Revetments

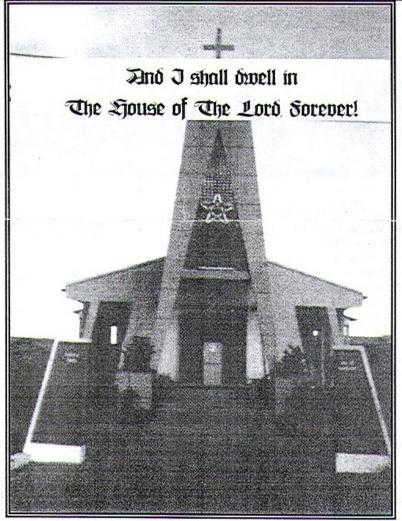
The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



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

May, 2001



The Catholic Chapel, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Circa 1968 Courtesy of Member Terry Love

REMEMBER MEMORIAL DAY 2001



Main Gate, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, circa 1968 Photography, courtesy of Member Terry Love

To Whom It May Concern

By Jan Jones, Kingsport, Tennessee What is the with you people!!

You all are in the position of owning some very valuable property and you all are not sharing it. It is your individual piece or pieces of history.

Do you not realize that by keeping quiet, you are allowing others to write it for you? You know they are not always truthful and whole in repeating bits of history. In fact, they choose to slant facts or even to erase them.

You have got to stand up and speak up for yourselves! You have to sew your piece of the quilt to make a whole history.

It is sometimes difficult, I know, to speak and to share your experiences. But, you must! You are the only one who has lived and experienced your own private history. You know what to say and how to say it.

There is a perfect place to do this. We have the best web site concerning Tan Son Nhut and Vietnam. Now is the time and here is the address: http://www.tsna.org

Please share your history before it is forgotten. Or worse, before it is told by someone other than yourself. Send any information and *please*, any pictures that you might have of Tan Son Nhut.

You don't have to be a general to write history. You are so important and your knowledge will be lost to the world when you are chosen to walk the next post.

You have walked this post so well. Let others learn just how well by sharing with this web site and the Tan Son Nhut Association paper (*Revetments*). It is a good paper. By sharing yourself now, it can become a great one.

Everyone, please If you are a man or woman, or a loved one of one who sewed, please, sit down and write your piece of history. Send pictures – send copies of your pictures.

Stand tall - think tall - write even taller. The truth needs to be told and you are the one who can do it.

Or, maybe you would rather a perfect stranger write it for you.

(Editor's Note: Ms. Jones is the sister of our Communications Officer and webmaster, Member, Charles Penley. We fervently agree with her comments and are proud to publish them. In her accompanying letter, she went on to say. "Excuse me, as my brother can tell you, I do have a way of getting on a soap box when I see the need. I read every paper that Charles gets and it needs to grow and educate everyone of the truthful history of Tan Son Nhut. I am just so tired to the "numbnuts" of the world telling us "how it was." Aren't you?" Yes, Jan Jones, we are. And people like Taylor McKinnon, Ira Cooperman, Mark Reveaux, Frank Ybarbo, Dave Koopman, Richard Fulton, and many, many other members are proudly adding their words to our task in preserving the chronicles of Tan Son Nhut. Thank you.)

Tan Son Nhut Memorial Day, April 30

A Request for Involvement and Action

by Robert Stanley Need, Public Affairs, Tan Son Nhut Association

Another April 30th has come and passed, its significance forgotten or ignored. The only reference it sometimes receives from segments of the media, delivered in snide tones, is that it is the day "the United States finally lost the war" in Vietnam. And, of course, we get yet another glimpse of that last helicopter lifting off from the roof of the embassy in Saigon, as the American ambassador "flees to safety."

Stop, period, end of story.

Eliminate the Negative

So, for over a quarter of a century, twenty-six years to be exact, that one day, derided as a "day signifying defeat," has been allowed to symbolize an heroic and masterful military operation that valiantly endeavored to keep a nation free and independent for over eight years.

That's 2,920 days when American men and women built communities for the displaced, bled and fell in battle, defended cities, posts and airdromes, and tried to inspire hope for an independent future in the people of a republic threatened with brutal subjugation by a murderous, totalitarian enemy.

