

# Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



"All Included - Non Excluded"

Volume 1, Number 11

The Tan Son Nhut Association, Washington, D.C.

August, 1999

## Tan Son Nhut Memorial Day, April 30?



From '59 'til '75  
From the beginning until the end,  
For those of us who still survive,  
Proud memories still descend,  
Fort McHenry of embattled Saigon,  
Its purpose ever resolute,  
It stayed the course 'til all were gone,  
But the flag flew on at Tan Son Nhut.

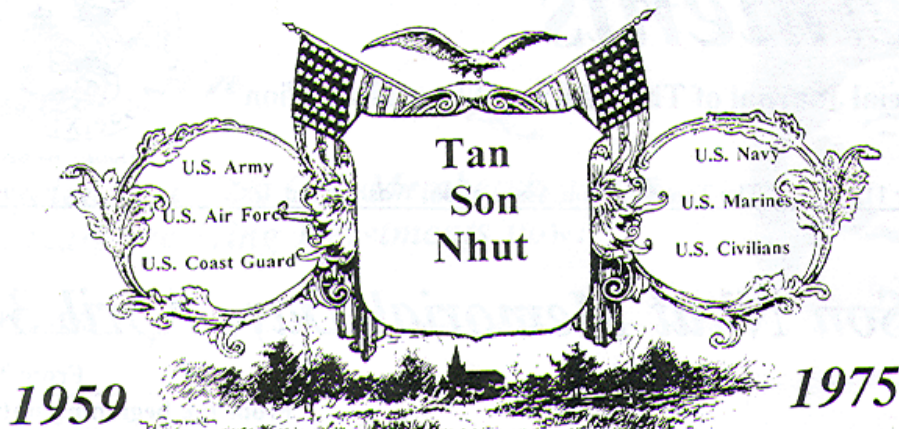
Some say t'was just a piece of ground,  
Ill-fated airbase in a tormented land,  
Those words have such a hollow sound,  
When the truth is bold and grand,  
Its gateway welcomed the millions strong,  
Bringing hopes of Freedom to the destitute,  
And the promise of Peace e'er long,  
And the flag flew high at Tan Son Nhut.

For sixteen years its walls stood high,  
Even withstanding the rage of Tet,  
Commanding the battles of land and sky,  
Winning the field each day ... and yet,  
Miles away in foreign palace halls they spoke,  
Bringing a tawdry end to the dispute,  
And as the last day of April, '75 broke,  
The flag came down at Tan Son Nhut.

That may be how the history books record,  
But I come now and boldly do refute,  
That in the Field of Heros of the Lord,  
The flag forever flies for Tan Son Nhut.

Tan Son Nhut's Flag, Anonymous





## A Serious Report to the Membership

by  
Robert Stanley Need  
Editor, Public Affairs Officer

The last year has been spent by a number of members of the Tan Son Nhut Association in attempting to establish an accurate membership accounting, the establishment of an effective constitutional organization, lines of communication, and of most importance, a tangible *raison d'être* or in less fancy words a real meaning for existing as an organization.

### Membership

Well, the accurate membership accounting has been accomplished and our paid-up roles are accurate. But last October we began with 650 some names accrued over the past five years. But when the call for dues was made we saw the membership dwindle to the current 238.

This showed us that, at this time, some 412 individuals had decided that the Association was not worth joining, at least for them.

### Constitutional Organization

In an attempt to strengthen the Association as a viable non-profit veterans organization in order to receive postal discounts, and to satisfy many other commercial and governmental requirements, the time was taken by the pro tem Board of Directors to draft a constitution.

It was not written on stone, and it has a number of mistakes that have already been noted.

It was sent to each member right after the first of the year. To date, only 85 members (35.7%) have responded with their ballots. Many of these contained excellent

comments, recommended changes and corrections. We were extremely happy and proud of these responses.

But 153 paid members (64.29%) have not responded. If only 68 of these members will now respond, we have the necessary two thirds vote to complete the constitution and send it back for a final vote. An approving vote would then let us have an election of officers ... and we would be in business!

