

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



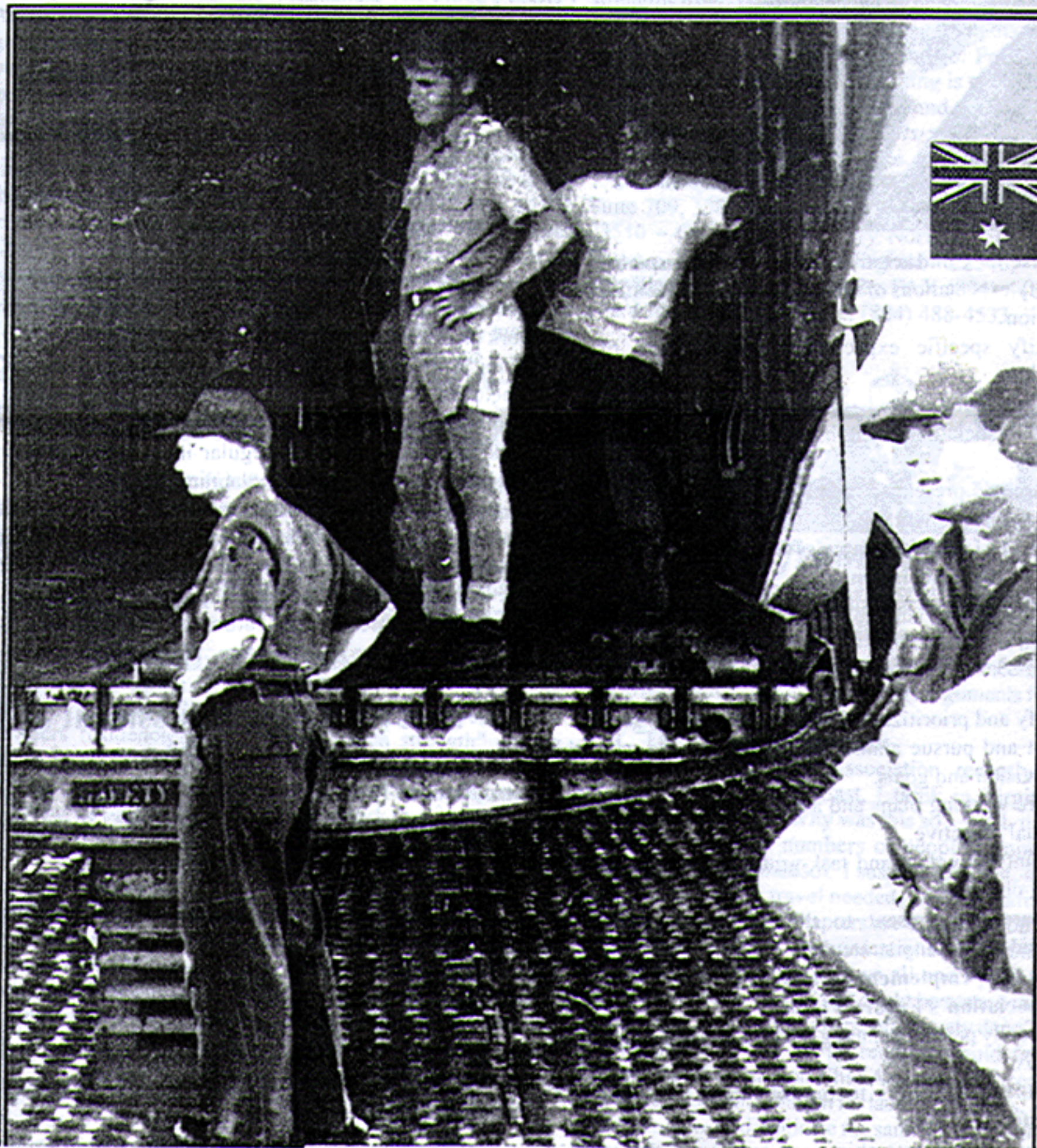
Volume 5, Number 11

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

August, 2003

A Sincere Salute to Our Australian Comrades on August 18th ~

Australian Vietnam Veterans Day



Aussies and Americans loading a C-130, 1968, Courtesy of Member Phill Greethead, Kalgoorlie, Australia

Further Down The Road to the Future



*Prepared by
Director
Jerry Norville*

The Tan Son Nhut Association Long Range Planning Report

The June issue of *Revetments* addressed the "Future Viability of the Tan Son Nhut Association" by proposing a three-phase process for Association planning. At its meeting on June 21, 2003, five of the seven members (John Peele, President; Directors Norville, White, Salisbury and Need) of the Board of Directors approved the plan summarized below.

