

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



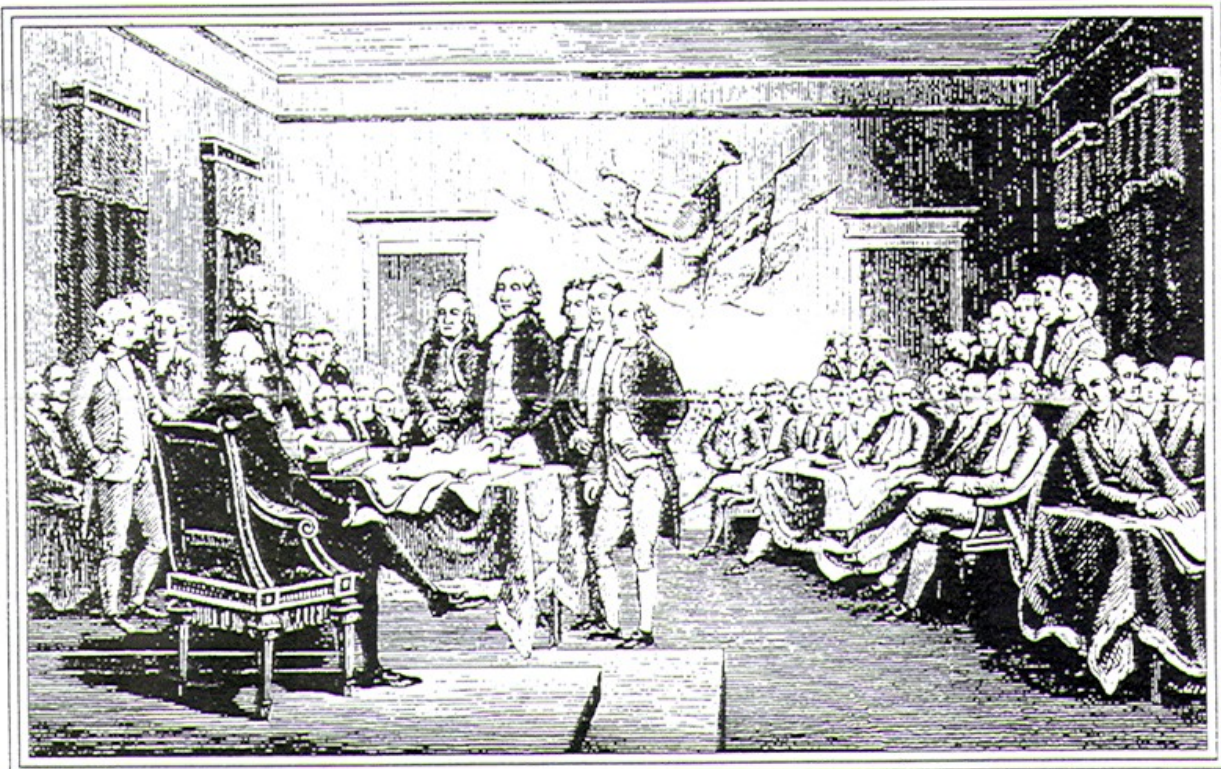
"All Included - Non Excluded"

Volume 1, Number 10

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

July, 1999

Independence Day!



The signing of the Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia, July 4, 1776

Oh! thus be ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."
And the star-spangled banner forever shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Francis Scott Key

Board Eyes Annual Reunion in D.C.

The Board of Directors (Pro Tem) of the Tan Son Nhut Association are considering the establishment of a permanent Annual Membership Reunion, to be held during the Memorial Day weekend in Washington, D.C.

For the last two years, a number of members have joined the annual wreath-laying at the Vietnam Memorial ("The Wall"). It has been a meaningful and inspiring occasion for all who have attended.

It has also been an enjoyable moment to spend time together with old buddies, and their families. Few knew each other at Tan Son Nhut, but the common bond has made them truly new friends.

Many members, especially new ones coming in, are asking when the Association is going to have a reunion, and many indicate that they are anxious it will be soon.

Memorial Day has been set as the last Monday in May as the official national holiday. Therefore the Board suggests that the reunion cover the Saturday, Sunday and Monday of the weekend.

Saturday would allow for the arrival and settling into accommodations for the visitors. An initial reception would be in the evening in an informal hospitality hour.