### Lines of Communication

This is an area in which we feel a justifiably proud measure of success. We have an internet web site/page (<http://home.att.net/~hercules29>) that ain't the greatest on earth (yet), but is bringing us in a regular trickle of new members. Also from time to time we place announcements and comments on the various internet military news groups and this has had modest membership results.

If anything makes us really happy, it is the success of this modest little newsletter, *Revetments*. The response from the readership has been tremendous and shows us that we may have a small membership at present, but they are the greatest. The letters, phone calls and e-mails make our day! We still hold to the goal of making *Revetments* a much better instrument of the Association's communication program.

### And now, the Raison D'Être business

This appears to be the darkest area of the whole program. And, after bragging about how great we think our budding communication programs are, perhaps we find ourselves not really having done enough or that good a job.

Out of perhaps somewhat murky

conjecture, we think we are finding that many people can't quite grasp who we are, who is eligible to join, and where are we headed as a veterans association.

### Who we are ...

We are military and civilians who view Tan Son Nhut Air Base's role in the Vietnam War, from 1959 to its tragic closing in 1975, as a tantamount factor in the lives of all those who served in Vietnam. Its history, its participation in violent battle across the country, and frequently on its own soil, is a history never to be forgotten if we are to sustain the honor of the brave and heroic men and women who served there.

### Who is eligible ...

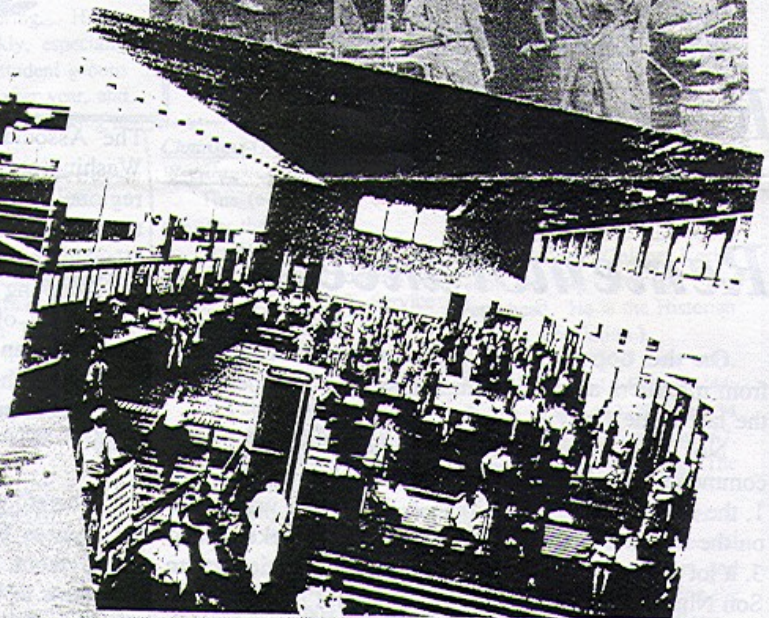
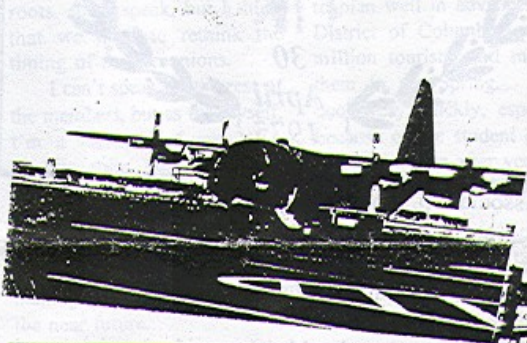
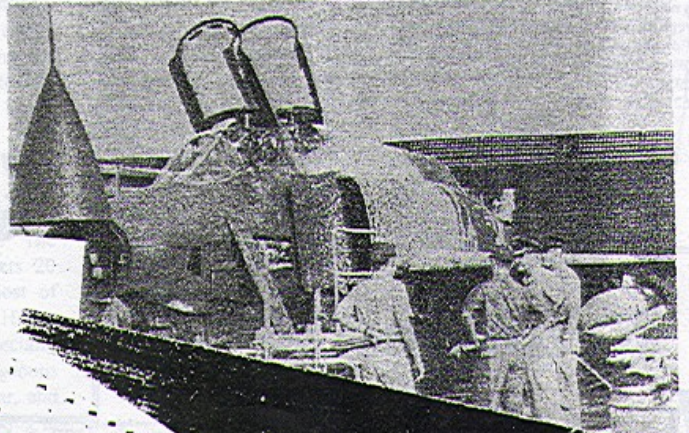
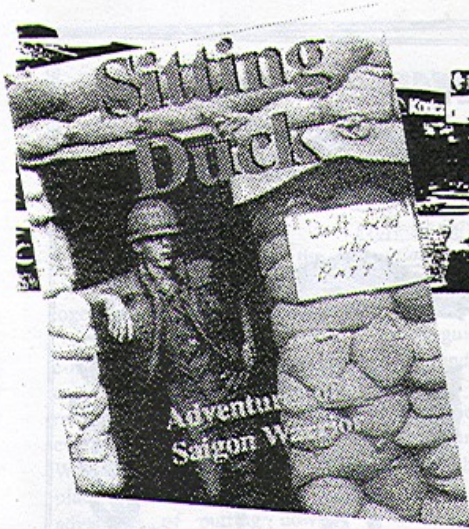
We will carefully spell it out, U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marines, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. and Foreign Civilians, and Members of Foreign Military Forces. We already have Australian representation and member, Norman Whitlow, in Texas is forming a cadre of VNAF and ARVN members.

