

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



"All Included - Non Excluded"

Volume 4, Number 1

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

October, 2001



*Oh,
Thus be it 'ere when
free men shall stand
'tween their
'loved homes
and
war's desolation!*

Francis Scott Key

Open Letter to Americans

(Member, Harry Patterson, Shallotte, North Carolina, sent the following comments written on September 14th by Dr. Tony Kern, Lt. Colonel, USAF (Ret.), Academic Advisor, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado.)

Dear friends and fellow Americans,

Like everyone else in this great country, I am reeling from the attack on our sovereignty. But unlike some, I am not reeling from surprise. As a career soldier and a student and teacher of military history, I have a different perspective and I think you should hear it. This war will be won or lost by the American citizens, not diplomats, politicians or soldiers.

Let me briefly explain.

In spite of what the media, and even our own government is telling us, this act was not committed by a group of mentally deranged fanatics. To dismiss them as such would be among the gravest of mistakes. This attack was committed by a ferocious, intelligent and dedicated adversary. Don't take this the wrong way. I don't admire these men and I deplore their tactics, but I respect their capabilities. The many parallels that have been made with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor are apropos. Not only because it was a brilliant sneak attack against a complacent America, but also because we may well be pulling our new adversaries out of caves 30 years after we think this war is over, just like my father's generation had to do with the formidable Japanese in the years following World War II.

These men hate the United States with all of their being, and we must not underestimate the power of their moral commitment. Napoleon, perhaps the world's greatest combination of soldier and statesman, stated, "The moral is to the physical as three is to one." Patton thought the Frenchman underestimated its importance and said moral conviction was five times more important in battle than physical strength. Our enemies are willing - better said - anxious to give their lives for their cause.

How committed are we America? And for how long?

In addition to demonstrating great moral conviction, the recent attack demonstrated a mastery of some of the basic fundamentals of warfare taught to most military officers worldwide, namely simplicity, security and surprise. When I

first heard rumors that some of these men may have been trained at our own Air War College, it made perfect sense to me. This was not a random act of violence, and we can expect the same sort of military competence to be displayed in the battle to come.

This war will escalate, with a good portion of it happening right here in the good ol' U. S. of A.

These men will not go easily into the night. They do not fear us. We must not fear them. In spite of our overwhelming conventional strength as the world's only "superpower" (a truly silly term), we are the underdog in this fight. As you listen to the carefully scripted rhetoric designed to prepare us for the march to war, please realize that America is not equipped or seriously trained for the battle ahead. To be certain, our soldiers are much better than the enemy, and we have some excellent "counter-terrorist" organizations, but they are mostly trained for hostage rescues, airfield seizure, or the occasional "body snatch" (which may come in handy). We will be fighting a war of annihilation because if their early efforts are any indication, our enemy is ready and willing to die to the last man. Eradicating the enemy will be costly and time consuming.

They have already deployed their force in as many as twenty countries, and are likely living the lives of everyday citizens. Simply put, our soldiers will be tasked with a search and destroy mission on multiple foreign landscapes, and the public must be patient and supportive until the strategy and tactics can be worked out.

For the most part, our military is still in the process of redefining itself and presided over by men and women who grew up with - and were promoted because they excelled in - Cold War doctrine, strategy and tactics. This will not be linear warfare, there will be no clear "centers of gravity" to strike with high technology weapons. Our vast technological edge will certainly be helpful, but it will not be decisive. Perhaps the perfect metaphor for the coming battle was introduced by the terrorists themselves aboard the hijacked aircraft - this will be a

knife fight, and it will be won or lost by the ingenuity and will of citizens and soldiers, not by software or smart bombs.

We must also be patient with our military leaders.

