

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



"All Included - None Excluded"

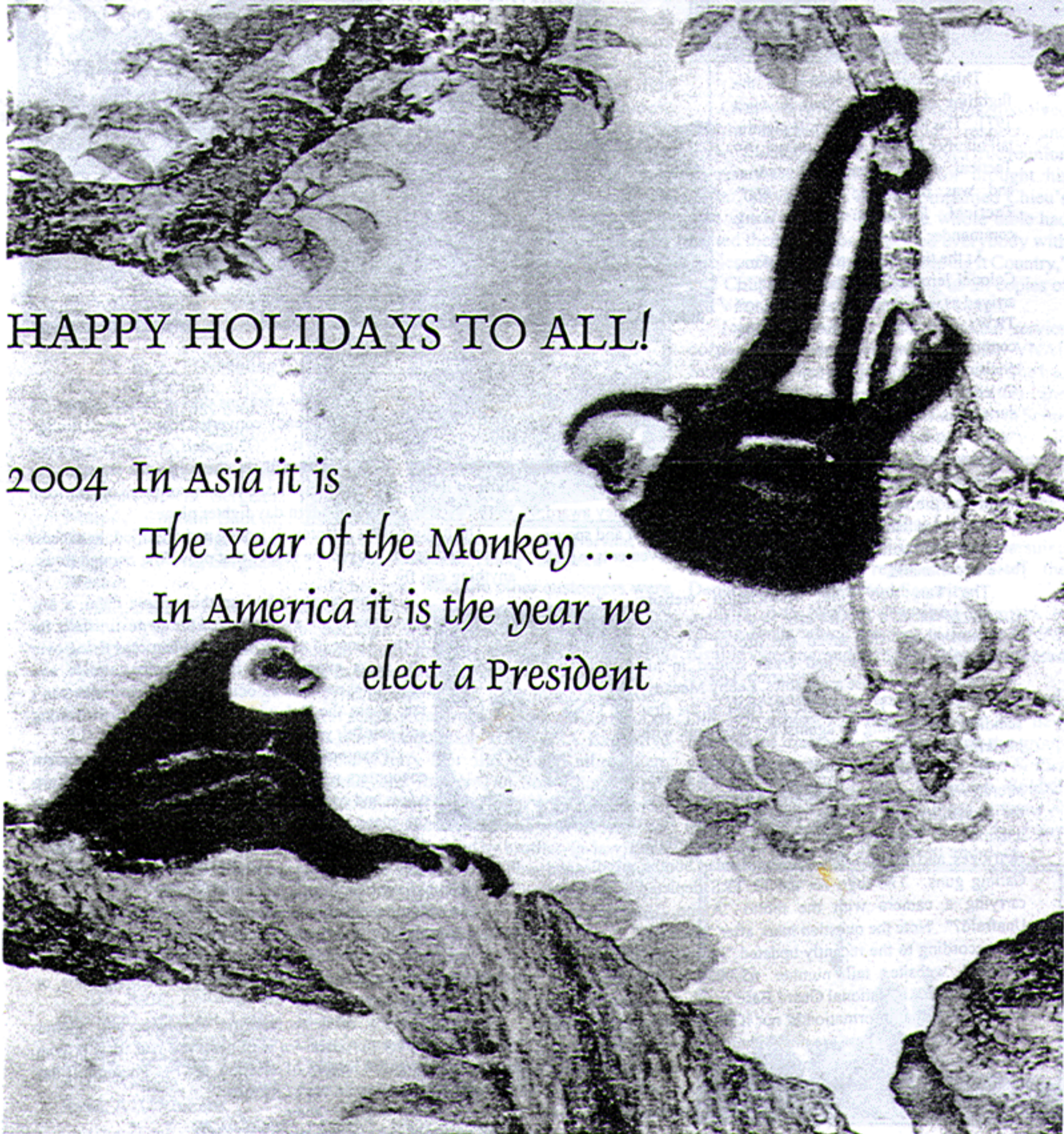
Volume 6, Number 3

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

December, 2003

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

2004 In Asia it is
The Year of the Monkey ...
In America it is the year we
elect a President



THE BITE OF THE PHANTOM!

(Editor's Note: Each month seems to get better and better as more and more members come forward with their priceless photos, and yes, their even more priceless and poignant comments. Frederick Treadway of Cocoa, Florida, dramatically takes us back to the world's greatest flightline in 1971.)