### Where are we headed ...

This is where you and your friends take the lead. What do you see for us in the coming years? The Board has suggested repeatedly in *Revetments* that, as we grow, we can develop a leadership in community and medical service programs for retired and senior military, the establishment of a Tan Son Nhut library and educational programs to compliment many of the fine programs already established.

We can have joyous reunions and public activities that will give younger generations an appreciation of what the Vietnam veteran was doing for the people of this nation.





Souvenirs  
of Tan Son Nhut

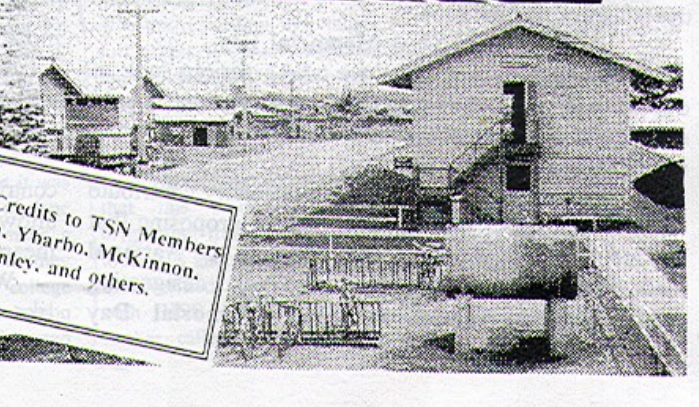


Photo Credits to TSN Members  
Fulton, Ybarbo, McKinnon,  
Penley, and others.





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## Reunions, Recognition and Remembrance

On the opposite page are a number of comments from members about the reunion subject we opened in the last issue (July).

Not only these letters, but other phone calls and comments from members underscore three conclusions: 1, the members want reunions; 2, they don't want them on the tremendously busy Memorial Day weekend; and 3, a lot of them like a fixed location for a National Tan Son Nhut Association reunion, and a lot them endorse the Washington location.

### Tan Son Nhut Memorial Day

Elsewhere in this issue we take a serious look at our future and the goals the Association should establish if we are to become a healthy, successful and meaningful organization.

This reunion business could dramatically contribute to moving towards those goals. We are proposing that the last week of April be recognized as the **National Tan Son Nhut Remembrance Week**, designating April 30th as **Tan Son Nhut Memorial Day** throughout the country.



