

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



"All Included - Non Excluded"

Volume 1, Number 12

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September, 1999





"All Included - None Excluded"

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Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me ...



**Thoughts of
Our Sky Pilot**

by
Chaplain James M. Warrington

(Editor's Note: We could not be prouder or happier than to publish the first column of our Association Chaplain. Chaplain (Lt. Col.) USAF (Retired) James Warrington.)

The Word of The Lord

Just suppose that in an instant moment all copies of holy scripture had disappeared. Not only were the books, CD Roms, pamphlets gone, but all traces of these sacred scriptures had completely vanished. Then we mortal human beings would really understand the power of Lord's Word.

All the great art galleries would have massive empty frames on their walls, for the artistry of the world had drawn much of its inspiration from scriptural sources.

Much of the music of the world would have been silenced; many orchestral, choral and pipe organ works were no longer to be heard. Anthems, hymns, gospel and praise songs died and were instantly forgotten.

Jewish, Christian, Muslim, indeed all religious holy days (holidays) were gone; they simply don't exist.

The libraries would look as if billions of devouring moths or other insects had descended upon the printed pages. Authors such as Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Tolstoy, and thousands of others were almost unintelligible due to the many

deletions or omissions. Volumes, journals, records containing great speeches would have many of their greatest passages left out.

As people began to speak, they would stammer and be unable to express themselves. They could no longer praise God; they could no longer curse God.

Law books would no longer make sense, because the fundamental principles upon which they were based had been eliminated. The Magna Carta of Britain, the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, and all the great historic statements of liberty and human rights had been fragmented and almost blank.

But the loss of all sacred writings would cut even deeper. Values would be blurred. Human life would become just another cheap commodity; just another tool to be used. Any search for peace would be considered futile, hopeless! Human living would have grown drab and meaningless instantly. Restraints were lost as people unleashed the animal instincts within them. "If it feels good, do it."

To think about such a tale as this is to gain a fresh insight into the meaning of holy scripture. Now we have a moment to start living again with new fervor and gratitude.

Truly, O Lord, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Chaplain Services Available

Chaplain Warrington invites members to ask for any pastoral services he can provide. Requests should be forwarded to the Office of Public Affairs, Tan Son Nhut Assc.

**TSN Association
To Be Represented
At Texas Event**

Lancaster, Texas ... Regional Texas Director, Norman Whitlow, announced this month that the Tan Son Nhut Association will be maintaining a representation booth at the Second Annual POW/MIA Observant Day ceremonies.

Observant Day, September 11th, is part of the annual Observant Day Week, September 11 through 18.

Ceremonies will be at Lancaster Heritage Park, Lancaster, Texas, beginning at 10 a.m.

Among activities scheduled will be a Health Fair; a fly-over of the Confederate Air Force with Missing Man Formation; and, The United States Marine Corps Color Guard and Firing Squad.

The Tan Son Nhut Booth will have pass-out brochures, copies of *Revetments*, with Whitlow as the host, and perspective TSN recruiter.

Whitlow, long active in veteran affairs in Texas, invites as many regional members as possible to attend.

He is also presently active in recruiting VNAF and ARVN among the large Vietnamese residency in central Texas.

* * *

Revetments Completes 1st Year

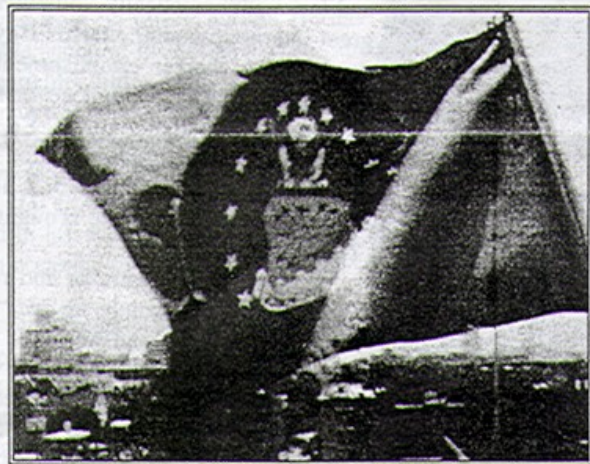
With this issue we complete one full year of publication and close Volume I. The October issue will begin Volume II. In the next couple of pages we attempt to show our gratitude and appreciation for the contributions of all the members.