This picture was taken on the flightline of Tan Son Nhut in April 1971. The RF-4C Phantom II picture, tail number 65-903, flew with the 12th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron and was designated as the 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing commander's plan.

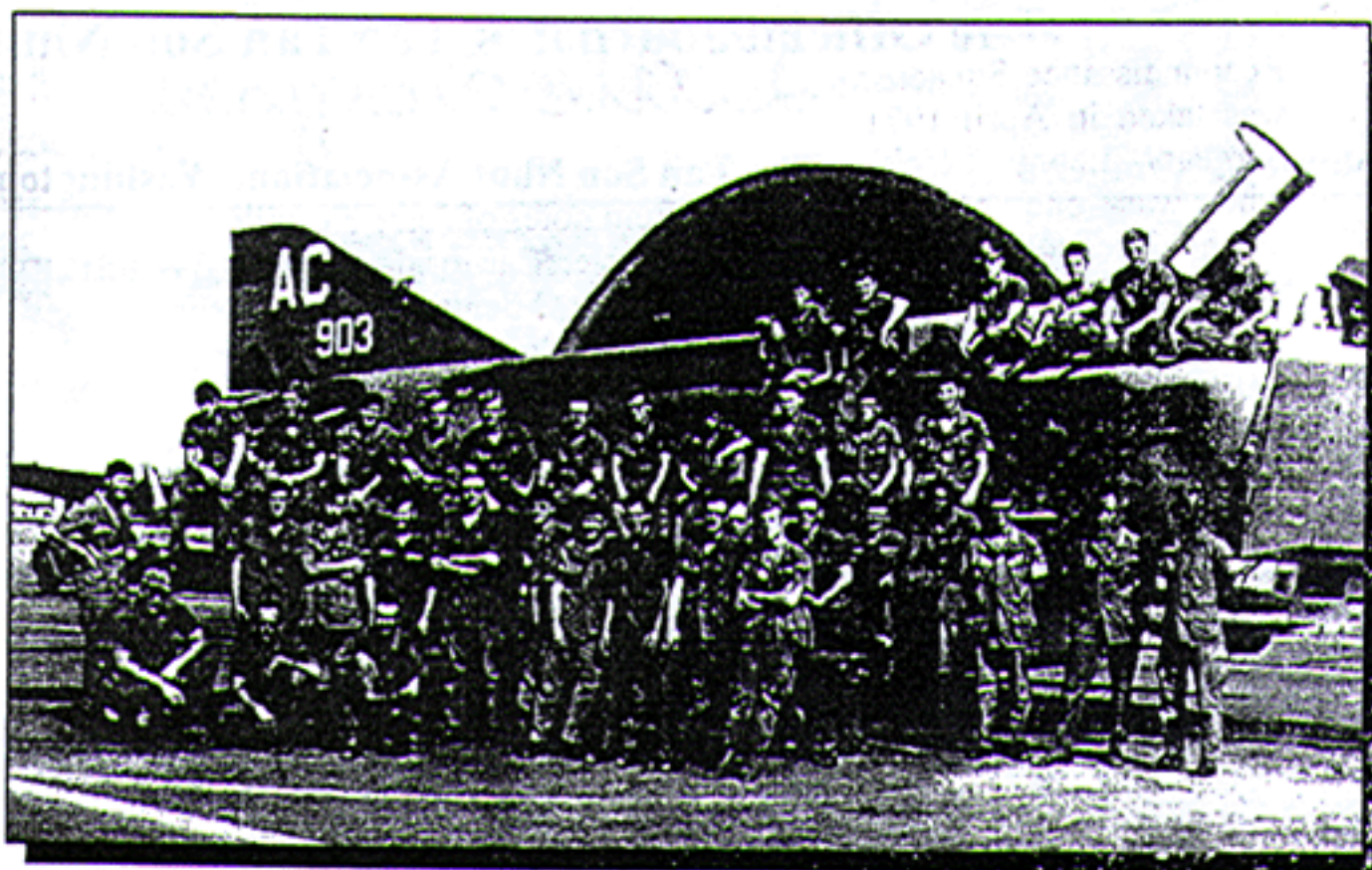
At the time this picture was taken, Colonel Jerome F. O'Malley had just arrived as vice commander of the 460th TRW. He later became the wing commander and remained in that position until September 1971. Colonel O'Malley flew this particular aircraft on several missions during his command. Later in his career he moved up to the rank of general and was commander of the Tactical Air Command at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. He and his wife died in the crash of an Air Force T-39 aircraft in April 1985. In his honor, the Air Force created the Jerome F. O'Malley award. It is presented annually to the Air Force commander and spouse whose efforts result in the most outstanding improvements to their base or command.