The Association would hold a National Reunion in Washington, D.C., and would encourage emerging regional chapters to hold similar reunions accommodating those who cannot make it to Washington.

Adopting this plan should create widespread interest among all of the millions who served at and passed through Tan Son Nhut. Regardless of where they ended up, they knew that they had the intelligent and courageous support of the men and women of Tan Son Nhut.

### Reunion 2000

Therefore, the Board of Directors (Pro Tem) hereby announces **Reunion 2000**, to be held in Washington, D.C. from 28 through 30 April, 2000, with annual reunions to be held thereafter.

A schedule of activities will be published in next month's (September) *Revetments*.

At the same time we hope that those of you who will not be able to attend, will consider organizing similar activities in your regional areas.

We want to thank all of the members who have contributed valuable comments on this subject that has allowed us to reach what we feel is a successful and meaningful conclusion.

We would like to hear from any and all who would like to assist in the planning for either the national reunion or regionally. See you in April!



# The Communications Center

Send us your letters, comments, suggestions, and stories by mail, fax or e-mail

Reunion Thoughts ...

First let me give a resounding "well done" to the crew that puts *Revetments* together.

Now to the reason for this e-mail. I do not have any problem with having the reunions in the same place every year, either in Washington, D.C. or some place else. I can see the advantage of putting down roots, so to speak, but I think that we need to rethink the timing of these reunions.

I can't speak for the rest of the members, but as for myself, I'm a member of my VVA chapter color guard and rifle squad. As such I have four to six events that we participate in around the Twin City's area. This would preclude me from making it to any reunions in the near future.

I'm sure that I am not the only one that will have a similar problem. May and June would be good times to be in that part of the country as it is beautiful and has not gotten too hot yet.

But please, some other weekend.

Thank you.

Joseph L. Herrmann  
Coon Rapids, Minnesota

More Reunion Thoughts ...

I say "yes" to having the annual reunion in D.C.

Perhaps the Tan Son Nhut Association can come up with some method of identifying members to each other. One method is to have each member wear a name tag including the member's name, organization, and year(s) at Tan Son Nhut.

Edward W. Zohn  
19th ACS, TSN 66-67  
Lebanon, Pennsylvania

Professional Thoughts on the Reunion ...

Just wanted to say that I am a licensed Washington, D.C. tour guide, and if I am in the area and not working (in the midst of the busiest tourist time of the year in D.C.) during your proposed TSN reunion, I'd be happy to lend a hand.

The one thing I'd advise is to plan well in advance. The District of Columbia gets 20 million tourists, and most of them in the Spring. Hotels book very quickly, especially because of the student groups that come year after year, and whose numbers are peaking at the end of May.

I have lived here for years, and never realized the extent of these trips until I got involved in this business.

Carol Bessette  
Springfield, Virginia  
(Editor's Note: That's right, folks, you saw it right here in *Revetments*, a VOLUNTEER! We are most grateful and will certainly be heading in your direction soon.)

A Reunion "However" ...

There is a **HOWEVER**, here. The idea is really great. But I also belong to another group that was holding reunions at the same time on the Memorial Day weekend. Our big complaints were, for those who drove, we were endangering our lives on the highway with the extra holiday traffic. Others said that it was too close to the first of June wherein they had to make a quick trip back so that they could attend their college reunion or college graduation exercises for their grand

children and the same for their children or grand children who were going to graduate from high school.

Myself, I am involved locally with the Memorial Day event that is, and has been, held for the last 14 years at one of our local cemeteries.

So I am not being selfish in writing this, it is just an opinion that I am sending as to some of the pitfalls that could occur if you were to stick to the Memorial Day weekend. D.C. is fantastic, I would go at some other time.

Art Davis  
Deltona, Florida

Chainsaw Gives An Important Warning ...

This (e-mail) was sent to me over the weekend..

"I received a telephone call from an individual identifying himself as an AT&T Service Technician who was conducting a test on our telephone lines.

