather was Major Sinh Dinh Dang, of South Vietnam's Armed Forces. He completed training with the US Air Force as a senior navigator.



Katherine Lee Hunter of Jonesboro, Arkansas, will attend her parents' alma mater, Lyon College in Batesville, Arkansas, this fall, where she will be a member of the Honors Fellows Program ... an elite activity at Lyon which admits only five from the freshman class each year. Katherine plans to major in biology and plans to pursue a career in psychiatry. Katherine has been involved in theater since childhood and plans to continue her drama involvement at Lyon College. Katherine is a graduate of Valley View High School in Jonesboro where she has received awards for her study in economics, pre-AP English, theater, AP U.S. history, AP Language and AP composition. She also participated in the Model United Nations program at Valley View and was one of 29 students selected by the Jonesboro Chamber of Commerce for its Junior Leadership program. She created with her mother an informational brochure regarding the Covid vaccine and made hundreds of cloth masks for friends, family, teachers, and peers.

Katherine's grandfather was Captain Larry Boling in the US Army. He was a personnel officer.



Sarah Elizabeth Russell of Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania, plans to attend Indiana University of Pennsylvania this fall, where she will pursue a degree in the field of nursing. But the BSN is not her ultimate goal. After her undergraduate studies, she plans to get an advanced degree as a Nurse Practitioner. Sarah was on her high school's soccer and tennis teams and served in a leadership role for the high school Library Club. She took nine advanced placement (AP) courses during her high school career and earned a straight-A grade point average in all of her high school work. She was recognized in 2019 as a Seton Hill University Women in Science Award recipient. She has been active in her community, including many activities at her church ... Vacation Bible School leader, Sunday school teacher, and a member of the praise band and youth choir. She has been active in her high school theater productions and won her high school's Theater Award for Best Featured Role in 2019.

Sarah's grandfather was 1Lt. Robert Kendall in the US Army. He was an intelligence officer.

9/11 Plus Twenty
Clair Smith USAF '66 - '70

Twin towers were raised far up in the sky
Above the world that was passing them by
Looking down at the crowds so far below
All on the move with places to go.

Standing tall in the September air
Skies were clear and mostly fair
But no one knew what was in store
A heinous act upon our shore.

Over two thousand civilian lives were lost
A price that was paid at too great a cost
To a terrorist group from a foreign land
Their actions too vile to understand.

We now live in a world of hate and of fear
With mistrust of those both far and near
who are seeking to change the path of our life,
who are willing to inflict such terrible strife.

Once we all knew the path we would take
Our Pledge of Allegiance we would never forsake
We stood together, with a feeling of pride
The knowledge of Brotherhood filled us inside.

But our Nation seems broken and falling apart
The dissension among us is breaking my heart
For a country I love and did proudly serve
No longer receives the respect it deserves.

But I'll stand at attention and give a salute
for the pledge and the anthem I learned as a "ute"
Because this is my country, the land that I love
The best that there is when push comes to shove!!

**ELECTION 2021
TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION**



There may be no reunion for a second year, but your officers and board members continue serving to keep our association viable. That said we need to conduct an election applicable to four (4) of the Board of Directors positions. Positions are Treasurer, Director of Marketing, Director of Reunion Planning, and Director of Membership Development.

Andy Csordas is running for reelection as Treasurer. Johnnie Jernigan is running for reelection as Director of Marketing. Paul Mortensen is running for Director of Reunion Planning. Richard Cooley is running for Director of Membership Development.

Though the candidates are running unopposed, we still need your vote. The ballot follows this announcement.

If you vote via email, send your vote to me at dale.bryan@gmail.com.

If you send by surface mail, send it to: **Tan Son Nhut Association, P. O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236**

Completed ballots must be returned by September 30.

Dale Bryan
TSNA Secretary

BALLOT

I VOTE TO ELECT THE FOLLOWING TO THE POSITIONS SHOWN:

<input type="checkbox"/> Treasurer - Andrew Csordas	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Director of Marketing - Johnnie Jernigan	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Director of Reunion Planning - Paul Mortensen	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Director of Membership Development - Richard Cooley	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Signed By: NAME: _____ DATE: _____

(The bylaws require that there be 30 days between the date of this announcement and the deadline for voting, so please have your ballots mailed or emailed by September 23rd)

DOG TAGS

Clair Smith USAF '66-'70

Two metal tags
on a silvered chain
A name, a number,
and a blood type too.
Around the neck,
close to the chest
A religious preference
for a last request.

A twenty four inch chain
and a form of ID
Specifically yours
though mine looked the same
This was the jewelry
that all of us wore
A special accessory
fitted for war.

All who were lucky
wore both of them home
If you wore them and read this
you know what I mean.
Cause if they were parted
then fate took a hand
All praise to the warriors
who fought for this land.



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Robert Robinson Gales, President 2007-2011
George Plunkett, President 2011-2015
Web Site: www.tsna.org
Annual Membership: \$20.00
Five Year Membership: \$80.00
Life Membership: \$180.00



02- Landed too close to a 130 landing.

Did a 360°

Photo from

Gerald (Gerry) E. Johnson,
377th CAM Trans. Maint. Aug 71-Aug 72.



1965 Original Revetments (Photographer unknown)

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