At the apex of this endeavor stood the operational command and control of the people of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. As General John Shaud pointed out in the first issue of *Revetments*, "It all began there – and it all ended there."

"It" does not mean that the war began there, because the war was already well in progress. "It" means that the American endeavor commenced at Tan Son Nhut, and successfully endured for eight years. Nor does "it" mean that the war ended there. "It" means that the Americans concluded their efforts at Tan Son Nhut when a cease-fire had been established and a peace treaty signed in

Paris

What transpired after the peaceful and orderly departure of the Americans is the stuff of political history and was the responsibility of those who sought to govern the native soil of Vietnam.

Accentuate the Positive

It is time for these negative impressions to be eliminated and a respectful and honorable recognition of the immense contributions that were made by the hundreds of thousands of American men and women who passed through or served at Tan Son Nhut.

We, the members of the Tan Son Nhut Association, should be, and are in fact, in the forefront of those who should work to encourage, engender and produce this change of attitude towards not just Tan Son Nhut, but of all of the locations, now sacred to us, where Americans worked and often died in the defense of liberty.

Petition the President and Congress

I am asking all of the members to consider writing to the President of the United States, and their members of Congress, to establish April 30, each year, as a national day of commemoration, Tan Son Nhut Memorial Day.

Some will probably comment that we already have Memorial Day, on May 30th. Yes, we do, and no one reveres it more than I do. It is a day of respect and honor for all the men and women who have fallen in America's defense. It is a monumental tribute to the sacrifices that heros make.

The President attends and speaks during every Memorial Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. This is fitting and proper.

Memorial in a Different Venue
I shall be writing these views to the

President and my Virginia members of Congress immediately. I beg you to work beside me and join me in this endeavor. In my request I am going to propose that on April 30, each year, the ceremonies be held at the Vietnam Memorial, our sacred "Wall." I will ask that the President attend and be received at these ceremonies.

My rationale behind this, I hope, is reasonable.

Americans often think and speak in a sort of emotional shorthand. With sincerity, but cramped brevity of meaning, they speak of "closure" and "healing." I would like to have people go further ahead and add the words "understanding, truth" and "triumph."

April 30, Tan Son Nhut Memorial Day, would eventually emerge as a day of national pride for those who served so valiantly in America's longest and most difficult and misunderstood war. The dignity of national recognition would grow as a different image of our participation is displayed on the national stage.

Deny it, if you will, but each and every one of us, our wives, our children, and our parents and friends, realize that we move in shadows, perhaps not as dark as during the 1960s or the 1970s. But the shadows are still there.

I would have us all assemble with our countrymen, on a bright warm April day, in all the towns and cities of America, as the Presidents of the United States, each year comes in reverence to "The Wall" to pay tribute to us, and to our fallen comrades, for the monumental service we gave our country years ago.

Long and intelligent speeches would be perfectly correct, but just two words would thunder across America at last,

"Welcome home!"



"All Included - Non Excluded"

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President, Don Parker
Vice President/Treasurer John Peele
Vice President/Secretary John Evans
Chaplain James M. Warrington
Public Affairs Robert Need

Communications Charles Penley Revetments is published monthly at the Office of Public Affairs, TSNA, Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510. Telephone: (757) 627-7746; FAX: (757) 627-0878; E-Mail: hercules29@worldnet.att.net



Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot

by Chaplain James M. Warrington

What Is Success?

The American poet, Joyce Kilmer, pays tribute in one of his poems to a friend named Martin who had none of the externals of success, but all of the internals. The poem concludes:

"Rich joy and love he got and gave; His heart was merry as his dress; Pile laurel wreaths upon his grave Who did not gain, but was success!"

I think of these words when I see some of those who are accounted successful by the material standards of our time – people who have all the externals of comfort and security – but who lack any real concern for their fellow human beings, and who lack inner peace and joy. I can understand the saying that no one is so poor as he who has only money.



"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion..."

Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg, 1863

I think of these words when I see people who for one reason or another lack the accepted modern criteria of success and therefore are full of self-pity and inner turmoil. They feel they are left out of life's finest experiences and richest rewards. Their search for a quantitative kind of success blinds them to the immense possibilities of qualitative success. The great gift of God both in nature and in human nature cannot be possessed; they can only be enjoyed. What finer epitaph could one hope for:

"He did not gain, but was, success!"

