



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



JUNE 2022

NEW MEMBER

I was there during Tet of 1968. Served on Gulf One during the mini-tet of 1968.

Departed Vietnam 3rd of June, 1968, after this, my second tour, having served the first one in Da Nang, 65-66.

Herbert E. Sasser
Aug 67 - Jun 68
377th Security Police

Chaplain's Corner-Providence Spring By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

We have all heard about the Civil War POW camp in Andersonville, GA and the terrible conditions that killed so many. The camp was designed for 10,000 prisoners but the population swelled to 33,000. It was basically an open field with a tall wooden stockade fence. Inside the fence was a "deadline". Any prisoner that ventured close to the fence past the deadline was shot. The only water the prisoners had was a small brook that ran through the camp.



The brook was downstream from a confederate camp and the prisoners used this already polluted water for everything from bathing to a latrine. It basically became a cesspool. The men could not drink it and were dying of thirst.

One evening a group of prisoners were singing the doxology led by a Calvary Sergeant named Shepherd from Columbus, Ohio. He had been a preacher before the war. He recounted how he had read that day in the book of Numbers when Moses struck the rock to provide water for the Israelites. **Numbers 20:11** says,

"Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank."

Shepherd said God must strike a rock on Andersonville or we will all die of thirst. The group then prayed for water and for God to strike a rock for that water. Shepherd admonished them to pray many times, now, that night and the next day for God to strike a rock in Andersonville and provide water as he had done in the desert through Moses. They met for several days and prayed for water. One morning the air was still and that afternoon black clouds rolled in. It rained buckets of water over a long-lasting cloudburst.

When the storm ended a prisoner near the north gate shouted, "a spring, a spring". A spring of the purest water shot up in the air near the north gate, inside the deadline. It ran down the grade in the camp. Prisoners said that during the storm a bolt of lightning struck the ground where the spring appeared. The lightning released an underground spring that provided an endless supply of clean fresh water to the camp.

God opened up the ground to release the spring much like the rock that split to provide the water to the Israelites. It was also in the dead zone so no prisoners were hurt or killed by the lightning.

If you visit Andersonville you can see Providence Spring under a stone shelter at the north side of the camp. God does answer earnest prayers for His followers.



**Damaged Chinooks, H-3, at the H-3 Heliport
Andy Csordas Photo**

Love In the Time of Vietnam

Remember when we went to basic training? Those of us who had girlfriends and wives said tearful goodbyes to our loved ones and went off to war. We arrived at induction stations across this nation where we began the process of becoming U.S. soldiers. Some of us were already married, some got married just prior to induction. We all promised our undying love and swore we would be true throughout our military enlistment and (if single but attached) to come home to marry our sweethearts when it was all over.

It was the Vietnam War era. For a lot of us there was an urgency in our desire to secure our love's in marriage before we left because who knew? We might not return from the war and this might be our only shot at love. We didn't want to miss out on what might be our only chance at love. It had been the same in every war before Vietnam, so why should it be different for us?

Remember in basic training? Whether you were already married or just had a girl you thought you loved at home, the Drill Instructors started early in our training letting us know that while we were gone, JODY was after our girls. The longer we were away from home the more paranoia set in and convinced many that our loves were in fact running around on us and had no intention of waiting for us. How many trainees received their "Dear John" letters while still in Basic or advanced training, or got the bad news when they returned from basic training?

I went to basic training at FT. Polk, and out of a training company of 240 men we had 57 men who went AWOL during training. Some couldn't handle the training, some couldn't handle the fact that they were bound for Vietnam, but some, and I'm sure not just a few, went AWOL to go home and try to get his girl back from JODY.

We were too young to be in serious love, and certainly too young to be making snap decisions about marriage before we deployed. In my case (and maybe yours too) a parent (usually the girl's) intervened and sat you down and gave you the *what for*. At the very least you got the royal grilling. What was the plan for once you were married? Where would you live? How were you going to support their daughter in the manner THEY thought she deserved to be kept? What if you got her pregnant before deployment and then got killed in -country? How would she (they/remember the baby!) get along if you didn't come home? And even if you made it home how were you going to support their daughter? WHAT IS THE PLAN? If you were lucky the grilling was all you got, and maybe you both agreed to wait until after you returned from the war. At worst the girl's father threatened you with bodily harm and warned you off because he couldn't stand the idea that maybe you were already sleeping with his little sweetheart!