Unlike Americans who are eager to put this messy time behind us, our adversaries have time on their side, and they will use it. They plan to fight a battle of attrition, hoping to drag the battle out until the American public loses its will to fight. This might be difficult to believe in this euphoric time of flag waving and patriotism, but it is generally acknowledged that America lacks the stomach for a long fight. We need only look as far back as Vietnam, when North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap (also a military history teacher) defeated the United States of America without ever winning a major tactical battle. American soldiers who marched to war cheered on by flag waving Americans in 1965 were reviled and spat upon less than three years later when they returned. Although we hope that Usama bin Laden is no Giap, he is certain to understand and employ the concept. We can expect not only large dose of pain like the recent attacks, but, also less audacious "sand in the gears" tactics ranging from livestock infestations to attacks at water supplies and power distribution facilities.

These attacks are designed to hit us in our "comfort zone" forcing the average American to "pay more and play less" and eventually eroding our resolve. But it can only work if we let it. It is clear to me that the will of the American citizenry - you and I - is the center of gravity the enemy has targeted. It will be the fulcrum upon which victory or defeat will turn. He believes us to be soft, impatient, and self-centered. He may be right, but if so, we must change. The Prussian general, Carl von Clausewitz, (the most often quoted and least read military theorist in history), says that there is a "remarkable trinity of war" that is composed of (1) the will of the people, (2) the political leadership of the government, and (3) the chance and probability that plays out on the field of battle, in that order. Every American citizen was in the crosshairs of the September

(Continued, See Letter, next page.)

My Walk Around The Block

(Member, David Sanders, San Jose, California, 377th Civil Engineers, Tan Son Nhut AB, 1967 - 1968, sent the following to *Revetments* on September 11, at 10:00 p.m., Pacific Standard Time.)

My god, my foot aches of pain and my knees are terribly pained and need replacement soon. None of this however compares to the pain in my heart and soul.

My dearest wife, Carmen, told me to take the dog for a walk to calm myself down as my reflections of the day had left me quite upset, as well as remembrances of war, and police work including the Chicago United Airlines crash of '71 or '73 off Kedzie Avenue. I somehow remember Howard Hunt's wife being killed with about ten thousands dollars in cash recovered from her purse.

The ball of flame from the F-105 crashing into the side of the fully fuel loaded C-130 on the runway at Tan Son Nhut - is also here tonight with its mushroomed cloud ball of flame.

My close calls with God's hand - as He gently removed me from harms way as the rocket hit the masonry shop one clear afternoon...

As I took the dog, my wonderful dog, Justice - the sound of silence in the neighborhood was deafening - silence and most notably only two planes high in the

sky obviously about thirty to thirty-five thousand feet traveling - one west to east - and one later north to south - way too high to hear but see the sharp extra sharp strobes of the military up - up there...

Mars was there too in the southeastern sky at about forty degrees, a bright red, looking like it wanted to just land in ten minutes.

There is always noise and planes in the sky here - always - except tonight. I have never seen the sky as it was tonight - and I wondered to myself - those stars - those stars - they now are the badges and shields and stars of the heroes lost today in New York City - yes that blue line my brother-in-law, Jerry, and my good friend, Jim, knows well is still alive in me.

I want to cry so bad, but my tears, they just well up - it will be a long, long week as the flesh is recovered and the horrors are told and retold. But we will survive - somehow we will - yes - tonight Chicken Little was right - the sky is falling, the sky is falling - it did today...

My world changed today. Your world changed today. I became much more angry than I already was, I became much more sadder than I already was from what I have seen and experienced in my life. But I have not lost my resolve to stay strong and help my Country, my family and my friends.

I love you all...

To make matters a bit worse for me, and I know others, some pictures of this horror were played with Samuel Barber's *1812 Adagio for Strings* which was Princess Grace's funeral march and also the music used in the Vietnam movie *Platoon*.

These are called, for people like me, "trigger points." Body bags - caskets - morgues - yes, the sky is falling. It is a new reality - a new worry - Chicken Little is here and I am going to somehow have roasted chicken for dinner and make damn sure that tomorrow I give my blood at Stanford and make sure that we will not be afraid.