I think of the words when I see some of the small communities (of which we have an increasing number in this country) where the shift to urban centers has caused a decrease in population, in business activity, and in the wealth of the community. Often there descends on such a community a spirit of frustration, defeat, and hopelessness. If only a different and higher, standard of community success could be accepted, what impressive things might be done to improve the quality of life – religiously, educationally, socially, personally!

Would you like to talk to somebody who can help you with a problem?

Chaplain Warrington is available for consultation and other pastoral functions. Call Public Affairs at (757) 627-7718.

An Apology to Member, O. Peter Doe

In April, Member O. Peter Doe, of York, Maine, informed Charles Penley, our TSNA Webmaster, and the editor of *Revetments*, that we had failed to include three very close comrades of his in our on-line Memorial.

Pete had written the following on March 28, 2000:

"Very happy to see this site. A flood of memories returns. Need to add some names to the memorial. Captain Arnold W. Lamp, Jr., Major Gerald F. Ayres (MIA), and Captain Francis F. Stewart. They were all assigned to the 16th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron. Captains Lamp and Stewart were killed in 1969. I do not recall when Major Ayers went MIA. There were two other crew members who were killed on a night sortie in January '69 in the Delta, but unfortunately the passage of time has erased their names. As for myself, I was the 16th TRS Maintenance Officer."

Public Affairs mis-filed this message, failing to send it on to Charles Penley. The officers Pete Doe has identified are now honored in our TSNA Memorial.

Replying to Pete Doe, in April, Robert Need, Public Affairs, Editor of Revetments, concluded his message with: "I deeply apologize, as I know the information is sacred to you, as it is to all of us." This will not happen again.

The Communication Center

Can we help Mrs.

Grant? Airman First Class Joseph C. Grant was stationed at Yokota Air Base, Japan, 90th Bomb Squadron, "Pair of Dice" Unit. He worked on B-57s and KB-50s. His Air Force serial number was 14483021. He was a crew chief. He was born September 1, 1924 in Miami, Florida (Ojus).

About September 3, 1963, he was sent to Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, with a small group where he was involved in photo reconnaissance flight. He told me that the C-123 aircraft were parked alongside his and they helped load them. He said they lived in "hootches" at the end of the runway and tigers prowled around at night.

As our anniversary was October 21st, Joe wanted to get home for it. So about three days before he got permission to try to "hitch a ride" back to Japan. I believe he left from Saigon and then went to either Okinawa or Philippines where he caught a flight back to Yokota. In any event, he was back home just about one or two days before the coup that toppled the Diem regime. He told me that those who hadn't made it out of Vietnam by then had to stay, so he considered himself lucky.

Would there have been manifests of his being on any planes going into or out of Vietnam. I couldn't find any orders. Others in our unit produced orders when he traveled to Thailand with them.

Joe was also at Bien Hoa but I believe that was in 1964, and i don't recall for how long.

Joe died from Multiple Myeloma on April 6, 2001. It is one of the diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure. We made claim to the Veterans Administration, but on April 6 they told us we didn't have proof he was in Vietnam. The expeditionary forces medal listed on his DD From 214 only proved he could have been in either Laos, Cambodia or Vietnam.

Reta Grant 4700 S.W. 126th Avenue Fort Lauderdale, Fl.33330 <u>rfgrant@prodigy.net</u>

More on Missing

<u>Units</u> I could not resist the temptation to comment after reading *Missing Units* in the April issue of *Revetments*.

Member Jim Steward of Montrose, Michigan, wanted to know what happened to the 6220th USAF Dispensary, which was not listed in your directory. Member Jim Jarboe also wrote to disclose that during his tour from May 1963 until April 1964, his unit changed from the 6220th USAF Dispensary to the 33rd USAF Dispensary.

I think the answer is that a new tactical group was created at Tan Son Nhut to run the base, which at that time was growing like "Topsy." The new unit was the 33rd Tactical This apparently Group. happened in Southeast Asia (SEA) on a large scale, because the unit at Bangkok, Thailand, Don Moung Airfield, was designated the 35th Tactical Group, and our personnel records were kept there. The 33rd, at Tan Son Nhut, kept only duplicate copies.