The Tan Son Nhut Association website (tsna.org) carries a 7th Air Force News article about four mechanics who saved the life of a South Vietnamese pilot. He had crash landed in his Skyraider. One of those mechanics, Lenny Mackey, is in this picture. He is on the far right of the first standing row, leaning up against the drop tank with his arms crossed.

The mission of the 12th TRS and the RF-4C aircraft was photo reconnaissance. Although having the capability of carrying weapons, they flew unarmed. Sophisticated cameras, photoflash cartridges, and miles of film took the place of bombs, missiles and Gatling guns. The logo for the 12 TRS depicted a blackbird carrying a camera with the motto "Alone, Unarmed, and Unafraid?" Note the question mark after "unafraid."

According to the recently updated "Preserved U.S. Military Aircraft" website, tail number 65-903 is on display at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base in Ohio. I'm not certain how accurate that information is, nor if Rickenbacker ANG Base is still operational. There are many Phantoms on display at bases and museums around the country. These include virtually every model the Navy, marines and Air Force flew.

The Phantom II was the "workhorse" of Vietnam and several



See Caption, Page 3

were still in service and flew missions during Desert Storm. A contractor in Arizona has already converted many F-4s to drones. These are primarily the "E" and "G" models. Eventually a great number of the "RF" models will see the same conversion. For those of us who loved them, it's sad to think of these magnificent warbirds as targets for modern day fighter planes.

The history of the Phantom II is long and dignified; its success is outstanding. It proved the theory that providing enough thrust, anything can fly.

Many who worked on them hated them, a few loved them, but everyone had the utmost respect for them. Those of us who kept the Phantoms flying over the years experienced the frustrations, pride and sometimes sadness associated with them. You can't talk about the F-4 without recalling the frustrating and painful, yet legendary "Phantom bites."

"Phantom bites" resulted from close and frequent encounters with flight control surfaces and the sharp edges and corners of panels and doors on the belly of the plane. The really good "bites" left scars and although they hurt at the time, I'm proud to carry mine now. If you've never experienced a "Phantom bite," then you can't claim to have ever been a "Phantom Phixer."

Pride and joy resulted in hearing the aircrews debrief a "zero defect" aircraft after a very successful mission. And, of course, there was the feeling of sadness upon hearing that a Phantom we just prepped and launched into the skies over Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia would never return.

Hopefully many of these fantastic warplanes will always remain for display purposes – a well-deserved rest for a proven veteran. In the entire history of aviation, the F-4 Phantom II has rightfully laid claim to an era of its own.

Fred Treadway



Caption for photo, Page 2

This photograph of some of the members of the 12th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron was taken in April 1971. Sergeant Lenny Mackie who was one of four mechanics credited with saving a Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) pilot from a crashed VAF A-1 Skyraider is in the picture. The 7th Air Force News article about this rescue is featured on the Tan Son Nhut Association website (www.tsna.org) Sergeant Mackie is shown at the far right of the first row (standing) against the drop tank with his arms crossed.

All rows from left to right:

1st Row: (Kneeling) TSgt. Moelenpah, MSgt. Miracle, TSgt. Jay Smith.

2nd Row: (Standing) Sgt. Kiss (with arm on wing), A1C Chase, Sergeant Lewis, Sergeant Murphy, Captain Babbitt, SSgt. Newby, SSgt. Cox, Sergeant Adkins, Sergeant Mackie.

3rd Row: (Standing behind drop tank) TSgt. Ashley (flight chief), SSgt. Miller, Sergeant Ford, Sergeant Hendricks, SSgt. Craine, TSgt. Goldsberry, A1C Brown.

4th Row: (Sitting on wing) A1C Kirchner, A1C Beebe, Sergeant Beattie, Sergeant Holum, Sergeant Gant, Sergeant Jim Reid, Sergeant Jarvis Lord, Sergeant Fred Treadway, SSgt. Derwacter, Sergeant Chase (twin brother of A1C Chase in the 2nd row), Sergeant Steve Dunlap.

5th Row: (Sitting on fuselage) Sergeant Leroy Chadwick, Sergeant Harry Everly, Sergeant Oakes, A1C Garcia, Sergeant Ryan, A1C Romero.