Part A - Introduction to Association Planning

volunteers permit.

4. Present final draft long-range plan for discussion/approval at 2004 meeting.

5. Present revised constitution and bylaws for discussion/approval at 2004 meeting.

* * *

In addition to approving these three phases of planning (at their meeting, June 21) the board members did preliminary work on the assessment phase. Following their experiences during an assessment brainstorming session, board members concluded: (1) it's absolutely essential that planning be accomplished; (2) planning is no easy task - there's lots of work to be done; and, (3) regular input from members is crucial to the success of this planning effort.

Part B that follows present preliminary ideas generated by board members during their brainstorming session. Members are invited and encouraged to submit any information or ideas that will contribute to the planning process. Only you, the members, can decide the future of the Tan Son Nhut Association - there is no one else. Please lend a hand in this effort. Let us hear from you.

Part B - Initial Assessment by the Board of Directors

Introduction: The preliminary ideas summarized below are presented in the order of the tasks listed under Phase I above. Ideas are not in priority order.

Initial Assessment:

1. Expectations of outside interest: Contact will be made with other veterans' organizations, foundations and government agencies to determine the extent of their interest in the Tan Son Nhut Association. There have already been several instances of dialogue between board members and representatives of other organizations expressing mutual interest in closer affiliation of programs. Members are urged to comment on this subject.

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Phase I - Conduct an Association Assessment:

1. Identify expectations of major interest groups outside our Association
2. Identify specific expectations of members of our Association.
3. Determine future data base needs of the Association.
4. Assess Association strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
5. Prepare and present to members a report of the overall Association assessment.

Phase II - Identify Strategies for Future Viability of the Association

1. Define and amend as desired the fundamental purposes of the Tan Son Nhut Association.
2. Prepare a vision statement of the Association's desired future.
3. Identify and prioritize Association long-range goals.
4. Adopt and pursue annual objectives supportive of the purpose, vision and goals.
5. Prepare working plans and a budget for each achieving each annual objective.
6. Pinpoint individual and task-group responsibilities for achieving objectives.
7. Prepare and present to the members a report of recommended viability strategies.

Phase III - Implement Strategies for the Association's Future Viability

1. Periodically present planning information and progress in *Revetments*.
2. Encourage members to provide input on plans and implementation actions.
3. Implement projects this year as funds and willing

(Long Range Plan continued from Page 2)

2. **Expectations of TSNA Members:** As each phase and task of the planning effort is undertaken, members will be asked to provide input. Board Directors have already received both excellent written and oral input from the members. Member Dan McKegney (Auburn, California) offered recommendations concerning the value of regional or state chapters as well as ideas for increasing membership. (See text, this issue). Member Kenneth Moll (Alexandria, Virginia) submitted an analysis and comments relating to the Association's purpose and made many suggestions that will be incorporated into the planning process. Ken Moll's point – get the job done but keep it fun so members enjoy the affiliation. Member Phung Van Chieu (El Monte, California) has suggested we pursue some form of affiliation with the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) Association and that we invite key leaders of the Vietnamese group to our next meeting, and that we consider overlapping our reunion meetings so members of the two associations could get together. We need more ideas. We ask the members to keep them coming.

3. **Data Base:** Public Affairs Officer, Bob Need, has already developed the membership files and a general file index that catalogs the huge collection of information already on file in the Association's office in Norfolk, Virginia. Webmaster Charles Penley's excellent comprehensive internet website continues to expand, over 24,000 visits have been made to the site since October 1999. Members are going to be asked to complete a profile sheet and to submit additional material relevant to the history of Tan Son Nhut to expand our data base. If you have comments in this area, please send them in as soon as you can.