So, maybe you agreed to wait until you got back to the world to marry. Daddy was happy because he thought the immediate threat to his daughter's future had passed. In his mind (and maybe mom's too) he figured that while you were gone for at least a year his daughter would hook up with someone else more acceptable and close to home. But you and your love promised to write each other every day while you were gone, and swore there would never be anyone else.

Eventually we deployed. and while JODY was tempting our girls back at home, no discussion of love in the time of Vietnam would be complete without acknowledging the temptations that we faced in-country. After all, a year away from home was hard on us too. More than a few lonely and loved starved GI's, married or single, found soothing *female companionship* in the ever present steam baths, with Saigon Tea girls, "Boom Boom" girls, or in the infamous 200P Alley in Saigon. None of this was truly about love of course, but it was a temporary substitute. The bad news is that some of these in-country trysts led to medical circumstances (I know you caught my hint!) that in some cases actually delayed the unlucky trooper's DEROS.

At a point some lucky husbands actually got to enjoy R&R meeting their wives in Hawaii. For the rest of us, who can forget the pleasures and adventures in female companionship that could be had in exotic places on R&R. In fact by the time I served in-country, instead of R&R in an exotic place we could even choose to fly back to the world (at our own expense of course). If we were lucky, we even got to see our girlfriends. Most of those trips home were problematic for JODY, but some ended up problematic for us when the strength of our undying love was found to have weakened.

Then, how many of our brothers got dear John letters during their tours? I guess some of those dads were right about their daughters. A year was too long to wait. The problem is that a lot of our brothers who got those letters were crushed. For many the love betrothed before we deployed is what sustained us in a place so alien, so dangerous, so devoid of everything we had been raised to value and love. It was what we held onto while we counted the days to DEROS and going "Back to The World". Unfortunately, some were young and emotionally unprepared for dealing with this kind of crushing heartbreak.

Even worse, how many of our brothers made it through their tours only to go home and be surprised to find out that the object of their love had moved on, but had been too cowardly or just unable to tell them before they got home. Can you imagine the feelings of betrayal? You survive a war only to come home and find out the future you had planned in your mind no longer exists? You can barely understand what you've just been through for the last 13-months, and now you can't understand why the future you counted on back in the world has been upended. Is it any wonder that suicide could become a choice?

Not so amazingly, actual real love did happen in country for some, and they married Vietnamese girls and took them home to mom and dad when they rotated back to the world.

The really good news is that most of us made it back home to find our loved ones were waiting (mostly with open arms). However, we were no longer the men they used to know. We had been changed by our war. We struggled to relate to our new circumstances while carrying the burdens of everything we had seen, heard, and experienced. PTSD took its toll on many relationships.

In the end, many relationships were strengthened by the separation we had endured. JODY didn't really get all of our girls. Love prevailed. Families, husbands and wives were reunited. A lot of the rest of us got lucky and our girlfriend's dads even let them get married to us! We turned our experiences into positive motivation to move beyond the war, and let love and family become the focus of our futures.

K.H. Elliott, CICV II/OC 1971

VIETNAM DEPARTURE - PART 2

By: SSgt Jim Marshall
377 ABW, Hq Sq, Data Automation
Feb 1970 – Mar 1972

If you recall in last month's newsletter I had made it out of Vietnam alive and had landed in Hawaii to refuel the C-141 Starlifter with all kind of wounded along with 21 drug patients and 3 of us Security Guards. It had been my ticket out of **NAM** 21 days early after serving 30 minutes at Tuy Hoa AB and 25 months at Tan Son Nhut AB. It turned into a real nail-biting flight out of Clark AB, Philippines after flying for 90 minutes 95% of the electronic systems failed. Back we went to Clark, to learn the backup crew had skipped out 20 minutes early for a beach party.

To get up back in the air at Clark, maintenance pulled out and jammed in 18-20 Black Boxes, slammed the doors and we rolled down the runway heading to Hawaii. It had been a nerve-racking, nail-biting 18+ hours flying over the Pacific not knowing if all the electronics were good. This was the first and only time I smoked a few cigarettes to try to calm my apprehension.