* * *

Luncheon in Little Saigon

from notes of Jerry Norville

Westminster, California, with its thousands of Vietnamese residents, quite correctly bears the appellation "Little Saigon." The many Vietnamese couples and families who dine frequently at the Thien-An Vietnamese Restaurant in Garden Grove were quite surprised when they arrived on Saturday, November 15th for their usual lunch. In addition to the expected relatives and friends from the Vietnamese community, they saw a private party of eight seated at a large round table tucked in a corner of the restaurant. Although those of us seated at the corner table



Three TSNA members, (l-r) Jerry Norville, Taylor McKinnon, Phung Van Chieu

could not hear what the other customers were saying, it was obvious that events taking place at our table were of interest to them. They couldn't know just how important our gathering was to those of us who attended.

The luncheon was a reunion in the very truest sense of the word. Representing the Tan Son Nhut Association was TSNA Executive Secretary Jerry Norville, from Ruther Glen, Virginia, and former Tan Son Nhut aircraft maintenance officer, Taylor McKinnon who lives and teaches college in San Bernadino. Jerry was accompanied by brother-in-law, Dick Morrow, a retired mathematician. Taylor brought his beautiful Amerasian daughter, Jennifer, who has recently graduated from the University of California - Irvine.

Representing the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) was Colonel Phung Van Chieu of El Monte, and his son Phung Kiem Phung, a former VNAF aircraft control sergeant. Chieu's guest was Mrs. Anh Nguyen, widow of Colonel Nguyen Van Tuong, of Westminster. Also attending was Colonel (Dr.) Do Xuan Giu, also of Westminster, who was the former Chief of the VNAF Medical Service.



Luncheon at Thien-An

Over thirty years of memories dissolved within moments as mutual respect and understanding made the luncheon a true reunion of renewed friendship. Taylor brought his guitar, played solos and accompanied Chieu's fine voice in song. Soon the whole table had joined them. Taylor presented everybody with copies of his latest release "Keeping It Country," and Chieu responded by giving us all copies of his Vietnamese and French love songs.

Jerry had been Dr. Giu's medical service corps advisor in 1967-1968 at the VNAF Surgeon's Office at Tan Son Nhut, where he had responsibility for improving facilities and staffing for all VNAF medical facilities in South Vietnam. Dr. Giu is now eighty-two years old and still seeing patients. He is very interested in current affairs and shared some of his innovative ideas for human safety and protection from terrorists. He will be sending his concepts and drawings to Jerry who will assist him in pursuing his proposals with representatives of the Department of Homeland Security.

Mrs. Anh Nguyen described her work in raising funds which are sent to former VNAF disable veterans, and to the families of deceased VNAF personnel.

All too quickly the luncheon came to an end. Old friendships had been renewed and new friendships discovered. After lunch the group visited the impressive *Tuong Dai Chien Si Viet Mi*, the Vietnamese and American Soldier Memorial, built by the Vietnamese citizens of Orange County, and paid respect to the many from both countries who served and died.



Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot



The Reverend Doctor
James M. Warrington
Chaplain, T.S.N.A.

Self-Pity

One of the most cheerful and outgoing persons I know is a woman who has suffered for years from crippling arthritis. I once asked her the secret of her amazing courage and inner strength. She replied: "I never allow myself to indulge in self-pity. As soon as I see the slightest tendency in myself to feel sorry for myself I strike it down as I would a poisonous snake."

She was saying, in effect, that self-pity is more crippling than any physical illness. I have come to feel through my pastoral ministry that it is probably enemy number one in our spiritual life. It is one of the devil's subtlest weapons to pry his way into the soul of a human being, to make him self-centered and to blind him to God's goodness and gifts.

Self-pity has little relation to outward circumstances. It can afflict the fortunate and prosperous as well as the poor and underprivileged. Indeed it often seems that the less a person has in material goods the more grateful he is for the intangible blessings of life.

Perhaps it was in warning against the danger of self-pity that the Psalmist urged us long ago: "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." The best protection against self-pity is the habit of giving thanks. What the Psalmist is saying to us is something like this: "Take your eyes off yourself, and look out on God's world. Taste and see how beautiful it is, how full of wonder and mystery

and surprise. Taste and see how much love and kindness you can find in the human beings around you. Taste and see how God has been at work in your life and the life of your family. Taste and see how God is at work in human history, to reveal the moral foundations of the universe and the spiritual laws that must be obeyed. Taste and see how worthy the Lord is to be loved and trusted."