4. **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis:**

a. **Strengths:** (1) *Revetments*; (2) the website; (3) organization's leadership since inception; (4) successful reunions; (5) number of members and continued growth; (6) active planning process; (7) Tan Son Nhut name recognition; (8) organization's distinctive patch; (9) historical items being collected and preserved – members are urged to comment on this area.

b. **Weaknesses:** (1) lack of clear purpose supported by all; (2) diversification of members (100-plus different Tan Son Nhut/service units); (3) widespread geographical locations of members residences; (4) lack of "bench strength" among leaders (who will replace us old guys?); (5) lack of adequate funding for routine operations and new projects; (6) lack of sufficient volunteers for Association's work – we strongly urge the members to comment and make suggestions in this area.

c. **Opportunities:** (1) serve as a "holding corporation" (umbrella organization) for other related individual unit organizations; (2) develop some type of ongoing affiliation with the VNAF Association; (3) establish state and/or regional divisions to enhance member interaction and support; (4) establish a Tan Son Nhut museum; (5) establish a Board of Trustees made up of national leaders willing to support Tan Son Nhut Association goals; (6) renew efforts for a Tan Son Nhut Air Base memorial in Washington; (7) plan and conduct an aggressive, comprehensive membership drive; (8) establish coalitions with other organizations such as Gulf War organizations; (9) expand the Association's sale of memorabilia; (10) redesign patch to enhance unit identity and time of service at Tan Son Nhut; (11) expand Association

library holdings; (12) find a permanent home for the Association's office; (13) pursue opportunities to preserve Tan Son Nhut history by working with the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University (Lubbock, Texas) and with other organizations with similar historical collections – and we'd like to know how you feel about this, comments and suggestions.

d. **Threats:** (1) future attrition of membership; (2) spin-off organization could form and capture TSNA members; (3) lack of replacement leaders; (4) lack of sufficient funds for accomplishing purposes and goals. What are your views in this area, and suggestions?

* * *

Conclusion: Please keep in mind that all organizations such as ours are dynamic – things subject to change. Any one of the strengths listed above could easily become a weakness at some future time. Weaknesses can become strengths with some effort on our part. Opportunities come and go. Potential threats may or may not materialize. So, planning is not a one-time effort. It must be ongoing to account for and accommodate change.

The next issue of *Revetments* will address **Phase II – Strategies**. Meanwhile, please send your comments and suggestions to either the Tan Son Nhut Office of Public Affairs, Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510 – OR directly to Jerry Norville, 588 Lake Caroline Drive, Ruther Glen, Virginia 22546, by E-Mail: norville@bealnet.com OR by FAX (804) 448-1662 OR, if you'd like to talk, call me at (804) 488-4533.



... and from the members

from Auburn, California, Member Dan McKegney writes to Jerry Norville – I suggest Regional or State Chapters for the Tan Son Nhut Association. This suggestion is based upon the fundamental notion that life is random and uncertain. I will use my own circumstance to illustrate my arguments for a Regional or State organizations structure.

1. **The Practical Argument.**

The Tan Son Nhut Association recently canceled a scheduled reunion back East, I think in Virginia or in the District of Columbia. Why was this so? Well, it was because of lack of sufficient numbers of people signing up for the reunion. Why was that so? I suspect for most, including me, it was the excessive travel needed, I live in California.

Now, assume that Chapters are organized on a Unit basis. I was with the 1876th Communications Squadron. Because of the random nature of where we all end up, geographically, former members of the 1878th could be spread throughout the nation. How could a reunion be effectively done? The answer is – it couldn't. An 1876th reunion would face the same problem that the Tan Son Nhut Association faced a couple of months ago, i.e. cancellation for lack of attendees. A unit-based organization would replicate the same problem that the TSNA, as a whole, has experienced in getting a reunion off the ground.

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(Long Range Plan Continued from Page 3)

Assume now that Chapters are organized on a Regional/State basis. There are thirty Tan Son Nhut Association members in California, where I reside. Could a reunion within the State of California be effectively done? Probably so, because the travel requirements would not be so onerous, nor expensive. A central reunion location in California could be chosen that would best fit the needs of those of us in California.