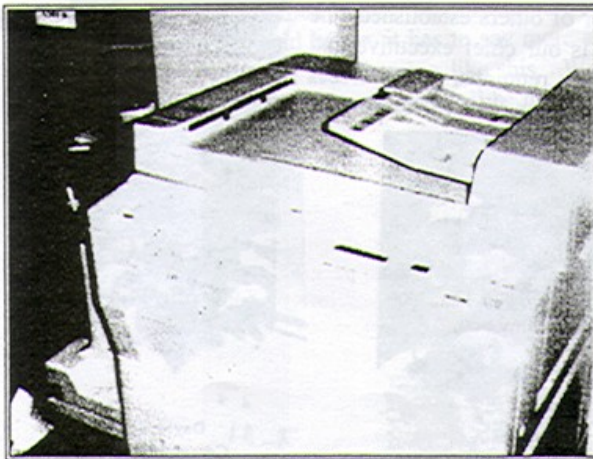
The Tan Son Nhut Association Publishing Building
Norfolk, Virginia (really Hague Towers, we're on the 7th Floor)



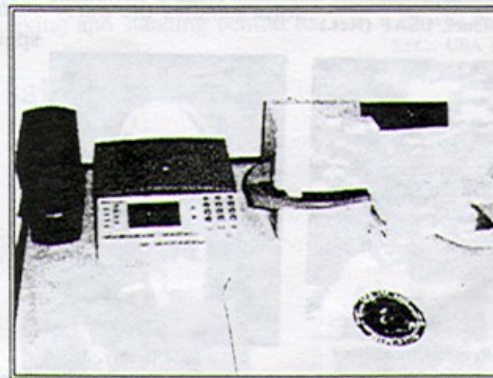
Main Composing Room



The Air force Flag flies from the offices' balcony



The Press Room



The Circulation & Mail Department

(Revetments from Page 3)



President Don Parker

Why Revetments ...

To begin with, for a full year now there has been a growing dialogue among the members, and often, non-members of The Tan Son Nhut Association. They are meeting old friends, and making new ones. They are talking about what they did then, what they're doing now, and what they see ahead. And they are doing all this meeting and talking in the pages of *Revetments*.

We deeply regret that *Revetments* is still a small-size publication. That's especially true this month when we wanted to express our immense gratitude to all of the members (and non-members) who have contributed their words, their time, and their heartfelt support to this endeavor.

We've lined the page with just a few of those who have meant so much to the continuation of *Revetments* month after month. Those shown on this page are the only people we had pictures of in our vast photo morgue, but we would have liked to run pictures of all the rest of the great supporters we've got.

We wish we could run a picture of Carol Bessette, who's given us sound advice and last month practically volunteered to assist reunion planning; Nik Boldrini, and his great internet material; Denis Boyer, a more than gifted writer; Alexander Chaisons, working on chapter establishment in Virginia and Norm Whitlow in Texas; David Chung, for a story we will never forget (February, *Sentimental Journey*); Lance Coar, Brent Cool, William Coup, Ed Noriega, Wayne Pittman, Jeffrey Shideler, Alan Strauss, Joe Thompson, for their e-mail and phone comments, and to Robert B. Chambers for letting us share once again the humor he brought to us in Vietnam (March, *The Comic Section*).

And more gratitude and respect to all the others who have given us the thumbs up and "right on" support during the past year. It's too bad we don't have pictures of them all!

The story goes on when we get to those fortunate or unfortunate enough to be pictured here.

Five years ago Don and Sue Ellen Parker and John and Michelle Peele, with a number of others established The Tan Son Nhut Association. Don is our chief executive and John handles the purse strings, plans reunions, and oversees special functions, like *Revetments*.



Vice President/Treasurer
John Peele



Association Chaplain
James M. Warrington
Lt. Colonel, USAF (Ret.)



Dennis Byrnes, USA
Ceremonies Group



Revetments Editor
Robert S. Need
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Regional Dir. Carolina
CMsgt., USAF (Ret.)



James A. Smith
Ceremonies Group
SMsgt., USAF (Ret.)



David Bolton
Ceremonies Group
CPO., USN (Ret.)

... is succeeding!

Association Chaplain James Warrington has begun his monthly column, as you have may already noticed on Page 2. Robert Need has fun every month putting *Revetments* together in the gadget-ridden office you see on Page 3. He claims his editorial operation is second to none, having internet, fax and telecommunication capabilities that rival *The New York Times*. Johnnie Beasly is busy establishing chapter operations in the Carolinas and Georgia. James Smith is a faithful participant in TSN representation at Memorial Day at the Vietnam Memorial ceremonies in Washington, as is David Bolton. Dennis Byrnes is a proud U.S. Army member and is also a Memorial Day participant.