When the hundred and fifteen 122mm. rockets dropped around me in '68, the same feeling and hopelessness and fear was there,

but we must not be afraid - never.

God Bless our freedom - I urge you to take a walk as I did which I do not really do regularly. Say your prayers and wish for a speedy healing recovery for our victims families - reflect in your walk - listen to the sounds and enjoy the peace.

Lord keep us safe and hear our prayers. Rudyard Kipling in his *War of The Jungle* stated something to the effect of "Do not let anger cloud your judgement, never get mad."

We will strike when the iron is hot.

Your friend,

Dave

(Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us. God bless you, all of our members, and God bless America forever! Ed.)

... and from abroad

(Member Phillip Greethead, Kalgoorlie, Australia sent the following message.)

My wife and I were holidaying in Sarawak (Malaysian Borneo) when the story broke about the terrorism attacks on the United States of America. We were saddened and shocked that this had happened to our American brothers.

America has been a good friend to Australia and the free world, and I was pleased to see our Prime Minister offer Australia's full support to President Bush.

I'm sure we will see American G.I.s and Aussie "Diggers" in action together again.

Best regards,

Phill Greethead (TSNA)



Temporarily
Closed

(Letter, continued from Page 2)

11th) attack, not just those that were unfortunate enough to be in the World Trade Center or Pentagon. The will of the American people will decide this war. If we are to win, it will be because we have what it takes to persevere through a few more hits, learn from our mistakes, improvise, and adapt. It we can do that, we will eventually prevail.

Everyone I've talked to in the past few days has shared a common frustration, saying in one form or another, "I just wish I could do something!" You are already doing it. Just keep faith in America, and continue to support your President and military, and the outcome is certain.

If we fail to do so, the outcome is equally certain.

God Bless America

(Dr. Kern is a former Director of Military History, USAF Academy.)



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Revetments is an official publication of the Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc. 6203 57th Avenue, Riverdale, Maryland 20737. The Association is a non-profit fraternal organization chartered under appropriate statutes and law.

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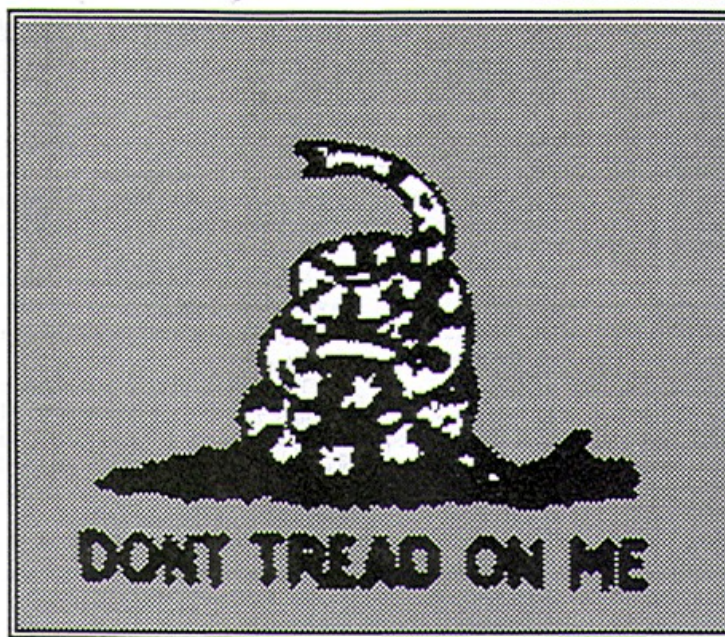
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Flag of the Continental Fleet 1776, inspired by a Rhode Island flag.

A Letter from Stephanie

(Member Bob Nelson, Anchorage, Alaska, received this from Commander J.B. Souder, U.S. Navy, shot down and P.O.W. in Vietnam. It was written by the daughter of one of his war buddies.)

I am just one of America's disillusioned youth. I have spent many safe nights blanked by the freedom that generations before me died to provide.