An organizational structure based upon locality would be far better in terms of getting things done. All one needs to do is look at the organizational structure of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) or the American Legion to understand the preference and benefits of organizing by locality. In contrast, organizing by Unit, by MOS, or by any other sub-unit would splinter the organization in terms of getting things done. Moreover, look at this way – isn't the Tan Son Nhut Association based on location? Isn't the TSNA comprised of members whose lives have been affected by random and uncertain events, all of which brought us together in the first place? I think that TSNA Chapters should follow suit for the reasons I have articulated, i.e., organize by locality.

2. The Recruitment Argument

If organized on a locality basis, members could begin to get to know one another. Perhaps there is a guy not far from me who is a TSNA member. Now, what is the most likely source of new members for the TSNA? I suggest that it is at the Veterans' Administration Medical Centers and Clinics in California. I am a heavy user of the VA Health Care system as a 100% service-connected vet. Maybe marketing/advertising at local VA clinics would make more people aware of the TSNA. I have not thought through this angle very thoroughly, inasmuch as the bulk of my thinking has been devoted to organizing by locality versus unit.

and Dan didn't stop there, he went on to New Membership Chairman Wayne Salisbury, saying – To increase membership, use the internet more aggressively by:

1. posting messages on the bulletin boards of other Viet veteran websites.
2. establishing connection with other Viet veteran webmasters with a view towards having a permanent notice inviting membership.

Dan McKegney
1876th Communications Squadron
Tan Son Nhut, '67 - '68

and from Alexandria, Virginia Member Kenneth Moll writes – I'm pleased to read in the June and July issues of *Revetments* that you're weighing this Subject of "where are we going?" Once in a while every organization should do that. Many outfits just stumble along blindly, not seeming to realize they might have a natural lifespan. They think they'll live forever.

In my view the Tan Son Nhut Association has done

remarkably well in activities and growth, given its inherent membership limits and modest objectives. But maybe now it's reaching "middle age" and should begin to confront its mortality. Such an organization should prepare to go gracefully, it's not productive to thrash around looking for some new role long after serving the original purpose. (See the postscript below if more is needed on that thought – though I hope this makes the point.)

Thus, I think the Tan Son Nhut Association's future objectives should be two:

1. Continue as an organization of veterans who served at Tan Son Nhut during the Vietnam War, with the normal vet group objectives of friendship renewal and war-story nostalgia. It's fun to go to one of their meetings and to stay in touch through *Revetments*. When it's no longer fun, or when the membership and interest dwindle below self-sustaining levels, close it down.

2. If we're going to take on any new or expanded objectives, I suggest that the Tan Son Nhut Association work to help capture and preserve our Tan Son Nhut personal and unit histories. Those histories are unique, and valuable for their own sake and for the country.

To capture our record, *Revetments* alone does an excellent job. Of course far more could be done if more people would compile their war letters and tapes, and write up or dictate their recollections. The Tan Son Nhut Association should encourage that, but only to the extent that we can DO something worthwhile with what we get – namely place it somewhere where it will be well cared for and accessible to future researchers.

Thus, after we capture the records we must send what we have to a place that will preserve Tan Son Nhut records and make them accessible. Conceivably, we could collect rooms full of material, so it may not be easy finding a place that would archive and make it available to researchers nationwide. Finding such a place seems formidable.

I know of no place in the United States Air force that would take proper care of Tan Son Nhut's history (and I'm on the Board of the Air Force Historical Foundation). The Archives at Maxwell Air Force Base supposedly holds USAF history, and they do indeed have fine material on Unit Histories, Aircraft Accidents, General Officer biographies – though sometimes it's hard to find. Yet Maxwell Archives aren't sized (or, I'd guess, even willing) to handle unofficial stuff. Nor is the National Archives at the University of Maryland, which has many official USAF records also. Conceivably they might accept some TSNA documents and tapes, but everything is likely to disappear in some hidden and disorganized cellar, never to be seen again.

Nor do I know of other places in the Air Force – at the Air Force Academy in Colorado, the Air Force Museum at Dayton, Ohio, or elsewhere – that would accept and preserve our documents and other historic material such as tapes and

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(Long Range Plan continued from Page 4)
and artifacts.