John Shaud gave us our first article and interview (October 1998) and gave us the best quote we've run thus far. "Tan Son Nhut, it all began there, and it ended there."

Thomas Joyce, recently retired, is an avid Tan Son Nhut historian and a dynamic individual who successfully obtained the Silver Star presentation for Staff Sergeant Alonzo Coggins, the heroic survivor of Bunker 51 at the opening of the Tet Offensive (March, *Ceremony Becomes A Day of Triumph*).

Charles Penley is one of *Revetments* strongest supporters and a provider of documentation and information we could have received from no other source. He has established an awesome internet web site that is a veritable shrine of memories to Tan Son Nhut and its people. <http://users.intermediatn.net/cepenlev/index.html>

Frank Ybarbo gave us the fine account of his return to Saigon and Tan Son Nhut (March, *Return to Vietnam*), and has given us great information and advice. Ray Bows, the author of the incredibly researched book, *Vietnam Military Lore*, shared one of his poignantly moving stories with us in the April issue, *100 P Alley, Saigon*.

Richard Fulton, whose life history can be read in last month's *What Am I Doing Now*, is a fascinating humor-filled advisor to us, and on occasion a serious critic we deeply appreciate.

Taylor McKinnon is our first regular columnist and brings back life at the working level on Tan Son Nhut in his *Days At Tan Son Nhut*. We are sincerely grateful for his valuable contributions. His column continues in this issue.

With people like this in the Association, *Revetments* may feel it has succeeded, but what has really happened is that it has incurred a commitment to the future. Volume II has got to be bigger and better, it has to say more and mean more if it intends to serve a membership like this. We take this challenge gladly, knowing that you will still be meeting and talking and standing behind us.



Taylor B. McKinnon
Major, USAF (Ret.)



Richard Fulton
(As seen in Vietnam)



Ray Bows
Msgt., USA (Ret.)



John Shaud
General, USAF (Ret.)



Thomas Joyce
Major, USAF (Ret.)

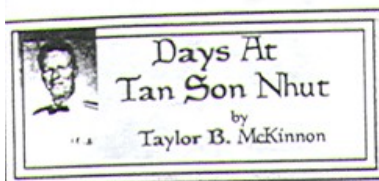


Charles Penley
SFC., USA (Ret.)
Sgt., USAF, 377th SS



Frank Ybarbo

Thanks, and a salute to all!



Day Three (Part II)

Apologia

In my last installment I name major members of the field maintenance branch of the 33rd CAMRON and I inadvertently stated that the 33rd Tac Group later became the 337th Tac Group. Upon reflection I remembered that it became the 377th Tac Group and the camron became the 377th CAMRON.

Sorry, all you 377th guys, particularly you guys of the 377th Security Policy who made it possible for us in the aircraft maintenance business to arm the aircraft and launch them for their missions without getting our asses shot off. Well, almost all the time. (I will discuss the Viet Cong attacks of December '65, and April '66 during a later installment.)

Our Private Arsenal

Now, back to the story.

While cleaning out his desk Captain Brouard opened a locker next to his desk and told me that in here were our branch weapons for use in defending ourselves from the enemy while out on trips to recover aircraft which had crashed off the airport.

Master Sergeant Vann and his Aero Repair Section were responsible, as was I since I was the OIC of field maintenance for crash recovery. We had a forty foot trailer and various other vehicles to be used for the accomplishment of this task. Our aim was to get to the crashed airplane within two hours of the crash, since the Viet Cong would most certainly get there and remove the guns to use against us if we took longer. Some of the time they got there sooner and were waiting for us. If they were not spoiling for a fight they would booby trap the wreckage. I will tell a true story of one such incident later.

Captain Brouard handed me several weapons from the cabinet. They were of World War II vintage, but better suited for our purposes than the Mattel Toy-like AF-15, later designated M-16 after the army adapted them to replace the M-14 30 calibre rifle. They were designed for close range in the bush and used a tiny 223 calibre bullet which was so light that an infantryman could carry an ample quantity on his person in order to fight independently for a good period without being resupplied.

The weapons in the cabinet were of three types. There was a 45 cal. Thompson submachine gun, called the Chicago Piano back in the 1930s when used against the law by the likes of "Pretty Boy" Floyd, no relation to "Pink" Floyd. He reportedly liked the '34 Ford as well since the metal in Fords of that day

would withstand the .32 pistols in use by the law, who later adapted the .38 special for that reason. The Ford had a powerful V-8 engine and was swifter than the law.