Sunday would be an ideal time to hold an early breakfast meeting of the membership. Then members could go to church and take sight-seeing trips. Sunday evening would be an association banquet with interesting and distinguished speakers.

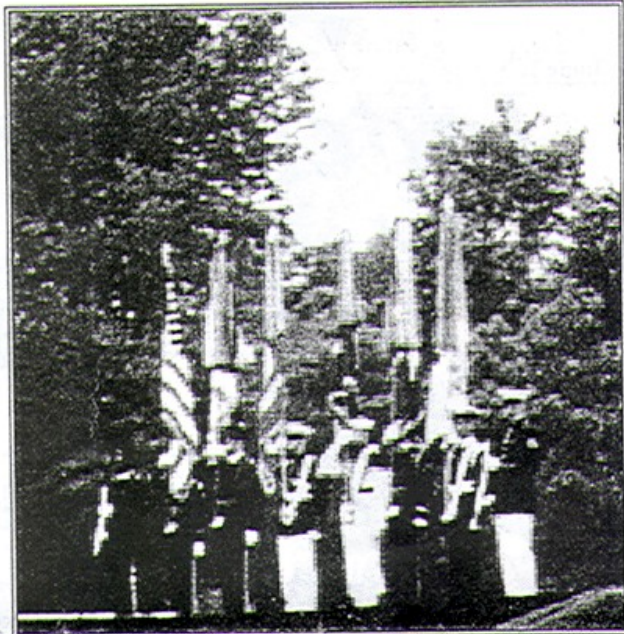
Monday morning members would be free to take other excursions, forming at the Vietnam Memorial at 12 noon.

The wreath-laying ceremony begins at 1 p.m. and usually lasts a little over an hour.

"This would be the greatest thing on earth," says Vice President Peele. "Our people would be very significant on this occasion. We are not just a veterans' association, a specific service or unit association, we are the actual multi-service people who participated in and ran the war in and through Tan Son Nhut."

Washington is the national capital and many would welcome their visit to the capital, many for the first time in their lives. As the association continues to grow the regional groups will become big enough to plan and sponsor regional reunions, to which, of course, all members could attend.

The Board strongly hopes that this will become a permanent annual affair



Posting of the colors, Vietnam Memorial

that members will plan for well ahead of time, and mark it as a "must" on their calendars.

To have it as an annual affair would allow the area-based members to develop relations with the hotels and touring agents that would generate well-planned assistance and support to incoming members, most probably bringing considerable discounts also.

The Board urges the membership to seriously consider this proposal and reply as soon as possible.

Replies and suggestions should be sent to the Tan Son Nhut Association, Office of Public Affairs, Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue,

Norfolk, Virginia 23510. E-mail to:

hercules29@worldnet.att.net

The telephone is: (757) 627-7746, and the Fax is: (757) 627-0878.

"Please respond quickly," asks Peele. "If we get an enthusiastic response we'll be starting to put things together immediately. We want to see an impressive occasion in May 2,000!"

**Please
return your
Constitutional
Ballots!**

Memorial Day 1999 Monday, May 31st, Washington, D.C. *Our Day At The Wall*



TSN Asse. V.P. John Peele,
prepares to present Asse. wreath



Association members at The Wall,
(l-r) J. Smith, James Warrington (our new
chaplain), J. Beasely and John Peele



General Alexander Haig,
the principle speaker,
meets Asse. V.P. John Peele



Pre-ceremony snap: (l-r) J. Beasely, USA ceremony
official, D. Byrnes, J. Smith, R. Need, (lower) J. Peele,
J. Warrington.



Member R. Need presents Asse. \$200
contribution to the Vietnam
Memorial Founder, Jan Scruggs



Members Peele, Beasely and Bolton
await ceremony's beginning.

Revetments is grateful to the following who generously shared
their photography with us:
Sergeant Johnnie Beasely, Michael and Jennifer Peele, and
Dennis Byrnes



"All Included - None Excluded"
 Revetments is an official publication of The Tan Son Nhut Association, 6203 57th Avenue, Riverdale, Maryland 20737. The Association is a non-profit fraternal organization chartered and registered under appropriate statute and law. Editorial offices are located at Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510. Telephone: (757) 627-7746. FAX: (757) 627-0878. E-Mail: hercules29@worldnet.att.net

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The Real Heroes

by
 Jennifer Bernard

(Editor's Note: We will let Member Alan Strauss from Azle, Texas, tell you about this profound piece. "This was written by my 18 year old neighbor. It was also read on the local radio station, KROC AM, on Memorial Day. If I were to start a chain letter, I'd copy it and ask that you send this to everybody you know who has served.")