Now we started the last leg to Travis AFB to drop off all the litter patients, drug patients. As we lifted off from Hawaii I decided to pray and came up with the idea of a "deal". **"Oh Lord, you watched over me all this time in Vietnam and if you get me back to the US in one piece I promise to do good work and never to leave the Continental US, AMEN"**.

Even with asking for help it was still an anxious few hours until we landed at Travis AFB and I could get to West Palm Beach (WPB), FL for some time off prior to my next assignment. Hours later we landed at Travis, AFB, **"THANK YOU LORD"**, being met by ambulances, converted blue school buses able to transport the litter patients. There was even a Mini-Bus for our motley crew and it was off to Letterman Hospital on the base.

I decided as the ranking man, E-5, besides being the oldest at 27+, I would let the other two very young troops go. They were eager to go home and how could I blame them. I got all the records and into the Hospital leading the motley crew going to some secure Ward. It was now a bit after 2000 hours and for me to get to WPB, I needed to catch a 2200 flight out of San Francisco International; no sweat GI I thought. If I missed that flight it would be an all-nighter in the airport waiting for the next flight to Miami at 1100. I completed the turnover of all the drug patients, records accounted for, paperwork signed off, grabbed my bags and exited the Ward to be met by two very serious Air Police men, **“And where do you think YOU are going?”**.

I briefly explained I was one of three Security Guards escorting 21 drug patients processed into the Ward and now I needed to catch a 2200 flight out of SF International. This was met by **“heard that story before!!!!”**. I guess letting the other two guards go early was confusing them. So it was back into the Ward, showing orders, rosters of names, ID card, etc., until they were convinced I was the real deal. By this time it was about 2040 and I needed to get to the airport **POST HASTE, FORTHQUICK**.

I dragged my two bags outside and maybe it was sheer luck there was a Cab. I screamed I needed to catch a 2200 flight out of San Francisco International, threw the bags into the trunk and away we went. I relayed my story about 2+ years in country and needing to catch the last flight out on National Airlines at 2200. If I missed it, the next one was in late morning. He got on the radio to the dispatcher and relayed my story. I even would throw in a \$20 tip if I got there in time.

I have no idea who the dispatcher called but as we rolled up to the outside terminal, two National Airline baggage guys were waiting. One grabbed a bag and the other guy the other bag. These men looked like Line Backers and we took off running through the terminal. I was doing my best to keep up with them running in my old Jungle Boots. We arrived at the gate at 2204 as I learned they had held the plane, a DC-10 widebody named **“Dorothy”**. Down the ramp we sprinted, jumped through the door and just avoided the two bags which flew into the plane one second before me. The door was slammed shut, my bags disappeared and now I was **SAFE** so I thought.

Suddenly it hit me I was still in my 2-year-old, Mamasan beaten so many times on the floor of the shower in the bath house, very faded jungle fatigues. I recall reading Directives about traveling in at least a Class B uniform, the tan Air Force 1505s, but there was no time to change for the bags had disappeared into some hole down into the cargo bay. As the plane was taxiing for takeoff, I had to walk down one of the two aisles because my seat was in the very last row.

Seated in the plane were all these Army, Navy and Air Force Officers giving me the **“EVIL EYE”** and thank heavens they were strapped in their seats. If the Evil Eyes were weapons, I was surely wounded for good. I avoided eye contact at all cost. I quickly found my aisle seat in the last row, plopped down looking to my right to see what appeared to be a 19-year-old Army Warrant Officer; W01. As I got my seat belt fastened I explained how I had escorted drug patients into Travis AFB, taken for one of them, was delayed getting to the airport and did the best impersonation of a sprinter doing the 400-yard dash to make the plane, was **“OUT OF UNIFORM”** and in **DEEP** trouble with all the brass on the plane. All he said was **“screw them, I did one year as a helicopter pilot and we need a drink!”**

When the plane got to its cruising altitude, the **“Fasten Seat Belt”** sign was turned off. Almost immediately I saw this Air Force Colonel, Full Bird, get up and head towards the rear of the plane and **“ME”**. When he was about 4 rows away, I popped into the aisle and blurted out my explanation why I was out of uniform. Finally I said, “if you are going to chew me out, please do it quick so I can buy some drinks!”. The Warrant Officer shouted out **“first round is on me”**. All he said was **“SCOTCH”** and I said **“Chivas Regal for this man”** to the Stewardess behind us. I looked at his chest to see Flying Wings above his salad bowl sporting all the Vietnam ribbons. He obviously understood. I figure he wanted to get to me before some Army or Navy brass decided to take a piece of meat out of me.