Other candidates to accept Tan Son Nhut histories are rare. For many years I've been researching the Cold War and also directing an effort to compile personal records of West Point Class of 1950 (that material will go to the West Point Library). Thus I have some knowledge of archives for the type of things the Tan Son Nhut Association would offer. Washington, D.C. is the center for a lot of things, but not Vietnam War documents.

The Library of Congress has a "Veterans history Project," yet all they collect is ORAL histories – after we do the taping, transcribing and typing to get in the form they demand.

Georgetown University's "Cold War International History Project" collects a lot of material on the Vietnam War – but their emphasis is academic studies, foreign document translations and diplomatic history. I doubt they'd be interested in veteran memories of Tan Son Nhut letters.

There's the Army Library near the Pentagon – yet it's only a Library not an Archive. At long last a central "Army Museum" is to be built – at Fort Belvoir. It might be a potential repository for such things as the Tan Son Nhut Association collections. Still, that is many years away and, even if it gets built, we have no assurance they'd be any more interested than is the Library of Congress – and, Tan Son Nhut was an Air Force base. As already noted, the Air force has no archives in Washington.

In my opinion the best place for Tan Son Nhut records would be the Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University. I've followed their progress for ten years and in May attended their Vietnam War History luncheon at the D.C. Army-Navy Town Club. I understand the Vietnam Center is increasingly recognized as the focus for Vietnam War documents and research, and they have some large grants from Congress, the Department of Education and other places too. They've collected many millions of pages of documents and have almost half a million pages online. To find out more look at their impressive website, vietnam.ttu.edu/vietnamcenter

Right now I'm beginning to look into giving the Vietnam Center an oral history – they say they're interested. I'd guess most anyone from Tan Son Nhut could do the same thing.

Also, I saw your recent recommendation that the Tan Son Nhut Association get involved with Francis Gary Powers' Cold War Museum. I don't really agree with that, though I don't question that Powers has gathered some good spy stuff. I've watched his progress for quite a few years but have to confess I haven't actually visited his site, or the Spy Museum over in Georgetown either.

In my opinion, amongst candidates for preserving Tan Son Nhut documents and making them available to future researchers, Vietnam Center is better motivated and equipped than any. Everything I've seen and heard assures their professional care of just the kind of Vietnam historical material that the Tan Son Nhut Association might offer.

I'm sorry this is so long. But it's an important topic and NOW is the time to sort these things out. Like others, I'm pretty busy on other projects. But if I can help further with your analysis of the Tan Son Nhut Association's future, please give me a call. And good luck.

and Ken added a very thoughtful postscript –

I've watched military organizations, churches and nonprofit outfits come and go. I myself closed down two companies

when their time came. It's often painful to watch an organization go out of existence, just like it is to wait while a person ages and dies. Yet it's a natural process.

Once in a while when an organization loses its purpose or outlives its members, it can find a new purpose. But mostly there's no sense in seeking institutional survival for its own sake.

Though I never joined any pre-World War II veteran organizations such as the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I've seen their continuing struggles to maintain membership. Some just fade out – is the Military Order of Foreign Wars still around?

From my membership in various World War II, Korea and Vietnam organizations I can know what it's like to get old. My West Point Class of 1950 has been very active, but is now slowing down and – like other Classes going back to 1802 – will eventually go out of existence. Some military organizations I've been connected with either never got organized at all (e.g. my Flying School Class 51-E) or did so but survived only a few years (USAF Research Associates). I'm used to seeing them shut down.

The Order of Daedalians began as a society of World War I pilots, the last of whom died in February 2003 at the age of 109. The Order survived by morphing into an organization of military pilots from any era, and by carving a special niche as military flying safety booster. Still, Daedalian membership has slowly declined for years and survival remains iffy – I know, I've long been a member.

Business offers similar examples of organizational mortality. I personally closed down two companies; a think-tank I founded and another one that I took over. We did our job well for many years and helped win the Cold War. When the USSR quit, the contracts disappeared and it didn't make sense to keep our doors open. That "hold 'em or fold 'em" decision was easy – I folded 'em and never regretted it.