With every standoff that the United States has had with Saddam Hussein, I have become more and more aware of the importance that the military holds to our country's continued existence as a free nation.

Even though we all appreciate great military leaders like George Washington, Douglas MacArthur and Dwight Eisenhower, I think the real heroes in history are the men who have carried out their orders. To me, the unknown and unnamed men and women who have risked, or given their lives over the years, are the real people who should receive our admiration and honor.

Many men have given up their lives in order to protect and safeguard the freedoms that we have been blessed with. All the men who fight in a war give up their lives to protect ours.

Any man who has fought in a war or battle is a hero to me because of what he has gone through during combat and what he goes through when he comes home. These men give up their comforts, their positions, and their safety, to secure freedom for their generation and for future generations.

We can never truly understand what it is like for them unless we actually go through the same things that they have. I'm sure many nights they have nightmares about being back in

the middle of the fighting and wake up sweating and screaming. They are still listening to the wounded and dying men's screams that continue ringing in their ears when they come out of their nightmares. Playing like a repeating record, over and over, in their memories, they watch and hear the sounds of men dying around them. They know what it is like to live with the constant awareness that at any second they could die.

These things, I imagine, become a common, everyday occurrence in the life of a Veteran. I know some carry feelings of guilt with them as long as they live because their friend beside them died and they didn't. We can never understand just how terrible it is and how much it changes a person's life when they go through a war.

When the Vietnam War was over these wonderful men came back home and found out that their pain and agony was not even appreciated by a majority of the people whom they fought to protect. These men went through what is probably the closest thing to hell that we know on this earth, and nobody seemed to care.

They were welcomed back home with insults, jeering, and undoubtedly the most painful thing for them was the scorn and the unappreciative sneers of their fellow Americans.

These men deserve just as much appreciation as the people who fought in the War for Independence and the Civil War. They

were called by the United States of America to fight in Vietnam, and they did so courageously, bravely and patriotically.

The soldiers are the real heroes; they were the ones who really won the wars; they faced the guns; and they were the people who felt and smelt the blood of dying and injured soldiers. The unknown soldiers are the ones who risked their lives for each military strategy, it was up to them whether or not the strategy succeeded or failed.

My heroes are the soldiers who receive no recognition for their pain and sacrifice, but yet, are so patriotic that they fight for one reason ... to protect their country from the people who would destroy it. These unnamed heroes are the soldiers who can wholeheartedly echo Nathan Hale's statement, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

They are also part of the reason that I'm so thankful for my country. This country was made great through their sacrifices for freedom and no expression can fully express the gratitude I feel towards these people.

They are the ones who have fought, and still fight, for me and for my country.

It is through these Americas' lives that we live in the " ... Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave."



*The Sponsors of Independence Day for over 200 years ...
 ... and still in business!*

The Communications Center

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



What Am I Doing Now?

(Editor Note: In the last issue of *Revetments*, Vice President John Peele wanted the members to tell us what they are doing now. Here is our first taker.)

A Life in the Law

Dave Dowdell, 377th Security Police Squadron, TSN, of Columbus, Ohio, writes ...

I returned from Viet Nam in November 1968 and was stationed at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi. I cross trained into law enforcement and was assigned to the 3650th Air Base Group (ATC). The base had just converted from the 454th Bomb Wing (SAC) to a pilot training base. I completed my enlistment in September, 1970.

I attended Ohio State University, from 1970 to 1976, and majored in Social Studies/Education. I had aspirations of becoming a high school teacher.

I reenlisted into the Ohio Army National Guard in 1973, and was assigned to an Assault Helicopter Company as a member of the RECON Platoon. My unit was part of the round-out Brigade for the 101st Air Mobile, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I reenlisted to obtain free tuition credits at OSU. I separated from the OARNG in 1980.