"He stated that to complete the test we should touch nine (9), zero (0), the pound sign (#), and then hang up.

"Luckily, we were suspicious and refused. Upon contacting the telephone company we were informed that by pushing 90# you would give the requesting individual full access to your telephone line, which allows him to place long distance telephone calls billed to your home phone number.

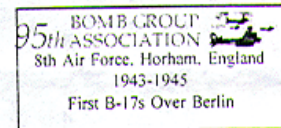
"We were further informed that this scam has been originating from many of the local jails and prisons. I have also verified this information with UCB Telecomm. I further called GTE Security

this morning and verified that this is definitely possible.

"DO NOT PRESS 90# FOR ANYONE. The GTE Security Department requested that I share this information with EVERYONE I KNOW!!!

"Could you please pass this on. If you have mailing lists and/or newsletters from organizations you are connected with, encourage you to pass on this information."

Alan (Chainsaw) Strauss  
Azle, Texas  
(Editor's Note: Alan, we are most grateful for the information and encourage our readers to help pass it on.)



(Editor's Note: Colonel Keeler sent us his note on this letterhead. He is the Historian for this association.)

As a veteran of three wars, 35 missions B-17 Europe, '44; B-26s Korea, '53-'54; and 34 missions B-57, Viet Nam, '67. I thoroughly enjoy reading "The Official Journal."

As T-39 Ops Officer at Tan Son Nhut, I flew General Westmoreland many times, and other V.I.P.s, before flying the B-57 missions at Phan Rang.

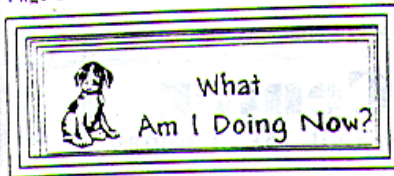
I was assigned to Andrews A.F.B. as a V.I.P. pilot in '61, retiring from there in '70, and residing in the Washington, D.C. area subsequently.

I note with interest Page 2 (July, *Revetments*) "Board Eyes Reunion in D.C."

Sounds great!

Respectfully,  
Albert T. Keeler  
Prince Frederick, Maryland





## Richard P. Fulton

(Rick Fulton was a member of the 7th Air Force Directorate of Information from October 1967 through September 1969. He started out as a journalist assigned to the 834th Air Division and was then moved to the Air War North daily summary writer slot. In 1968, as a photo journalist, he pulled several TDY assignments with deployed ground forces to I Corps, II Corps and III Corps locations, including Hue and Khe Sanh. During 1969, he then served as NCOIC of the Tan Son Nhut Air Base installation level Office of Information. During his two back to back tours, he was on non-crew member flying status and flew numerous missions, including combat flights aboard A-1J, AC-119 and AC-47 aircraft. He was honorably discharged as a staff sergeant, with Bronze Star and the Air Force Commendation Medal.)

\* \* \*

After Vietnam, I became a college student and worked my way through both undergraduate and graduate-level programs at a small state college in southeast Kansas.

I was a newspaper reporter for a time, managed the married student apartment complex, then was a radio dispatcher, and later, a patrolman on the campus police force.

I also became part of the Army reserve components, specifically an Infantry staff sergeant in the Kansas Army National Guard.

### Jumping into marriage

During school years I met this *wee charming lassie* in, of all things, the college skydiving club, and figured if she had guts enough to jump out of a perfectly good airplane, then she was worth a lot more than a second look. Luckily for me, she felt the same way and we were married and soon had a son.

In 1977, I earned my MA Degree in History and Community College Teaching, but couldn't find a job. A couple of years before, after finishing the bachelor's program, I had taken the U.S. Civil Service PACE Test, and just a few weeks after graduation was interviewed for the newspaper editor position at Fort Leavenworth.

Had this job as a GS-7 until 1979 when the Army offered me a promotion to GS-9 if I would go to Fort Hood as the

managing editor of the post paper.