Kenneth Moll

460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, Det. 1 and Member Taylor McKinnon, from San Bernadino, California weighs in with – Love the July edition. At first I was not totally for unit chapters, but now I can see how it could help bring in membership, what with G.I.s keeping old unit friendships and exchanging correspondence. We should solicit photos from members of their days at Tan Son Nhut and make a library of photos available to all members. Perhaps a page of *Revetments* could be dedicated specifically to members photos. Members, who like me have lost or had stolen their photos would really benefit, as well as those who were photographically challenged. I took my old Argus C-3 which I paid two weeks salary for on Okinawa back in '53 and took dozens, hundreds of photos only to have the foot locker they were in stolen from my garage in Maili, Hawaii, Kulaaupuni Street (pronounce that).

A Sincere Thank You to You All

The Board and I are most grateful for your invaluable contributions to our future planning program. Your comments are not only interesting and a practical look at the situation, they are inspiring. The board has made it clear that it does not want to pursue this program alone. The participation of all the members is not just encouraged, it is vital. Keep adding advice, commentary and yes, criticism. Thank you,

John Peele, President, TSNA





Founded 1995

By

Don Parker & John Peele

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* * *

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Membership Information

Annual Membership \$20.00

Five Year Membership \$80.00

Life Membership \$180.00

Send to Public Affairs, address above.



"Nobody but mom ever had the culinary wizardry to make me lick my chops and salivate under her feet in the kitchen like a pup with a wagging tail. This is one of three cartoons I drew in the quest for capturing the effect of her care package that came as a surprise to me (and my buddies) in Vietnam. No matter that I was in the Air Force. There is no doubt in my mind that our troops in the field smiled as broad as I did with a package from home . . . especially one from a loving mother's kitchen!"

John Burke

Are we going to leave it up to Jim Smith and John Peele to lay the wreath alone again?



Veterans Day falls on Tuesday, November 11th. Let's plan now to join John Peele and Jim Smith at breakfast and a wreath-laying at "The Wall."

Call John NOW! (301) 277-7474

(There are at least 40 members within an hour's drive from D.C. Call by October 15th and let's have a great day.)



Visit the TSNA
Terrific Website

<http://www.tsna.org>

Beat the elves this year!

Go Back with Ron.



The new, elegant Caravelle

Plan now to join experienced Military Tours director, Ron Huegel, as he leads a fascinating tour of Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Cu Chi, Tay Ninh, Vung Tau, My Tho-Vinh Long-Can Tho, Dalat and Nha Trang, from November 3-14. Schedule

subject to change. For complete information contact Ron Huegel, 90 Stonewood Place, Catasaugus, Pennsylvania 18032. Phone: (610) 231-3475 FAX: (610) 231-0389 E-Mail: shutin40cal@enter.net

If You're Close, Join George!

TSNA Member George Kinnaird wants to see you at the Third Veterans Reunion sponsored by the Clermont County VVA Chapter in Batavia, Ohio, on Saturday, August 9, from noon 'til 10 p.m. RV camping available close by. Bring the whole family. Live entertainment all day long. Call George at (513) 722-8712 or Jim Smith (937) 288-2372, or check it out on the internet at www.vva649.org



Where was the P.O.L. dump? Charles knows!



Trying to remember where things were around Tan Son Nhut, or in downtown Saigon? Our Webmaster, Charles Penley has maps available for purchase that clearly pinpoint on-base locales where you worked, ate, and sometimes fought. He can point out 100 Pee Alley, Tudo Street and everywhere else in Saigon.. Contact him at <http://www.tsna.org>

THE BATTLE THAT SAVED SAIGON

This powerful 4CD set, at \$19.95 receives raves from everybody who has it. Beginning in the middle of the night of January 31, 1968, it follows the 377th SPS combat in the heroic defense of Tan Son Nhut. (Make check or money order payable to ANACHRON STUDIOS, and mail to TSNA Public Affairs, Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510. Please do not send cash.)



Give Tan Son Nhut Gifts!



Powerful Memories!!!