For many days months and years I have forgotten that truth - but I woke up on Tuesday, September 11th, cold and shaking because my blanket was gone.

For those of us in our early twenties, patriotism was slowly erased by ignoring the Pledge of Allegiance in home room and by mixing a drink during the *Star Spangled Banner* at a college football game. The only war of our lifetime was lost on us by distant images of a bombed Baghdad.

Our only "real" memories of war cost six bucks and are served up cafeteria-style at the local movie theater. We think Tom Cruise and Val Kilmer are heroic fighter pilots - and never think to ask our Dads about their tours in Vietnam. The next week we applaud Tom Hanks when he kills fake Germans - and forget that our grandpas killed real ones.

But on a random September Tuesday in the dawn of a new century, America's disillusioned youth finally woke up. We were awakened by fire and smoke, burning buildings - and more frightening - burning people. War and destruction came in through our television sets and sat down in the Lazy Boys of our collective living rooms.

And the youth of this country found out what it feels like to be an American.

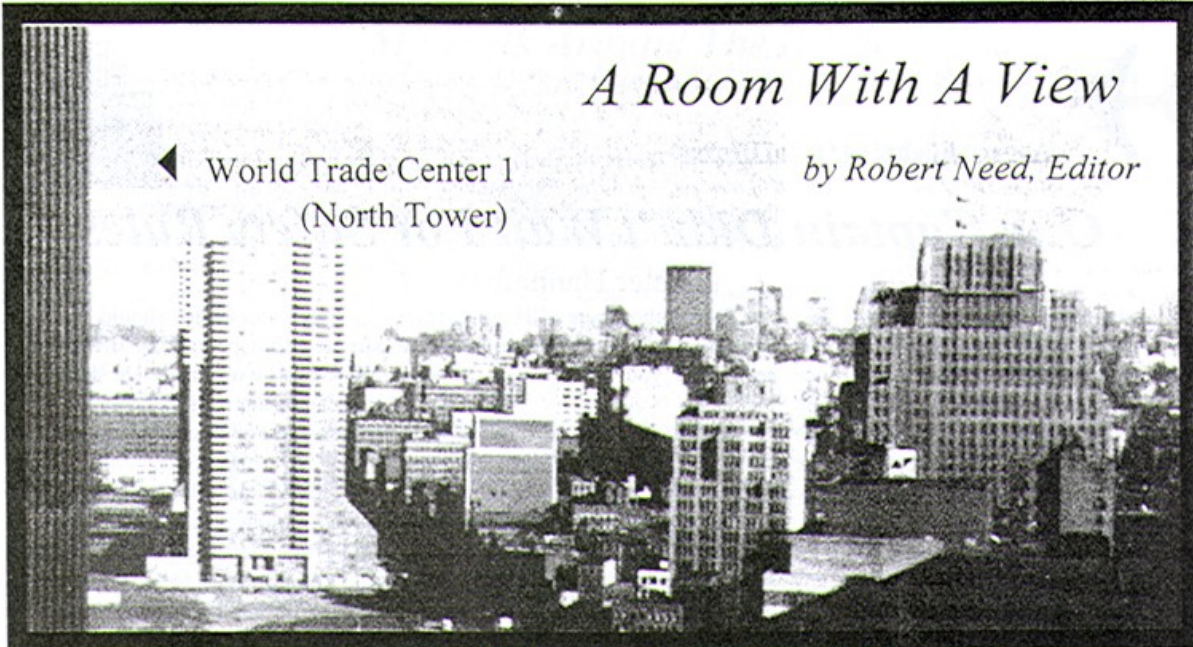
Suddenly, you feel pride rush to your cheeks as a New York fireman pulls out another survivor from the wreckage of the World Trade Center. You well-up with emotion when you hear that the passengers of United Flight 93 sacrificed themselves in the air over rural Pennsylvania so more lives wouldn't be lost. And - you cry when you see the American flags displayed outside every house on your block.