Want To Talk It Over?

The Association Chaplains are available to provide pastoral advice and counseling to all the members. To reach them, call the Public Affairs Office, (757) 627-7746, or e-mail us at hercules29@worldnet.att.net

I DON'T CARE IF YOU
DON'T LIKE "POWDERED
MILK", GET RID OF HER!



Special to Revetments, by John Burke

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The Communication Center

Tribute to the "Rat Patrol" -

I was stationed at Tan Son Nhut from April 1967 to April 1968 and experienced the terror of Tet '68 firsthand. I was assigned to the same duty section as Dan McKegney (Member, TSNA, Auburn, California). My grade was Sergeant (E4) and I was assigned to the 1876th Communications Squadron, Aeronautical/Single Sideband Station as a ground radio operator (AFSC 293X0). Another member, Art Phaneuf (Flager Beach, Florida) was also assigned to this duty section.

Our radio site was on the outer perimeter in K section, I think. We were very close to the church that the Viet Cong holed up in and that Puff took care of on the second night of the offensive. We were friendly with the 377th Security Police as they used to patrol the area in their jeeps with M-60s mounted on them. We called them "The Rat Patrol." They used to stop in at our station for coffee, sodas, to heat up their c-rations and to use the toilet, a very ratty 3-holer - magnificent by Vietnamese standards. I don't remember any of their names, but their selfless actions during Tet insured that I would be here today to write this letter.

I live in Bermuda, but will be moving back to the U.S. when I retire. My thanks to those whose idea it was to form this association. It serves a need and operates as an outlet. Reading through your guest book and seeing the photos on your site has rekindled many memories. Sincerely,

Robert L. Miller
Hamilton, Bermuda

A Really Great Question!

Here's a question for the folks who served in the reconnaissance community. Did establishments like the 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing

have alert birds that could be scrambled to perform photo and sensor reconnaissance of high-priority emergent targets?

This question relates to my concern that we are trying to prosecute a war against terrorism, one that is highly time-sensitive, without tactical reconnaissance units that possess fast-movers.

The substantial bandwidth-eating nature and slow speeds of today's UAVs makes me wonder if there isn't one or two USAF leaders who wish they had the capabilities of a Tactical Reconnaissance Wing in theater right now. Any thoughts?

Thomas Hildreth
Chester, Vermont

More on April '66 Attack - In the November issue of *Revetments* Bud Parrish (Forsyth, Montana) asked about Tan Son Nhut's "mortar attack that took place in April 1966."

That attack, the first against Tan Son Nhut, began at 0027 on April 13. It killed seven Americans, wounded 117, and damaged 62 aircraft. Two Republic of Vietnam soldiers were killed and two RVN aircraft destroyed.

It was the 7th attack on a U.S. airfield in the Vietnam War. There were 475 attacks altogether, 35 against Tan Son Nhut. The last attack struck Tan Son Nhut at 0628 on January 28, 1973, an hour and a half before the Paris Peace Agreement's Cease-Fire. Two RVN military were killed and four wounded.

This information and a lot more comes from *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam: 1961-1973* by Lt. Colonel Roger P. Fox, USAF (Ret.) A publication of the Office of Air Force History, the book was printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office but is no longer listed as available.

For temporary reference, copies should be available through inter-library loan.

Ken Moll, Col., USAF (Ret.)
Alexandria, Virginia

Member's gentle note keeps the memory of "unsung" warriors alive - (Editor's Note: Bill Grayson is a longtime member and a prime supporter of the Tan Son Nhut Association. We are not at all surprised at what he tells us in the following message. In fact, we would hope members might give thought to making up similar notes for the next time they visit "The Wall" or their local military cemeteries. We also appreciate that he included the TSNA Patch in his note.)

* * *

Working as I do in downtown Washington, I get to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall) several times a year, but always on November 11.

Awful lot of names on panels 9 East to 22 East covering my 1966-1967 tour, which makes me ask those unanswerable questions.

At each visit I leave a copy (See below) at the foot of Panel 15E for Staff Sergeant G. A. Peeler III, a Tan Son Nhut neighbor of mine.

Thought you'd like to see it

and think about it. Especially at this time of great peril for all U. S. and coalition troops on the ground in Iraq. It is important to acknowledge that volunteers for military service follow orders and go where they are sent - some into non-combat roles which does not exempt or protect them from danger.