Member, Taylor McKinnon has already brought a lot of veterans back in time with the humor and poignancy of his CD "The Victors," (\$11.95) dedicated to the heroes of the 377th Security Police Squadron at Tan Son Nhut, which also includes musical vignettes that sweep across the Pacific to World War II and Korea. Now he adds the powerful new 2CD set of "Vietnam: a Sublime Homecoming," (\$12.95) This



sublime collection of preserved tapes by Sergeant John Peter Jorgensen, produced by Arielle Ruth Brooke, takes you back to those intimacies that touch the heart between those who love each other during war across 12,000 miles. Make check or money order (only) to TaylorMac Productions, P.O. Box 381, Patton, California 92369. Order both for \$19.95 and save \$4.95.



Patching things up!

Do you run around with no insignia on your smoking jackets or sweaters? Take care of that problem by purchasing a colorful Tan Son Nhut Association Patch (\$5.00) or a MACV Patch (\$7.00) Make check or money order (only) payable to the Tan Son Nhut Association, and send to the Office of Public Affairs, Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, VA 23510.



Read Any Good Books Lately?

Member Denis Boyer's recently published **Prairie Whistles** is a trip into the past, weaving together tales of railroading from times gone by. The perfect gift for rail buffs and armchair historians, or yourself. Make out check or money order for \$16.95 to Trails Books, P.O. Box 317, 11321 Mills Street, Black Earth, Wisconsin 53515. Call (800) 236-8088. If you call, ask about Boyer's first book, **Northern Frights**, a superb study of folk legends, including one touching on Vietnam.

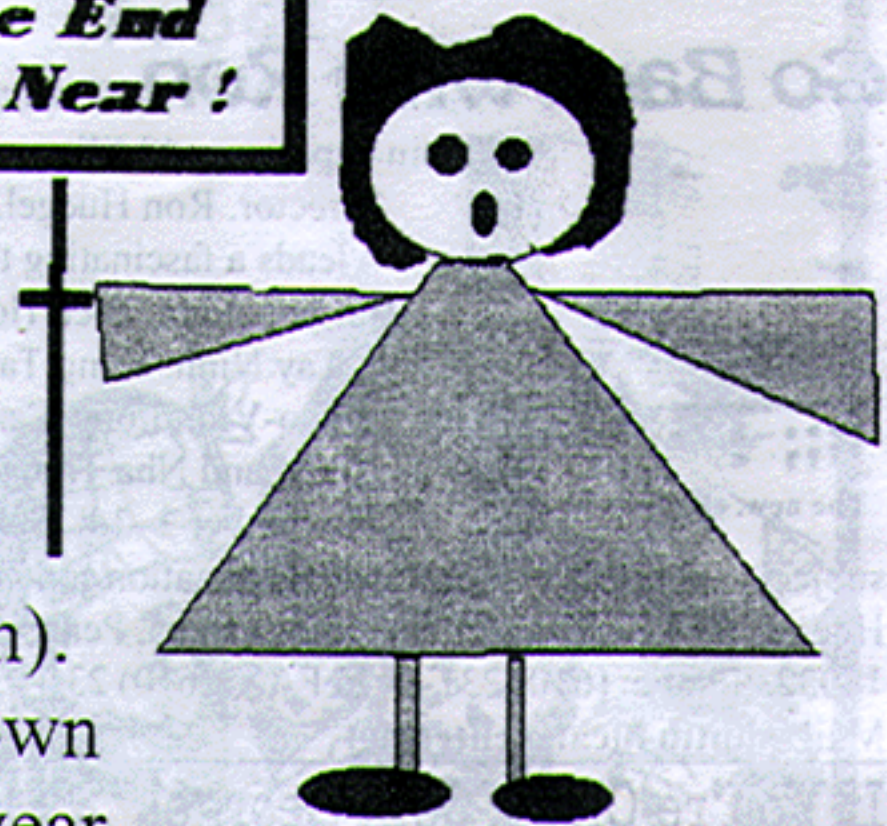


E-Mail: www.trailsbooks.com

One Month Reprieve For 2002 Renewals !

The Page 8 cartoon last month must have really gotten to the membership. So many Year 2002 renewals were received that it has been decided to give the remaining hold-outs time to stay with us (we really don't want to lose them). So come on guys and gals, dig down and send us just \$20 for another year.

**The End
is Near !**



Please get your renewal in by August 20 – so that you're safely renewed before the axe falls! Check your date below.

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Special Report: Further Down The Road to The Future!
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