I guess I always knew that I would fight to the death for my family and friends - but the love of a country comes when you feel millions of people coming together ready to defend their home.

America, your youngest able-bodied generation just woke up. Sorry it took us so long.

Stephanie Davis, Marietta, Georgia





◀ World Trade Center 1
(North Tower)

A Room With A View

by Robert Need, Editor

The view north towards midtown New York City from my office in World Trade Center 2 (1977)

I suppose there will be members who will think it is presumptuous of the *Revetments* editor to take up space with his own little stories. But, I'm just like you and your families, my wife and I are still numb with the shock of the horrors we were all subjected to on September 11. On Page 3 of this issue, member Dave Sanders mentioned "triggers" and he's right on target. We all have them.

I sat there on Tuesday watching two of the buildings I had worked in subjected to fiendish horrors by the terrorists.

One was hideously damaged with a grievous loss of life. It was the Pentagon.

The other – my wonderful, exciting World Trade Center. I watched, speechless, as fire and smoke roared from each tower – and then, first the collapse of WTC 2 and an hour later the demise of WTC 1. Literally, scenes from hell! And the mind still can't accept as reality the monumental loss of human lives.

The other day, I was cleaning my desk and out fell my WTC 2 I.D. card. I cried for an hour, holding it gently in my hand. As Sanders says, it was a trigger – a powerful trigger.

Frank Summers and I met in 1950 at Ladd Air Force Base in Alaska. He was an automotive mechanic and I was the squadron's personnel sergeant major – we were both staff sergeants and were room mates. He was adopted and his real name was Francis Joseph Petronio. We hated each other at first until one night I was playing some music on the radio from Tosca. His Italian blood simmered with joy and he leaped up and yelled "You can't be that bad if you like Puccini!"

He got out of the service, but we never lost touch. He went through college, got married, went to work at Price-Waterhouse and soared to the top ranks in a phenomenally short time. Saying "to hell with this" he quit PW and formed both an accounting

company and an investment company and boldly opened offices on the 22nd floor of the great new WTC 2. In 1977 he was having trouble managing his growing staff and I had just returned from six years as a newspaper editor in Oregon. He called and asked me to come to New York and reorganize his companies. It was a great period in my life. I was the corporation comptroller and enjoyed every day. I had a feisty and incredibly efficient secretary named "Rosie," naturally she was Italian.

I did the daily banking at Irving Trust Bank on the corner of Wall Street and Broadway. That meant I had to walk through the wonderful old churchyard of Trinity Church with its cemetery of famous patriots including Robert Fulton of steamboat fame.

What a thrill to take visitors to Windows On The World (WTC 1) and hear newcomers howl with delight as they looked down the brilliant illumination of New York at night, the Verrazano Bridge looking like a chain of diamonds.

I enjoyed many nights with Frank and his family, either eating their terrific Italian dishes, or hitting the best Italian restaurants.

At five p.m. on December 16th, I came down in the elevator for the last time. The windows in the great foyer of WTC 2 reach upwards in great arches, giving way to a view of the immense plaza of the World Trade Center. Snow was falling lightly. Up on the mezzanine there was a large youthful choir – they were singing "Silent night, holy night..."

God bless America.



My WTC 2 I.D. Card



Aboard Flight 564 Out of Denver—



One Captain Didn't Wait For Safety Rules

by Peter Hannaford

As it was at most U.S. airports, last Saturday (Ed. 15th) was the first near-normal day at Denver International since the terrorist attacks. On United's Flight 564 the door had just been locked and the plane was about to pull out of the gate when the captain came on the public address system.

"I want to thank you brave folks for coming out today. We don't have any new instructions from the federal government, so from now on we're on our own."

The passengers listened in total silence.

He explained that airport security measures had pretty much solved the problem of firearms being carried aboard, but not weapons of the type the terrorists apparently used, plastic knives or those fashioned from wood or ceramics.

"Sometimes a potential hijacker will announce that he has a bomb. There are no bombs on this aircraft and if someone were to get up and make that claim, don't believe him.