When I arrived in April 1965, the outfit was the 33rd TAC Group, with subordinate units being the 33rd CAMRON (Maintenance C-123), the 33rd Supply Squadron, the 33rd

Security Police Squadron and

Sometime in 1965 or early 1966 the creation of the 7th Air Force caused the 33rd TAC Group to become the 6250th Tactical Group, with subordinate squadrons as the 6250th CAMRON, 6250th Supply, etc. I think the security police became the 6250th Security Police Squadron.

Hope this helps a little.

Taylor B. McKinnon San Bernadino, California

I AM AN ARMY

OF ONE Sent in by both Members Bob Nelson, Anchorage, Alaska, and Rick Fulton. Of Pittsburg, Kansas.

I Am An Army of One
I am the 18-24 year old being
target by this new marketing
concept, the very embodiment
of "what's in it for ME." The
legacy of the politically correct
years. It's okay to be immoral
and a pervert, and if anyone
tries to mold me too vigorously
into something that resembles

a warrior, I'll tell my congress

person!
I Am An Army of One

Teamwork? My chain of command consists of ME, MYSELF, and I. I'm destined to be a dot-com millionaire. Just give me all that college money and take it easy on the discipline stuff. When divisions of Chinese are racing toward my outpost like rabid lemmings I'll break out my stress card and pack my Task-Force-Smith-smellin' rear back to Milwaukee.

I Am An Army of One

I have Carpal-Tunnel Syndrome, I'm great at Nintendo and my androgynous, sensitive physique can't handle 10 properly executed push-ups. I couldn't blast my way into an old folks' home, let alone stand my ground in an impromptu bar brawl. I am a product of social engineering and 6 hours of TV a day; my idea of a "Survivor" is not a Medal of Honor recipient who killed three Vietnamese with his etool before being shot and left for dead, but a pudgy, manipulative gay guy on an island shared with other losers.

I Am An Army of One

Concepts like duty, honor, and country are passe. If it involves sacrifice of my individuality to became part of a team, I'll punch out and spend the rest of my life hanging out with my Microsoft employee slackerbuddies in Seattle, speaking in learned tones about an unfortunate period in my life where I endured the indignities of military service. Oh, the Patton movie? Haven't seen it.

I Am An Army of One

Gimme Gimme Gimme. What can I do for my country? Ha! Let me ask that after I've feathered my nest like so many of the non-veteran, draft-dodging, privileged Ivy Leaguers populating Capitol Hill.

Cater to me first, pander to me as an individual, and after I don the uniform, continue to treat with me with kid gloves, and let me punch out before things get really tough – where I might actually have to risk my life for my country, because

I Am An Army of One!



Days, Continued from Page 7

Kai Tak on Hong Kong Island, a scary experience. The old prop jobs could do it easily, but the new jets, particularly the mammoth Boeing 747 of later years had a hard time of it.

Enter Mazie

I chose the King Hotel and having had my shower, stepped out to a A local beauty nearby club. approached me and introduced herself as "Mazie." She was a little older than the usual bar "hostess". But in 1965, I was thirty-two years old and not really interested in the underage girls usually found in Oriental nightclubs. We spent the evening in my hotel drinking some Drambuie, and Mazie told me humorous tales about the Scottish Black Watch Regiment which has traditionally guarded Hong Kong, and how the girls of Hong Kong referred to them as "stinky feet" because they only washed their feet once a week. I mentioned by tattered shoes which had been rotted out by the Viet Nam humidity and that one of my shopping aims in Hong Kong was to replace them.

The next morning I arose and my shoes were gone. I thought they had been stolen. But a little later, in through the door comes Mazie with a package. It contained my shoes, expensive Florshiems, which she had taken down town and had completely re-manufactured with her own money. I tried to pay her, but she would hear none of it.