All of the sudden more military, mostly Army Officers, a few enlisted, joined us along with a few Vietnam Vets in civilian clothes. It turned into quite a Vietnam reunion and the time passed quickly heading for 0630 landing in Miami. Around 2400, we all quieted down, returned to seats and allowed the other passengers to get some rest on this **“Red Eye”** flight.

Now I faced another hurdle once I landed in Miami. My bags were already checked through to West Palm Beach so I was stuck in my faded Jungle fatigues, boots and ball cap. Thanks heavens it was now a Sunday morning as I departed Dorothy and headed to find "**GULLAIR**", a commuter airline to get me 100 miles north. As I was walking through Miami International I was getting strange stares out of the few people along the way. I then realized I must have looked like I was joining up some Anti-Castro Army to go retake Cuba. I found a phone, called my mother to say I was on the last leg coming home.

I finally found GULLAIR and looked out at the plane. It was about a 12-seater, single engine, puddle jumper and my final obstacle to getting home,. All 9-10 of us were standing around when this employee walks us out to the plane, opens the door, directs us to board and when done, shuts and locks the door from the outside. He then climbs up on the wing, crawls through the window and sits in the pilot's seat, calling out, "**who wants to be co-pilot and spot for me?**" What the heck, the only flying I did was those 25+ months over and back to Vietnam twice and one free leave trip around the world when I extended the 2nd time. Then there was the corkscrew take offs and landings in C-123's. Now I would get to sit in the right seat and see what all this flying was about.

He gave me a quick overview of my duties. We'd be flying around 4,000 feet and needed to avoid getting close to other airlines' jet planes; close as in 3-4 miles. It was not as much the smaller jets but the big ones for him to know where they were. If I heard something like United 100, it was not such a big deal to spot it. But if I heard American 24 **HEAVY**, I needed to scan the skies to find its location. The turbulence caused by large jets could do a number on us. Between Miami and West Palm beach was Ft Lauderdale's Airport besides small airports like Boca Raton. So there was traffic everywhere. I fastened the seat belt, donned the head phones and was going to get a taste of how the other half of the Air Force lived. All I had done so far for most of my career was fly a computer.

The flight was bouncy as heck all the way up the Florida coast. The skies were very blue and clear making my job easy. All the fear of something happening to the plane, engine or other problems disappeared for worst case, we'd just become glider and put down on some road. We landed at West Palm Beach International and now my mother's **Baby Boy** was safe at last. Even though I was safe, even today lingers "**Survivors Guilt**" thinking about all those who did not make it back or came home wounded and maimed.

When I read others stories, I always wonder what happened to the person in later life. Did they come back and adjust to the "**REAL WORLD**"? So this is what happened to me. The time was 1972 and the Space Program was shut down. Engineers, PhDs, were out of work. So I took the \$10K tax free bonus, reenlisted choosing Denver, CO as my next base; Buckley Air National Guard Base stumbling into the beginning of Space Force and spy satellites. I retrained into Computer Programming and in 1975, still an E-5 got noticed by the Pentagon, getting snatched away from "**Almost Heaven**" (not West Virginia). Three years later an offer came to stay there another 4 years only if I went off at 34 to become a 2nd LOOIE; lowest rank in the military. I came back into the same office, same job, for the 4 years as a computer GEEK and in 1982 I found my love, married, getting snatched to San Antonio, TX to prototype a Cloud Computing project for 4 years. Then it was off to the National Security Agency as a Computer Scientist retiring in 1990, one day before the war started. I joined the Federal Government as a computer guy for the next 22 years retiring a 2nd time.

All during this time I kept my promise to the Lord never to leave the shores of the US. After all the Lord kept his part of my deal and I am still keeping mine. As with thousands of other Vietnam Vets, Agent Orange got me, being told in 2017 I had Stage IV Prostate Cancer (PC). So for the last 5 years I have been mentoring those afflicted also trying to educate others how to recognize the symptoms when some times the medical community fails. I joined the **AnCan Foundation's High Risk Support Group** along with a number of medical PhDs, MDs and others with Terminal PC. It was the best thing I ever did for just like any war wound, no one should do this journey alone.