After a year, I was promoted to GS-11 and became the III Corps public information officer. Early in my career, the Army sent me to the Defense Information School at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana: first, for the formal information specialist course, and later, for the officer level course.

### How to be an "instant" officer

While a civilian employee of the Army, I had continued with the weekend warrior program, and when the state needed a PIO in the grade of captain, AG Corps, they found this somewhat over-age Infantryman serving in one of the cav units who was qualified for the information job because of training obtained in his civilian occupation.

Age waiver was granted and I became an instant officer, with kind of a butter bar mindset and heart, though wearing tracks. The joke in the kitchen, at least from my wife's perspective, was, "We have met the enemy and he is us!" She may have been right. But in those days in the reserves, there were few in America who wanted to be soldiers, and I was proud to serve in any capacity.

### Back to Korea, again & again

I stayed a captain until 1983, when the demands of my civilian employment with the Army finally surpassed the time available. What happened was that the Army asked me to go back to Korea and be a speech writer to CINC. I had been there in 1966-67 at Osan as a military journalist, the tour from which I had then gone to Tan Son Nhut. Anyway, there was a promotion in it and so, in May 1982, Lorella, son Shawn and I went to Yongsan in Seoul. I wrote speeches for General Robert Sennewald and then did the same for the first few months of his successor's tour, a fine Infantry gentleman by the name of Bill Livsey.

We hit it off quite well, and since General Livsey was one of our nation's top Infantrymen, and I still considered myself to be part of the Infantry community (at least at heart), working for him was a tremendous experience.

In 1984, we returned to the states and to an assignment as writer with the Army Aviation Systems Command in St. Louis. I was selected to attend the Army Advanced Public Affairs Course at the University of South Carolina, and after that went to Dugway Proving Ground, Utah, as the installation Public Affairs Officer.

We had been there a year and really

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liked it, when one day, I received a call from Seoul. General Livsey had lost his speech writer and wanted me back as the replacement. How do you say "no" to a four-star? Especially that four star! I didn't, of course, though for the sake of my later career I probably should have.

We went back to Seoul ... even to the same apartment we had the first tour ... and it was a great assignment. In the mid-1980s, the Koreans were learning about Democracy, and it was also the time they were hosting the world: first with the Asian Games, and then, the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics.

General Livsey had the command intensely involved in these athletic and other events in a variety of support roles. Sitting in the shadow of his command chair, doing this and that, was a neat place to be.

After General Livsey retired, the gentleman who followed him was also a well known and very decent kind of Infantryman who started his army career as an EM and worked to staff sergeant before taking a commission. General Louis Menetrey.

I was honored to be asked to stick around for his tour, in the same job as speech writer, as well.

Our second son, Travis, was born the same days as the shootout in the great square in Beijing, right in the middle of a major demonstration in Seoul too (which I had to drive through twice, a long story best told another time).

### Army snits & a damp Chicago

We came back to the States in 1990, but not back to Dugway. AMC Test and Evaluation Command was still in a snit about the fact we had gone to Korea in 1986, so I took work with the North Central Division Corps of Engineers in Chicago, as speech writer for the one star who headed the operation, and also as deputy PAO.

A couple years after we arrived, a hole busted through the roof of a freight tunnel running under the Chicago River and we had quite a flood fight on our hands. It was a very unique one, for about three months, in the heart of a major city, but underground.

In 1992 I found out that Corps of Engineering "right-sizing" meant consolidation with the Ohio River Division, and that in the public affairs field, four slots would become two ... and guess who was the odd man out.

(Please see: *Fulton*, Page 7)



### Fulton, from Page 6

So I took a cut in pay from GS-12/Step 8 back to GS-11/Step 10 and went to Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina as chief of media and community relations in the post PA shop.

It wasn't a bad place to finish a career. We had a lot of turmoil, with overseas deployments, and with Clinton Administration mandates such as "don't ask, don't tell" and gender integrated basic combat training.