"If someone were to stand up, brandish something such as a plastic knife and say, 'This is a hijacking' or words to that effect here is what you should do: Every one of you should stand up and immediately throw things at that person — pillows, books, magazines, eyeglasses, shoes — anything that will throw him off balance and distract his attention. If he has a confederate or two, do the same with them. Most important: get a blanket over him, then wrestle him to the floor and keep him there. We'll land the plane at the nearest airport and the authorities will take it from there.

"Remember, there will be one of him and maybe a few confederates, but there are 200 of you. You can overwhelm them.

The Declaration of Independence says, "We, the people" and that's just what it is when we're up in the air: we, the people, vs. would-be terrorists. I don't think we are going to have any such problem today or tomorrow or for a while, but some time down the road, it is going to happen again and I want you to know what to do.

"Now, since we're a family for the next few hours, I'll ask you to turn to the person next to you, introduce yourself, tell them a little about yourself and ask them to do the same."

The end of this remarkable speech brought sustained clapping from the passengers. He had put the matter in perspective. If only the passengers on those ill-fated flights last Tuesday (11th) had been given the same talk, I thought, they might be alive today. One group on United Flight 93, which crashed in a Pennsylvania field, apparently rushed the hijacker in an attempt to wrest control from them. While they perished, they succeeded in preventing the terrorist from attacking his intended goal, possibly the White House or the Capitol.

Procedures for dealing with hijackers were conceived in a time when the hijackers were usually seeking the release of jailed comrades or a large amount of money. Mass murder was not their goal. That short talk last Saturday by the pilot of Flight 564 should set a new standard of realism.

Every passenger should learn the simple — but potentially life-saving — procedure he outlined. He showed his passengers that a hijacking does not have to result in hopelessness and terror, but victory over the perpetrators.

The Airline Pilots Association, the pilots' union, last week dropped its opposition to stronger cockpit doors and is now calling for retrofit. (Its opposition was based on pilot concerns about getting out easily in emergency situations.) The scandal of easily penetrated airport security will result in congressional calls for a federal takeover of the security system.

Previous efforts to reform security procedures and raise standards have been talked to death. This time, however, no lobbying efforts must be allowed to prevent airport security from getting the reforms that are needed: federal operation, rigorous training, decent pay and no foreign nationals eligible for employment.

Peter Hannaford is a public affairs consultant.
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MARKING TIME

with Mark Fleisher



Just a word .. The captain of Flight 77, Charles Burlingame III, that was flown into the World Trade Center, was the son of late Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Charles Burlingame who is buried at Arlington. This was confirmed by a comment on the Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association web site. * * *

The Communication Center

You Learn Something New Every Day - For years and years I tried to find out what ceremony on October 1st. To exotic meaning "Tan Son Nhut" stood for. I just had a Space Group and the Vietnamese friend tell me. It is activation of the 460th Air Base Wing. The 460th lives on. **John Peele**
Riverdale, Maryland

* * *

Separate Tables, Act II -

"Separate Tables" may be a good idea "if individual outfits want to get together at some free time," but at a TSNA reunion for all members, we should do everything possible to cross boundaries, meet and learn about each other's experiences! So I too support **Bill Carlson's** idea of integration of all TSNA members and friends at the reunion versus any kind of segregation by units or otherwise. **James Dugan**
Lindenwold, New Jersey

Congratulations also go to Webmaster **Charles Penley** for maintaining the outstanding TSNA.org website. It's one of the best of any veterans organization! And continue to keep *Revetments* flying. I look forward to taking a trip down memory lane with each issue. Best regards to all.

Ira Cooperman
Rochester, New York

* * *

Some Units are Eternal -

Was reading *Revetments*, "An example from the website." One of the readers had mentioned membership in the 460th.

I live in Aurora, Colorado about a mile west of Buckley Air Force Base. Received

Roy Colding
Aurora, Colorado

* * *

From a membership renewal envelope - This is one of the few organizations that I am proud to be a part of.