Rank has it privileges

That day she took me all over Hong Kong and Kowloon, from the Tiger Baum Gardens and the New Territories and finally to my favorite place in Hong Kong. That place was a holdover from the British Empire (which the sun never sets on) called the China Fleet Club. It was a huge edifice overlooking the Hong Kong harbor, which I suppose was kind of a

seamen's club for sailors of the British Navy in the old days. You could buy anything there for less than the prices down town. Upon entering, we spied a kind of discotheque where there was pop music playing and the troops were having a ball. We tried to go in there, but the door man asked me my rank, and told me, "No sir, you can't come in here, you are a 'senior.' you must go to the Seniors Bar."

The Seniors Bar, as it turned out, was reserved for petty officers and above, like staff sergeants and higher in my experience. The Seniors Bar was on the third "deek," and had a fine view of the harbor. It was outfitted with wooden nautical furniture and had no music. There was a bulletin board listing the names of men of the navy who had gone "over the hill."

I must admit that I liked the Seniors Bar better than the "teenagers" bar. I enjoyed a couple of "pints" of Half & Half as Mazie enjoyed her apple cider

Mazie and I took a tour of the harbor on a real Chinese junk.

A touch of Germany, Aussie style

Later on we visited one of the two Waltzing Matilda Pubs they have in Hong Kong. They had the best food in that place, one delicacy was a German meal which consisted of sauer brauten and veal steak wrapped around cheese with Spatlasser, a good sweet white wine.

All too soon this wonderful holiday came to an end. I found myself back in the Republic of Vietnam.

Well, old soldiers, this is about all I can think of to bore you with tonight. Those of you who are single and who do not have the good fortune to have a nurturing wife, might do well to think a little about Mazie.



Authentic MAVC
Patches Discovered
and Up For Sale

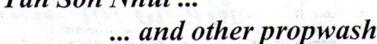


In a recent issue of *Revetments* we announced that we would be placing the Military Assistance Command - Vietnam (MACV) patch on sale for purchase by TSNA members.

Executive Vice President John Peele, Riverdale, Maryland has been doing considerable remodeling of his home. While doing so he came across a very old and fragile cardboard box, bearing the label as shown above. Inside were two hundred, pristine condition, red, white and gold-bordered MACV original patches. The date shown on the label means that this was a MACV order in April 1968. These are not reproductions – this is the real article worn in combat duty in Vietnam.

They are \$7.00 apiece (including shipping and handling). Please send check or money order (only) to Public Affairs, TSNA, Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510. Patches will be returned to the member immediately.

Days At Tan Son Nhut ...





Day Ten

Life in The Villa

In Chapter Nine (Day Nine) I talked about my new "digs," at 145 Vo Tahn, and my new room mates. This building was about a five story structure.

Later in my career I was stationed in Germany in the 7407th Support Squadron of the 7499th Support Group (these were generic names of the units which were intended to cover the real missions of the units at Wiesbaden.) They flew old piston engine transports, T-29s. My squadron, the 7407th flew high altitude RB-57F Super Canberras at Rhein Main. The 7406th flew missions from Rhein Main in old A&B model C-130 transports.

I had the opportunity to visit the Alsace Lorraine area of France and saw many identical buildings to my Vietnam villa. In fact our building had been occupied by French families while Viet Nam was a French colony, in fact three colonies, Annam China, Cochin China and Tonkin China. The Vietnamese in the early part of the century were referred to worldwide as "Annamese."

To me the most unusual things about the old building were the high ceilings, necessary in hot climates, so heat can rise. There was no air conditioning, but revolving fans hung from the ceiling. There was an old 19th century elevator, a cage- like device with no walls, which was extra slow when it worked at all. The plumbing, which was oddly shaped and at least seventy-five years old, dripped continuously since parts were only available in France.

Our housekeeper, Tai, spoke no English, only French. She was middleaged, and was a good cook. Major Berrier, who spoke French, did most of our talking. Since my mom was a school teacher and had taught me a petite amount of French, I was able to communicate a little with her Question from Thi

It is amazing how one can remember something he learned when ten years old, if the need arises. I also met a little "honey" who asked me one day to help her learn English. Her name was Tran Thi Ngoc Yen. She was twenty years old, and her father was the postmaster at Oui Nhon. I taught her English and how to play the mandolin, but our relationship was mainly platonic. She was a sweet little thing and after I got back to "the world" she wrote me that because of me she had a job at the big Army base at Long Binh (remember the LBJ, the feared Long Binh Jail).