Be well, be safe.

Bill Grayson
Bowie, Maryland

And a vignette from the editor


- I had occasion recently to spend a whole day at the Norfolk Naval Hospital for testing. When one of the corpsmen found out I was a Vietnam veteran he was anxious to hear about what it was like in that era.

As we talked I found out that he was only 19, but had gone into Iraq with the Marines taking Mosul and he had his close buddy, another corpsman killed beside him.

He was sad that it seemed that the people back home didn't understand what the military were doing and the sacrifices they were making. I told him that coming back from the "Nam was the same.

He thought this over, and then turned to me and proudly said, "When I go home to my town in Pennsylvania, and my old buddies start to get on my case, I tell them, you can keep wearing those rings in your nose and your lips only as long as you have the United States Navy and me." RSN






STAFF SERGEANT GLOVER AUSTIN PEELER III, USAF
 Born 13 July 1940 - KIA 25 February 1967
 Panel 15E

Glover A. Peeler III was killed on a Saigon street corner in 1967 by a grenade thrown from a passing motor scooter. He was waiting for a ride to his desk job at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, just north of the city.

Staff Sergeant Peeler stands as the model for all US servicemen and servicewomen, who follow their orders and perform unseen and unsung work in countless non-combat specialties but who are nonetheless combat targets in harm's way because of the uniform they wear.



Then & Now!

Member Carl B. McKenzie

Member of the Month



There are all kinds of "kickers" – football would be lost without its place kickers; Marine T.I.s would be nothing if they weren't expert A...-kickers, and our Army comrades, cringe when those crude dolts among us refer to them as S...-kickers. But member, Carl McKenzie of Kaneohe, Hawaii, was the high kicker of

them all. He was a "flare kicker." An article in the August 1965 *Stars and Stripes* says "Flare kickers are airmen who stand in the open exits of C-123s and launch flares into the night sky, lighting area under attack."

Carl was stationed at Tan Son Nhut from September 1964 to September 1965. He was the NCOIC of Operations, 19th Air Commando Squadron. He volunteered as an additional crew member "flare kicker" on the squadron's C-123s. He flew 80 combat missions during the 9 months he was on flying status, flying every third night.

The May 1965 issue of *The Air Division Advisor* carried a front page picture (right) of McKenzie's group of flare kickers and their flare launch tube. Carl is shown standing at the far left.

Stars and Stripes went on to report that McKenzie set a record for flare kicking in the Republic of Vietnam, during a 36 hour workday.

"A volunteer 'flare kicker' flying aboard an Air force Fairchild C-123 Provider, McKenzie helped drop 400 flares to deprive Viet Cong forces of the cover of darkness when they staged a harassing attack on elements of the U.S. Army's 2nd Brigade."

Operations went on all night. The *Stars and Stripes* account goes on to report that "the C-123 Provider dropped flares until 2 a.m. when 'Smoky Blue' relieved 'Smoky Red' over the target area. 'Smoky Red' returned to Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Air Base to be

refueled and resupplied with flares.

"We didn't have a minute to spare," said McKenzie. "It was hurry, so we could 'di di' (Vietnamese for - get out of here!) and get back to target."

"When dawn broke, McKenzie had acquired 10 hours of flying time and dropped 400 Mark 24 flares. We dropped 800 million candlepower. That's a record, the Texan said."

Retiring as a master sergeant in 1969, with twenty-four years service, Carl picked up another twenty year career with the Hartford Insurance Group, working in Safety Engineering in Hawaii, where he presently resides.

And (we couldn't resist) now that he's fully retired he probably agrees with Richard Nixon that "we're not going to have ole Carl to kick around any more!" You think that's corny, the *Stars and Stripes* article was headlined: Airman gets his kicks out of showing up VC.



FLARE "KICKERS" - Above are 315th Air Commando Group administrative personnel who volunteer to serve as "flare kickers" on night missions in addition to their regular duties. From the left back row are: Carl B. McKenzie, A1C John M. Kirt, A1C Darrell E. Rice, A1C Leonard L. Arrowood, A1C Robert L. Wall, A1C Lindsey J. Brown, A1C Henry C. Bailey, and A1C Nantz D. Schuster. Second row: A1C Boyce A. Test, A1C J. Alfred, A1C Carroll L. Harding, and A1C James L. Boudridge. Front row: A1C Franchise E. O'Brien, A1C Robert J. Callahan, A1C George S. Hunt, A1C Sandy A. Bussell, A1C Jeter, and A1C Richard M. Stroud. Members of the group who were not present for the photograph are: A1C Willard H. Colman, A1C Clyde E. Neal, A1C Raymond L. Williams, A1C Roy Thompson Jr., A1C Dennis J. Wing, A1C Franklin G. White, and A1C Jesse L. Cooley.