Bless All Those Who Served.

David Chung
St. John, Indiana

* * *

More accolades for the TSNA 4 set CD - I read the comments in *Revetments* on the Cds. They sounded great! Enclosed is my order for *The Battle of Tan Son Nhut*.

James Dugan
Lindenwold, New Jersey

Let me say bravo to the people who produced the CDs *The Battle for Tan Son Nhut*. I really enjoyed, even though I had missed that little episode by only a couple of days.

And last, but not least, keep up the good work with the web page, **Charles Penley**, you do a wonderful job. I know what a pain it sometimes is to keep up.

Harlan Hatfield
North Highlands, California

* * *

Looking for a Phantom - A photo of an RF-4C at TSN, published in the April issue of *Revetments*, made me think. For some time now, I've been trying to collect enough

background on the RF-4C we have in the Air Force Museum collection to put together a pamphlet with its history. The aircraft, serial number 64-1047, was at TSN from December 1965 until May 1970. It was assigned to the 16th Tac Recce Squadron, Tail letters "AE" until October 1967, and then to the 12 TRS, Tail letters "AC."

It would be greatly appreciated if members of the Association would look through their flight line photos and see if this particular Phantom shows up. I'd be happy to pay for postage and the cost of copying the photos, and promise to return them in good condition.

Wayne Pittman
498 Carthage Drive
Beavercreek, Ohio 45434

* * *

Scatback Flashback (In the August issue of *Revetments*, columnist Mark Fleisher did a piece on the Scatback operations at Tan Son Nhut. He received considerable support from a Malcolm (Max) Springer who was a former flight crew member with Scatback from 1969 to 1970.)

Hey Mark,
Just had a flashback from Tan Son Nhut and thought I better get it to you before it goes away.

I remember one time we were taking Senator Barry Goldwater in the C-54 up to Pleiku to visit with the guys at the MARS station. Senator

Goldwater was an avid ham radio operator and had a station set up at his home in Arizona so the G.I.s, through the MARS, could talk to his site. He had a telephone link to anywhere in the U.S. and would pay the phone bill, giving hundreds of G.I.s a chance to call home. What a guy, huh?

Anyhow, just before landing I lost the hydraulic pump on number three engine. The pilot sent me back to tell Senator Goldwater that we would be making an emergency landing at Pleiku.

To my surprise he said, "I'm not worried, sarge, you still got a good pump on number two engine."

It turns out that he flew C-54s in the Berlin Airlift and knew exactly what I was talking about. He said, "Those old Vickers pumps never were worth a damn, much rather have an Eclipse, wouldn't you?"

I found out later he was a reserve USAF major general. Boy! What a shock, ha, ha!

When he got ready to leave, two or three days later, he asked for the same crew that brought him up there. That sure made us feel good.

Well, I hope I didn't bore you with this story. Just thought that Goldwater was such a popular person it might be newsworthy.

Happy Trails, Max



January Set as Registration Month

Registration: Reunion 2002 Coordinator, and TSNA Executive Vice President John Peele has announced that registration for those who will be attending the reunion should be submitted not later than January 31st, 2002. This is extremely important because reservations in the Northern Virginia/District of Columbia area should be made well ahead of the reunion date to assure availability.

Registration Form: A comprehensive registration form is being prepared and will be enclosed with next month's issue of *Revetments*. It will contain the prices for accommodations at the Holiday Inn in Alexandria, and the available menus for the cruise luncheon and for the formal banquet. Please complete the form and return it with check or money order not later than January 31st, 2002. Early registration is encouraged.

Emblems, Insignias: Peele would like to have members send him unit insignias and/or emblems, on loan, for use as decorative material for the banquet hall. Other items you feel could be displayed would also be welcomed.

Contact one of the following now -

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**REUNION 2002
NEWS
April 26, 27, 28**

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



Renewal Date -