The next gun to come from the locker was a big B.A.R. (Browning Automatic Rifle), a long tripod-mounted, air cooled squad gun with a huge magazine which carried the old and large 30.06 cartridge which would shoot accurately for a thousand yards through underbrush without being deflected. This was the preferred weapon by infantrymen and military police units in WWII and Korea.

Lastly, was an M-1 Garand, the 30.06 autoloading rifle named by General Eisenhower as one of the three weapons most attributable to the United States winning the war in Europe (the M-1, the Willys Jeep and the Douglas C-47 transport plane).

I asked where do I sign for the weapons, and the captain replied, "Those were left here by the French. The only one you must sign for is this 38 cal. Model 10 Smith and Weston I carry. It is now yours."

He gave me his personal gun belt and scabbard which had his name inscribed on it and I still have that rig. I am sixty-five now and teach aeronautics at San Bernardino Valley College, so it doesn't fit as handsomely as it used to thirty-five years ago.

L'Affaire Francaise

Whilst we talked, the door opened and in came a Vietnamese gentleman by the name of Bernard Yai (pronounced like the letter "Y"). He began to speak to Captain Brouard in French. "Bonjour, mon capitaine, comment allez vous?" My mother (a school teacher) spoke French and had taught us some small amount when we were young, so I kind of followed the conversation and ascertained that he was the Operations Officer for Air Viet Nam, the national airline located next to our hanger.

When I confessed that I spoke little *français*, he expressed amazement that one could become a commissioned officer in our country without being able to speak French. I later found the Vietnamese to be ambivalent about the French, as the Koreans are about the Japanese colonization of their country for 45 years. They admired the culture and the ability of the Japanese to build railways and schools, but abhorred the intrusion on the country.

The Viets still considered the colonizer's language to be the *lingua franca* of the western world, a position it lost after being humiliated twice by Germany, and then by the Viet Minh and Algerians in a space of fifty years.

Bernard asked me if I had transportation, and added that he had an old U.S. Army 45 cubic inch motorcycle (former French lend-lease) that he would sell to me for \$250. Since I had owned a couple of Indian motorcycles as a teen ager, and I needed wheels, I replied to the affirmative, a decision I later painfully regretted.

We bid *adieu* to the captain and got into



AFLC kept a detachment at ISN to repair aircraft which were damaged beyond my capability to repair. They were real "wizards" at bringing life back into combat damaged aircraft such as this A1E "Skyraider." These were former Navy attack bombers. The Navy called them AD. A for attack and D for Douglas. They had huge R-3350 Curtiss-Wright 3000 hp radial engines. (Photo from TBM)

his Citroen sedan, a front wheel drive 34 Ford with the same backwards "suicide" doors as the 34 Ford had. We drove to his villa on Tran Nung Dau Boulevard (in an earlier installment I spelled this Tran Dung Hau - which is an insult to Viets since the street is named for the heroic sisters who died horrible deaths trying to save Viet Nam from the Chinese prior to the French incursion in the late 1800s).

Besides "dung" is an Asian word meaning excrement according to my little Korean wife. I served in Korea prior and after the Korean War, sorry, you old guys, *conflict* to those 55,000 who died in the "unwar." Perhaps that is a correct term as I have recently become convinced that World War II didn't end in 1945. Korea and Viet Nam were the "coda" as we used to say in the music business.

In any case, my old chief of maintenance of the 319th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, used to precede half of his sentences with "in any case." Colonel Fred Funk, I last saw him in the Philippines going to survival school for Viet Nam. I hope he made it, a fine officer and generally good guy. He ran maintenance twelve hours per day, and flew operationally like any other pilot. I don't know how he did it.

Business with Bernie

Bernard took me to his office adjoining his villa to do business, not in his house where I would have to meet his wife. In Asia, business and personal life don't mix. He sat down behind his desk. He had brought us some mineral water. And, like the common clod he probably thought I was, I proceeded to drop the entire glass on the beautiful tile and teak floor. He graciously got down on his hands and knees and cleaned up the spillage.

It's strange how I can remember every second of that exchange, but can't remember much about how I almost "bought the farm" a few months later. I gave him the money and he took me outside to see the Harley. I don't recall why I didn't demand to see it before the sale. Being an old Indian rider, I suppose I thought, "stand 'em on their heads and they all look like your sister."

(See Days at TSN, Page 7)



The Communications Center

Send us your letters, faxes, stories and e-mail, we want to hear from you!