We became expectant parents and the doctor termed it a high risk pregnancy. My wife had to quit work. I reverted back to my Air Force training and began a career in law enforcement.

I ended up spending 21 years in law enforcement, in Columbus, Ohio, and moved

through various specialty positions: uniformed Patrol Division, SWAT, Hostage Negotiations, Detective Bureau, Crime Search Unit, Criminal Intelligence Section, and the Basic Police Academy as an Instructor and Field Training Officer.

I ended my career in the uniformed Patrol Division. I wrecked my cruiser during a high speed chase in 1993, and suffered a cervical compression fracture. I experienced some loss of dexterity in my left hand (I am left handed) and was forced to take a medical retirement.

I have since been working as the Manager of Corporate Security and Loss Prevention with a major coal extraction company in North America, and travel exclusively to our 38 active mines and loadout facilities in nine states.

I have been married for 29 years and have three grown children, as well as four grandchildren. Our two youngest sons are still attending college in the Pittsburgh area.

I was diagnosed with Renal Cell Carcinoma (a.k.a.: kidney cancer) last August and had my left kidney removed. The cancer was contained to the kidney capsule and I did not require any additional radiation or chemotherapy treatments. I have to complete a five year program on cancer screenings. All previous quarterly screenings have been OK.

The oncologist determined that my cancer was caused by my exposure to Agent Orange or

Agent Blue while stationed at Vung Tau Air Base in Viet Nam. I was stationed there on a 90 day TDY assignment from April 1968 to July 1968, and can remember seeing the C-123s assigned to Operation Ranch Hand.

I have been able to locate numerous ex-377th S.P.S. buddies via the internet and keep trying to locate addition friends. I can be reached at:

DDowd306@aol.com

(Editor's Note: Member Joe Thompson, King of Prussia, Pa., forwarded the following that he had received in his E-Mail. It is by Charles M. Provine. We are proud to publish it.)

It Is The Soldier

It is the soldier, not the reporter,
Who has given us freedom of the press.
It is the soldier, not the poet,
that has given us freedom of speech.
It is the soldier, not the campus organizer,
who has given us freedom to demonstrate.
It is the soldier, not the lawyer,
who has give us the right to a fair trial.
It is the soldier who salutes the flag,
who serves under the flag,
and whose coffin is draped by the flag,
who allows the protester to burn the flag.

Days at Tan Son Nhut

by

Taylor B. McKinnon



Major, USAF (Ret.)

Day Three

This installment is entitled Day Three simply because so many important events occurred on my third day that I wanted to give it an installment of its own. After this I will cover the rest of my tour by month.

In order to set the stage for this story, I must explain to the readers that most of the aircraft we used at the start of the involvement in Viet Nam were not flown to that tropical paradise. They were floated there by the Military Sea Transportation Service, and later, the U.S. Navy.

Before the advent of large, swift jet-powered and pressurized transport planes like the C-141 and C-17 (Civilian Reserve Air Fleet) American troops went to war on troop ships. During the Korean War I went over on the U.S.S. *Randall*, a C-2 freighter, which later took Elvis Presley to Germany.

These ships were operated by the U.S. Army MSTs. You knew you were overseas after 18 days on the briney, unlike the unreal experience of having a beer in the Radio Bar & Grill in San Francisco on one day, and stepping off of a C-17 DC-8 the next, in a combat zone.

Although the jets were being used in the 1960s to transport troops overseas, the new Boeing 707 flew its first commercial flight to Europe in 1959 and the DC-8 flew (Please see, Days, Page 7)

Your Closet is Important... ...To These People

(Editor's Note: Thanks to the suggestions of Association Member, Colonel Wayne Pitman, Beaver Creek, Ohio, we have established a relationship with The Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. We sent James R. Reckner, the director, all of the past issues of *Revetments* and last year's Memorial Day tape at the Vietnam Memorial. His kind replies have been interesting and informative, and probably pertain to all of you. This is his most recent letter of June 7th.)

Just a short note to thank you very much for the materials you have sent, including latest edition of *Revetments*.

Nostalgia, it seems, has about a twenty-year incubation period. We are all reaching the point in life where we reflect a bit on the large portion of our life which has already passed by. This has resulted in the organization of veterans' groups throughout the ages, the most notable of which, I suspect, was the Grand Army of the Republic after the Civil War.