One night she prepared dinner and while drinking wine to candle light, she asked me why I hated the Viet Cong. I replied that I didn't hate anyone. I was a career soldier and I had to fight anywhere my government wanted me to. I wondered at the time I said it, how many French Foreign Legionnaires had said that to Vietnamese women prior to 1954, since they were mostly German soldiers who had been defeated in World War II. They had no other way to make a living but to join the Legion.

She replied that she was happy, and I asked, "Why?" She answered, "Most of my high school class mates are out there in the jungle." I didn't ask her any more for fear of finding out "too much." But I was careful from then on about discussing military affairs.

Getting Ready for Hong Kong

The next thing I knew, it was R&R time, and I chose Hong Kong.

As an after thought about little Thi, I was attending Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB when Saigon fell on April 30, 1975. In the secret debriefing we got I saw a photo of the new "politburo" and in the picture were a number of people I had known in Saigon.

I was almost hesitant to go on my leave to Hong Kong, since Major Berrier had introduced me to the hoi polloi of Saigon at places like the Circle Sportif. This was the French country club in Saigon, complete with pool and bathing beauties wearing bikini bathing suits. The Saigon golf course, near the Phu To race track, and the Pickwick Restaurant served the best French onion soup in the universe. Don't drink more than two Ba Moui Ba beers before eating it, since it is hot as hades and the hot cheese on top will stick to the top of your mouth and you will remember it for days.

The unique thing about the golf course was that there was a Quad Fifty Antiaircraft battery at each hole. A bomb went off one day in one of the lockers and killed three caddies.

The horses at the race track ran clockwise, as in Europe, not counter clockwise as in America.

But I went on planning my R&R. I am glad I did because Hong Kong is now in Communist China - at least one phase of the "domino" theory worked! My maid, Tai, asked me to bring her a Phillips battery powered radio, they seemed to think that there was no better short wave radio in the universe and maybe it's true. I have read that Hitler chewed out the German radio industry and stated that his Telefunken was always on the blink, and that the Dutch Phillips radios worked forever without fixing.

My friend Bernard Ouii (pronounced "Y") asked me to stop by a gun shop in Hong Kong and pick up a hunting rifle that he had already paid for. This was something I could not do, since as a new First Lieutenant, I was too early in my career to risk a courts martial. He didn't understand this since in the French army a lieutenant could get away with anything he could arrange.

I am reminded that in many countries, a military officer has almost unlimited power and almost always goes into the government upon retirement from the military.

I was flown to Hong Kong on one of our base C-54 Skymasters and we landed at Kai Tak Airport, which has now been replaced. At Kai Tak, the pilot shot his approach right down alongside the Kowloon apartment houses and landed on

(Continued, See Days, Page 6)

Revetments, May, 2001



Over eighty members of the Tan Son Nhut Association live within a two hour drive to the Washington, D. C. area. This year Memorial Day will be observed on Monday, May 28. On November 11, 2000, Veterans Day, fifteen members met at the Four Seasons Restaurant, 557 South Van Dorn Street, in Alexandria, Virginia. We had an excellent breakfast, great conversation and then most of the party took the Metro downtown to

the Mall, where we laid a wreath at the Vietnam Memorial. We are anxious to have as many of you who can, join us on Memorial Day at the Four Seasons at 10 a.m. Getting to the Four Seasons is extremely easy, turning off I-95 at the Van Dorn Street exit, it is only two blocks up the street. Using the Metro overcomes all the disadvantages of driving into town. PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO COME BY MAY 15! We need to know in order to provide the reservations to the restaurant. If you can't make the breakfast, please try to join us at the Visitor's Kiosk at the Vietnam Memorial by 12.30 p.m., for participation in the wreath-laying ceremonies. If you are coming to either event, please call, fax or e-mail:

John Peele

Phone and/or FAX: (301) 277-7474 E-Mail: JMPeele6203@cs.com Public Affairs Office Phone: (757) 627-7746 FAX: (757) 627-0878

E-Mail: hercules29@worldnet.att.net

The Tan Son Nhut Association
Public Affairs Office
Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue
Norfolk, Virginia 23510



Renewal Date -