Days at TSN, from Page 6

I cranked the Harley with some help from a spare battery from a shop next door, since the bike's battery was dead, and took off for what I thought was Saigon airport. I mistakenly got on the highway to Bien Hoa after almost being ground up in a dervish of a traffic circle and got lost.

I stopped beside a kind old Viet gentleman and asked directions in English. He called me "monsieur" and in French said something about "la Mort." Well, even I knew was a "mortuary" is so I followed his finger back to Saigon. More about Bernard later.

I was lucky that Captain Brousard had a few days to go, and Chief Dailey was not quite ready to leave yet, so I had a few days in which to "fart around and clear in."

Fortunately, I found a Navy B.O.Q. in Cholon, a leased hotel in the Chinese section of Saigon. I found a really nice roommate, 1st Lieutenant Ronald E. Ginsback, U.S. Infantry. Ron and I lived in the same room, and drank scotch at night while listening to Johnnie Carson on the radio.

I got struck on my Harley by and army truck after the army arrived in force in Saigon, and broke my right arm and had it in a cast. If you are right-handed and lose it, just try wiping your rear with your left arm ... it's impossible.

Ron was kind of chubby when we lived together, but he got transferred from his Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam (MAC-V) staff job for command of an infantry company which is the basic 200-man combat unit of the army. Four or more companies make up a battalion of perhaps 1,000 men, command by a Lt. Colonel.

The term "company grade officer" refers to captains and lieutenants, those authorized to a company on the Tables of Organization & Equipment (TO&E). I bet that brings back

Any old RF-4 won't do, it has to be special ...

I'm looking for photos of RF-4C #64-1047, recently acquired by the Air Force Museum, for use in a possible article.

The aircraft was at Tan Son Nhut from '65-'70, assigned to the 16th Squadron and then the 12th.

Negatives or slides loaned for copy are preferred and will be returned promptly, but prints will do.

Contact

Wayne Pittman
498 Carthage Drive
Beavercreek, OH 45434-5865

More reunion thoughts

I am writing to voice my thoughts about having the reunions in one place. To me, this would be a mistake.

After maybe one or two reunions, I think attendance would fall off. Members who have to travel a long way usually plan a vacation around the reunions and therefore would not want to go to the same place every time. It would also make hardships for

Days, continued ...

some *deja vu* to some of the old timers from the Army Air Forces.

The last time I saw Ron was on the freedom bird, and it was sad. We got off the plane together and his mom and dad, along with, I think, his wife. They were standing behind the fence at Travis Air Force Base. He walked up to the fence and they didn't know who he was, he was so emaciated. They just kept saying, "You're not Ron are you?"

I got tears in my eyes and just left without being introduced as his buddy.

Well, it's getting late and time for "taps." You guys be careful out there.

members who don't live in the general area.

Having it in different locations gives more members the opportunity to attend the reunions without having to travel a great distance because it would be nearer their home. It would add variety to the reunions by having new places and faces each year.

Where is the reunion going to be this year?

Bryant Sherrill
Rockingham, N. Carolina
(Editor's Note: Bryant, we are like Hillary, we're still "just listening.")

* * *

Location, location, location ...

I'll vote for the present constitution and hope you get enough votes to go forth.

As to the Association reunions, Washington D.C. is not the best spot to get in and out of, and travel around in.

It will be a burden for west coasters to have one eastern location to have to travel so far for a reunion.

Yearly reunions may be fine if you just belong to one or two outfits. We elderly (75) have WWII, Korea and Vietnam, and other military and fraternal reunions to attend.

The yearly? Should be every two years. I'd opt for odd year dates.

I know you all have put much effort into the TSNA and it is a shame that the percentage figures are so low. Such is it with most other organizations however.

Revetments is a class act for a bulletin.

Leland H. Williams
New Carlisle, Ohio

Some sage advice ...

Revetments looks better with each issue.

On the Tan Son Nhut Association - I suggest not getting too hung up on membership response to the ballot/questionnaire. I've spent twenty-five-plus years in organizing groups and can attest that most eyes glaze over when faced with structural/procedural/mechanical/constitutional issues.

You really need to lower your quorum/vote threshold so that you can transact business.

Every group I've encountered is run by three to five people, no matter what the size. Activists are a naturally self-selected crowd, most others are on the periphery by choice.

The real task is grooming those for the inner core so as to have replacements when the burnout syndrome hits. Every good organizational officer trains his replacement.

Dennis Boyer
Dodgeville, Wisconsin

The Constitution Forever!



This is a member who has not sent in his Ballot

Christmas in September

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and they'll start receiving Revetments now!



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