As, in my spare time, I research and write about the Navy in the era of Theodore Roosevelt, I duly note the activities of these organizations fifteen or more years ago, long before I got bitten by the "Vietnam bug." In fact, when the Great White Fleet sailed around the world, 1907-1909, when it reached California, in one of the ports the old veterans of the GAR were reported to have lined the streets as the sailors of the fleet were given a tour. There probably was an organization of veterans of the Revolutionary War, though I haven't run across them yet.

And so, The Tan Son Nhut Association has some very colorful predecessors in America's military past. The big difference between then and now is that now we are more aware of the fact that within us reposes a small piece of our country's history, and with that comes the responsibility. I think, to ensure that it is preserved for future generations. If those old boys of the Grand Army of the Republic had focused their energies on preserving all of the records and all of the

personal memories of the Civil War, rather than building monuments to themselves, they would have built an infinitely more important monument: one that would have helped future generations of Americans understand their struggle.

As an aside, during the past week we have been examining the possibility of moving our administrative offices from the Texas Tech campus to the former Wing Commander's headquarters building at Reese AFB, about seven miles west of the campus. We are hard pressed for space in our present location and can't get any new spaces just yet. At the same time, Texas Tech has been developing a major research center at the former Air Force base, now redesignated Reese Center. It seems likely we will move there toward the end of summer, as I get back from Vietnam, into the new, long-term, but still "temporary" quarters. Our permanent quarters will be the new Vietnam Center Building, the completion of which is still several years off.

We are very pleased to have a complete set of *Revetments* as a part of the permanent holdings of The Vietnam Archive. If any of your members have any other Vietnam-related materials stored in their attics or basements, please urge them to get them out and consider shipping them to The Vietnam Archive, where they will be permanently

preserved and made available to future researchers. You know, that stuff is deteriorating where it is.

A few years ago, a guy who was defense lawyer for a number of the enlisted men at My Lai decided to hand over all of his papers relating to their trials. When he went up into the attic to get the material down, he discovered there had been a small leak in the attic, which destroyed perhaps 20% of the papers and damaged a fair percentage of that which remained. The Vietnam Archive maintains all papers in temperature- and humidity-controlled spaces, stored in acid-free folders and acid-free boxes. And for materials that already show deterioration, we immediately photocopy the information to acid-free paper. In the hands of the professional archivists, these materials will survive much longer than they will in private hands. And they will be available for researchers.

Further, if any TSNA members would like to be added to our mailing list, please tell them to just send their mailing address and we will be delighted to plug them in.

James R. Reckner, Director

The Vietnam Center

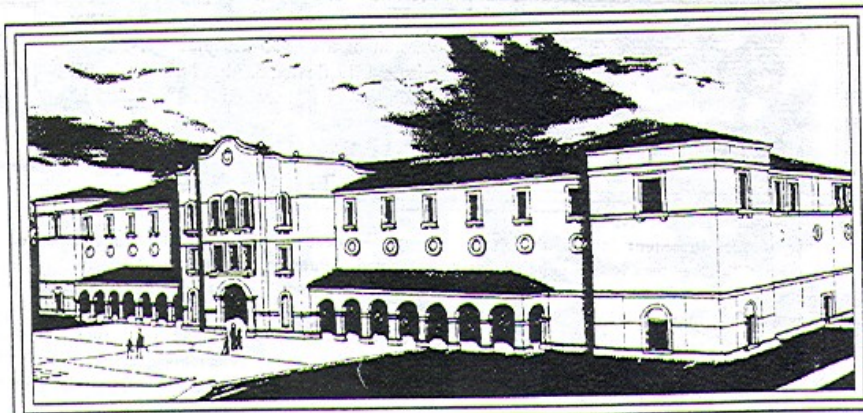
Box 41045, Lubbock, Texas 79409

Phone: (806) 742-3742

FAX: (806) 742-8664

E-Mail:

vietnam.center@ttu.edu



The Vietnam Center Building under construction at Texas Tech



A Few Favorite Web Sites Tan Son Nhut Association

Membership information, memorial pages: will be greatly improved soon.

<http://home.att.net/~hercules29/>

Denis Cook's Home Page

A treasure chest of photography, Tan Son Nhut, humor and lots of good stuff!