Kick the shoe box and see what falls out . . .

Revetments would have disappeared a long time ago if it weren't for the great and growing membership of the Tan Son Nhut Association. Day after day there is a short letter, or a bulging envelope in the mail with comments, clippings and precious photographs that we try to share with the other members in the pages of this publication.

Tom Hildreth, Chester, Vermont, speaking of the photo on the right, claims to have "kicked the old shoebox and out came this photo. Of course our domiciles all looked pretty much the same, but if I remember correctly, the decorator-green barracks on near right with the exquisite landscaping by Sandbag, Inc., was my home at the 1876th Communications Squadron for a year. I recall



large, hot chunks of a C-130 landing on the roof one night when Charlie got lucky and hit a Hercules parked on the transport ramp across the street.

"I'll keep kickin' that shoebox from time to time. Never can tell what might pop out of it. Happy Holidays to all, at home and abroad."

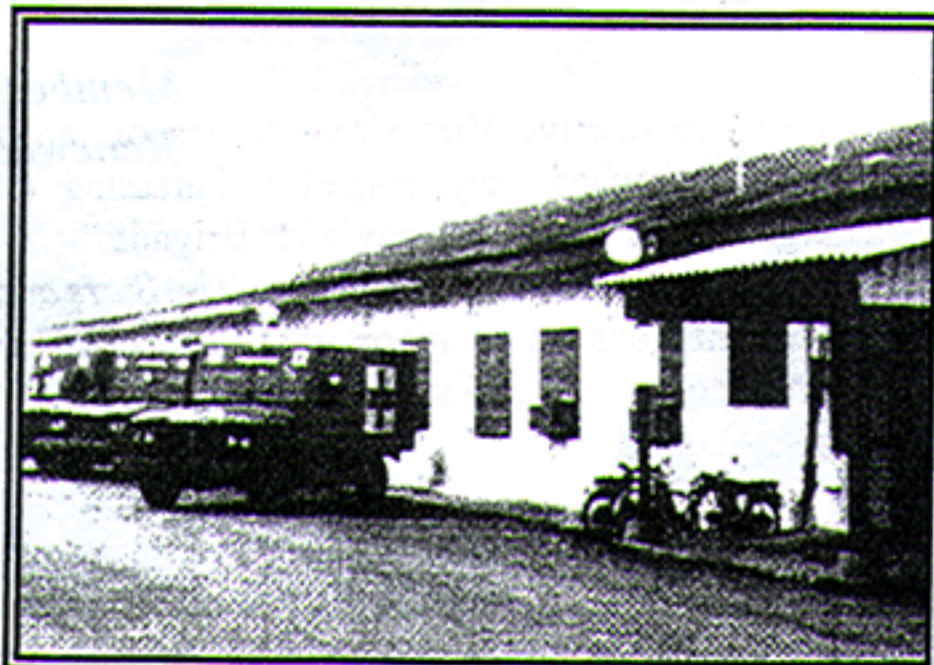
The great shot of the Tan Son Nhut Air Base Main Gate to the left was the result of another kick of the shoebox by Tom.

Ralph Schneider of Carpentersville, Illinois, obviously has a shoebox too. He sent us this excellent photo of the 377th

Dispensary, taken in 1967. Ralph was a member of the 21st Casualty Staging Flight, 377th USAF Dispensary from September 1966 until March 1968.

We all have shoeboxes, or albums, or old suitcases in the attic or basement that have treasures like these. Yes, they are treasures, treasures of history. As the Association grows and the means become available, library and museum facilities are being planned. All the materials that members have already sent in will be maintained in the library and available for educational activities.

Next time you happen to see that old shoebox, give it a good kick and see what falls out . . . and send it to us.



An attractive gift card in your name, a one year membership card and a sampling of past issues of Revetments will be sent out the minute your order arrives.

A black and white illustration of a woman sitting in a wicker chair, which is being pulled along by a dog on a leash. The woman is wearing a hat and a patterned dress. The dog is running to the right, pulling the chair behind it. The scene is set outdoors on a grassy area.

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