Our post was also selected by film director Penny Marshall as the shooting location for the movie *Renaissance Man*. And, we also got to make a limited amount of input (or rather I should say three weeks of effort that wound up not being used) to *Forest Gump*.

I always liked military public affairs, but in late 1994, the writing was on the wall. A major RIF (reduction in force) was set and it was pointed out that those who had the time in could take early retirement and that would open up some continued employment possibilities for those who were not yet qualified to retire.

It was a tough grenade to fall on, but in January 1995 I was out the door.

Since then, I haven't really done a lot. We moved back to southeast Kansas and I went back to college but quickly discovered my heart wasn't much into it.

Have had several chump change jobs since, and played around with politics some. Also wrote a book about Vietnam which I published electronically, and have been fussing with a darkroom a bit.

Frankly, I haven't done too well latching on to what civilian life is all about. We are getting by on retirement pay okay, have our house paid for and all that, but I have such a hole in my life right now.

From the days before the Cuban Missile Crisis, in Libya for 18 months before those crazy days in Asia, and at so many other places, I spent my days wearing a uniform or being part of an organization dedicated to support of those who did wear it.

I have always considered my heart green and my spirit G.I. Though a civilian employee of the Army, I carried a Geneva Convention Card, was a dedicated stay-behind, did the annual MOPP'n'mask kinds of training and was always ready to be what I am, wherever ... and that is, bottom line, one who sees value in services as a military journalist.

I guess I just miss the sounds, smells and sights of the uniformed world, and find it hard to take "civilian life" seriously.

This Fall I have been asked to teach an evening class for a local community college. The course is the History of The Vietnam War. My hope is, that by teaching this class, I will be sticking my foot in the door of a second career teaching History ... something I wanted to do after Vietnam anyway.

We shall see ... we shall see.

## 1999 Australian Vietnam Veterans Day Commemoration Ceremony

\* \* \*

On 18 August 1966, D Company, 6th Royal Australian Regiment, with a strength of 108 men, engaged North Vietnamese (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) forces estimated at between 1,500 and 2,500 at Long Tan, in Phuoc Tuy Province.

The engagement began at 15:40 hours and continued until last light.



B Company Headquarters, with one platoon, and A Company with armored personnel carriers arrived, dispersing an enemy flanking move.

The enemy left 245 bodies on the battlefield. Seventeen Australian Infantrymen and one APC crewman were killed and 21 were wounded.

D Company, 6th Royal Australian Regiment, earned the United States Presidential Citation.

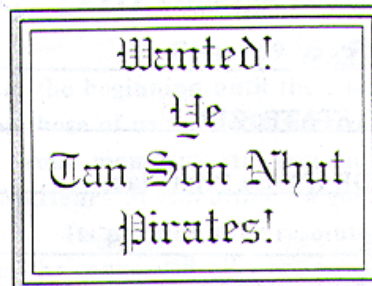
The Annual Vietnam Veterans Day Commemoration Ceremony will be held at the Post-1945 Memorial Wall, Shrine of Remembrance, Saint Kilda Road, Melbourne, Australia, on Wednesday, 18 August 1999,

commencing at noon. Visitors are welcome.

Posted by Leo Powning, Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia.

For a full account of the battle of Long Tan, by D Company Commander, Major Harry Smith, M.C., go to internet web site:

<http://users.mildura.net.au/users/marshall/harry/harryv.htm>



(Editor's Note: Member, Denis Cook, just sent us this message. It looks interesting and would like to hear any comments by readers.)

Dear Denis,

I am writing to you from London, England. Having just found your web page on the internet.

I am doing some research here in London on a pirate radio station that operated out of Tan Son Nhut. It was called *Radio First Termer*.

I am looking for information on this station which operated in the late '60s, early '70s. It may be that you served before the station began broadcasting.

If you know anyone who served at Tan Son Nhut around 1971? I know the station was very popular around that year.

Any information or links or anything would be most appreciated.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Max Levell, London, U. K.

[revivalcars@ragemail.com](mailto:revivalcars@ragemail.com)



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