<http://host.fptoday.com/COOK>

377th Security Police Sqdn.

This is a masterpiece of fine web site presentation by TSNA member, Charles Penley. A treasure house of information on TSN and the times.

<http://users.intermediatn.net/cepenlev/index.html>

Sitting Duck

Member, Nik Boldrini's site that offers a glimpse at some of his excellent writing.

<http://hometown.aol.com/nirdlobkin/index.htm>

EC-47 History Site

An interesting and informative site created by retired Master Sergeant James C. Wheeler. Recommended by member, Nik Boldrini.

<http://www.ec47.com/>

Reflections of a Sentry

A nostalgic look back at Tan Son Nhut, the times, people and places, by Ollie "Kirk" Bennett.

<http://www.cyberstate.infi.net/~kbennett/vietnam.html>

A Tribute to Veterans

An interesting site prepared by a young Norwegian, Roy Inge Rynning, with a touching tribute to Vietnam veterans.

<http://home.c2i.net/rrynning/>

Modern Saigon Today

Another interesting site, full of pictures and information about Saigon today. Beautiful photography.

<http://maingate.net/vn/saigon.html>

If readers find any errors in these addresses please let us know immediately. Thanks!

Days, continued from Page 5

in 1960) the old MSTs freighters were still used for very heavy cargo and items which were not needed immediately in the combat zone (toilet paper was reportedly one of these items, but I can't image any item more important to the prosecution of the war than TP). Any airplane (or helicopter) smaller than a C-47 (military version of the 1935-designed DC-3) was customarily floated to Viet Nam on board a freighter or a "baby flat top," an aircraft carrier of smaller size that larger carriers of World War II, sometimes called a "jeep" carrier. These ships landed periodically at the Saigon quay and it was the duty of my branch (field maintenance the days before and during WWII there were three levels of aircraft maintenance in the Air Force, organizational maintenance (performed by the "crew chiefs," who were assigned to the flying squadron), field maintenance (the responsibility of the base commander, then called "field" as in March Field or Chanute Field, or Sheppard Field) and depot level (performed at perhaps Kelly Field in Texas).

This system worked fine, but over the years has been transmuted by latter day officers (Air Force Academy graduates) into a system which hardly works, and only then by the expenditure of great effort by officers and NCOs who have to push it in order for it to work. The old system worked effortlessly and naturally.

Back to my story: upon arriving at the office on my third day, Captain Brouard informed me that a boat load of O-1 (observer aircraft) were arriving that day at the Saigon quay and it was our responsibility to unload them from the ship and tow them to Tan Son Nhut where they would be dispersed to the various provinces and flown by Air Force Forward Air Controllers (a duty that my kid brother, John McKinnon, was assigned to later in the war).

These aircraft were the famous Cessna "bird dog" airplanes formerly owned by the U.S. Army. The Army had phased them out in favor of helicopters and stored them at Davis Monthan AFB, in Arizona. The Air Force reactivated them for use in Viet Nam (much to the consternation of the Army).

The ship carrying these aircraft was a "jeep" carrier named the *Conch*, if my memory serves me correctly, and we (along with MSGT. Vann and his Aero Repair Crew) board the ship immediately. After a few minutes inspecting the little



Typical C-34 of Air America with no national markings. Air American was a subsidiary of Civil Air Transport, but funded by the C.I.A. Lots of old retired USAF officers flew them. Same kind of plane I mentioned cracking up at Tan Son Nhut, killing the crew of two.

high wing "piper cub" looking airplanes, a cry rang out and the word was passed for all to remain still and not move.

We were informed that one of our crew chiefs had discovered a large plastique explosive in the rear seat of one of the airplanes.

To this day, I have no idea how that booby trap got aboard that airplane. We had boarded the ship almost immediately after the gang plank dropped. The V.C. were obviously a little more immediate than we were.

Well, friends, thus ends another episode in the combat experiences of a fearless (OK, I admit to a little nervousness ... but maybe you did too at times). You guys sleep tight and don't let the bed bugs bite. We have made it this far, so let's not f---up at this late date. Remember: in basic how we told "You've got it made it you don't f--- up!"

RECRUIT FOR TAN SON NHUT



Spend some time
recruiting new members!

Fly The Flag on the Fourth!



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