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION 2022
REUNION REGISTRATION

Dayton, OH
Sep 22 - 25, 2022

NAME _____ GUEST NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TEL (____) _____ EMAIL _____

SPECIAL NEEDS (if applicable) _____

Choose one of the following:

1: FULL Reunion Registration

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

Full Reunion Total Remittance: \$ _____

2: PARTIAL Reunion Registration

Access to Hospitality Room (includes snacks & beverages):

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

Partial Reunion Total Remittance \$ _____

3. Banquet Only Saturday, September 24, 2022

Number attending _____ x **\$44.50** = \$ _____

Banquet Only Total Remittance: \$ _____

Mail this form with payment (check only) to:

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

REGISTRATION FORM WITH PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED

NLT September 1, 2022

Questions regarding Registration should be directed to:

Paul Mortensen

Director of Reunion Planning

TSNAreunions@gmail.com

Hotel Information

Hope Hotel and Richard Holbrooke Conference Center

10823 Chidlaw Rd (Outside Gate 12A)

Wright Patterson AFB 45433

937-879-2696

Registration must be made by telephone. Mention **Tan Son Nhut Association**, Do not say TSNA

Rm Rate \$109.00 plus taxes

Breakfast Coupons will be provided at check-in

Schedule of Events (SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED)

Tan Son Nhut Association
Wright Patterson AFB OH
September 22-25 2022

Date and time	Event	Room
Thursday September 22, 2022		
1000 2000	Set-up and Registration	Sabre/Phantom
1000 2000	Hospitality/Social	
Friday September 23, 2022		
0900 2100	Registration	Sabre/Phantom
0900 2100	Hospitality/Social	Sabre/Phantom
1000 1800	NMUSAF Visit	NMUSAF
1000 1800	Cars leave/Return at convenience	Lobby
1100 1300	Tours	NMUSAF
1300 1400	Memorial Rededication Ceremony	NMUSAF
1800 2100	Dinner/socializing on your own	Hope Hotel
1900 1930	Silent Auction ends	Sabre/Phantom
1900 1930	Door Prizes	Sabre/Phantom
Saturday, September 24, 2022		
0900 1600	Registration	Sabre/Phantom
0900 1600	Hospitality/Social/Hospitality closes	Sabre/Phantom
1200 1400	Board Meeting	
1400 1600	General Meeting	Sabre/Phantom
1415 1445	Officers and Directors Report	Sabre/Phantom
1445 1500	New officers/Swearing In	Sabre/Phantom
1500 1530	Officers and Directors Q and A	Sabre/Phantom
1700 1800	Welcome Reception	Sabre/Phantom
1800 2200	Banquet	B29 Super Fortress
1800 1815	Welcome Remarks Randall or designee	
1815 1830	Presentation of Colors/Pledge	WPAFB Honor Guard
1830 1945	Dinner	B29 Super Fortress
1945 2015	Guest Speaker	B29 Super Fortress
2015 2100	Awards	B29 Super Fortress
Sunday September 25, 2022		
0900 1100	Breakfast/on your own	Restaurant
	Reunion Ends	

5/18/22

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Five Year Membership: \$80.00
Life Membership: \$180.00



**RF4C Photo Plane
From George Greenwood**

21st BIRTHDAY AT TSN

Everyone has a birthday that stands out. One of those is your 21st. That is when you are officially an adult. For many of us TSNA members, that happened during our time at Tan Son Nhut. My big day was April 14 1969. As luck would work for me it was my day off. So off to Saigon I went with a friend. We spent the day at the zoo and had a steak dinner at a restaurant, the name of which I cannot recall. Another friend and coworker, Bob Alain, also shared my birthday. Bob was a Canadian citizen who was living in Massachusetts and volunteered for the Air Force. I always admired him for that when he could have gone back to Canada and avoided serving. Some people we worked with on the T39 flight line found out about our big birthday and arranged a party that night in our 1200 area barracks day room. A good time was had by all. The beer did flow and a late-night card game topped off the day.

So here we are 53 Aprils later and I still remember that far-away day. I, like Bob and all who served, came home well beyond our young years in the experiences we had in our year away from the world.

Dale Baker
TSN July 68-July 69



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