

Revetments

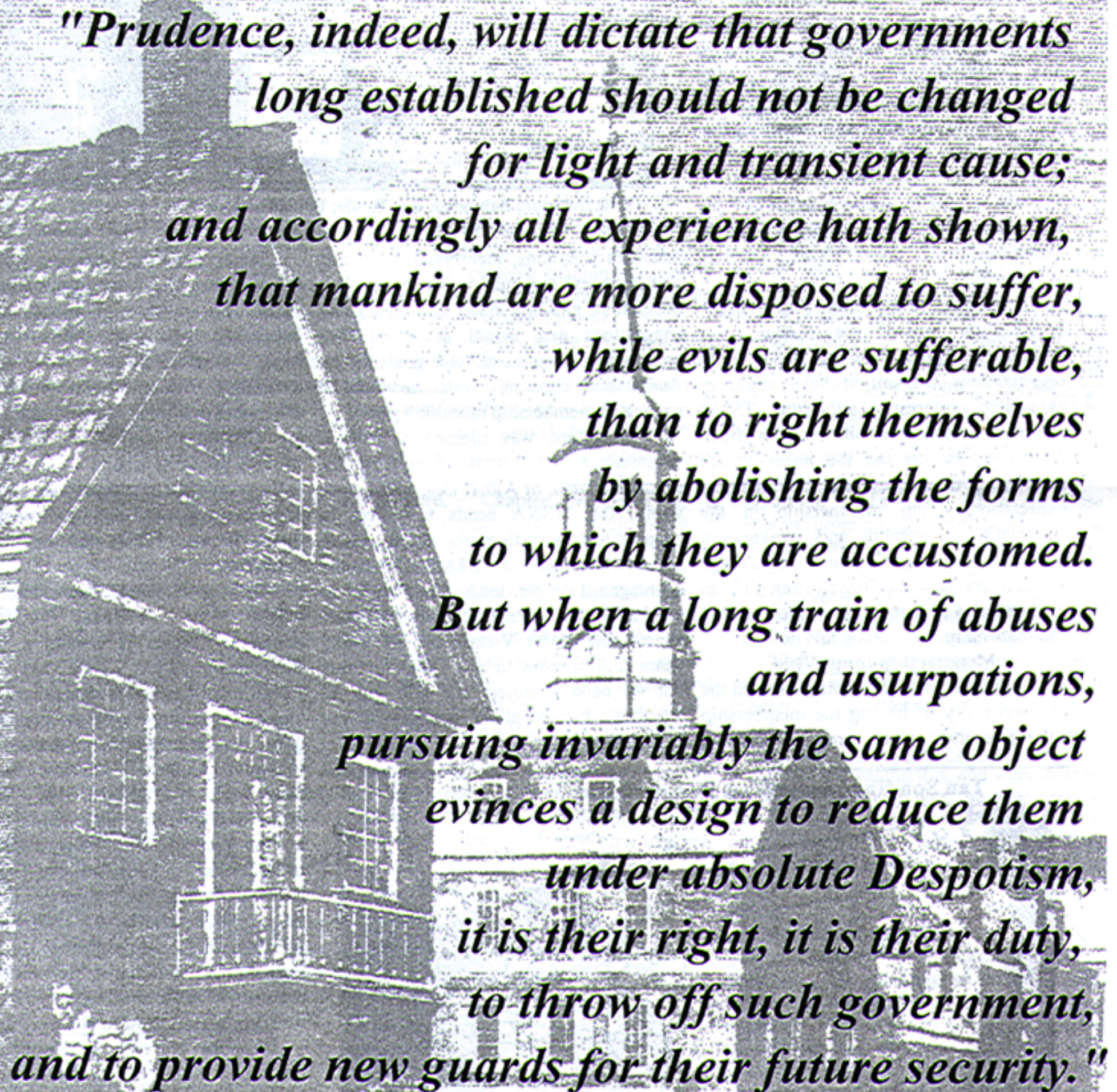
The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



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July, 2003



"Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient cause; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security."

From The Declaration of Independence

Philadelphia, July 4, 1776

TSNA Directors Seek Road to the Future

For the second time in four months the Tan Son Nhut Association's Board of Directors met in the Public Affairs Office in Norfolk, Virginia. For over four hours on Saturday, June 21, the directors began work on the previously reported "plan to have a plan" for the future of the Association.

President John Peele, of Riverdale, Maryland, called the meeting to order at 10 a.m., and the board immediately proceeded to examine the agenda prepared by Director Jerry Norville, of Fredericksburg, Virginia. Others present were Ben White, Norfolk; Wayne Salisbury, Roanoke; and Bob Need, Norfolk. Directors unavailable for attendance were Charles Penley, Kingsport, Tennessee, and John Evans, Oconto, Wisconsin.

Assessment of the current posture of the organization opened the session. A discussion of other veterans' and military organizations that might have allied or associated interests with the TSNA explored liaison possibilities with them. The directors stressed the necessity for identifying their own and the members expectations from membership in the Association. Strength and weaknesses, threats to the organization such as age attrition, and how the "bench strength" can be broadened to sustain future membership and leadership.

Membership Input Vital

Board members constantly stressed the vital necessity of having the membership contribute their input: projects wanted,



(L-R) Directors Bob Need, Ben White; President John Peele, Directors Jerry Norville, Wayne Salisbury. Peele holds the plaque presented to us by VNAF Colonel Chieu.

activities (reunions, memorials, museums and libraries, community and benevolent programs), and any other comments and suggestions that would assist building solid, workable and attainable goals for the Association. Especially welcome would be suggested membership recruiting plans.

The Board was pleased to review comments already submitted by members. Frederick Stein, of Albert Lea, Minnesota, wrote, the "TSNA needs a project to support; to do something for others... I am a Life Members of STMP (Save the Montagnard People, Inc.). The "Yards" as you know, were our staunch and loyal allies against the North Vietnamese for many years... I'm proud to be a TSNA member but we need a project that will pull us together, which we all will support with our time, energy and \$\$..."

James Stewart, Montrose, Michigan believes that "the thrust of the Association should be in historical preservation of information about our time at Tan Son Nhut. You are doing a super job with *Revetments*. The membership is so broad, relative to the units involved that reunions are difficult to get people to attend... Moving reunions around the country helps more people get to at least one... I wish the members who will meet to consider the future of the TSNA the best in their deliberations."

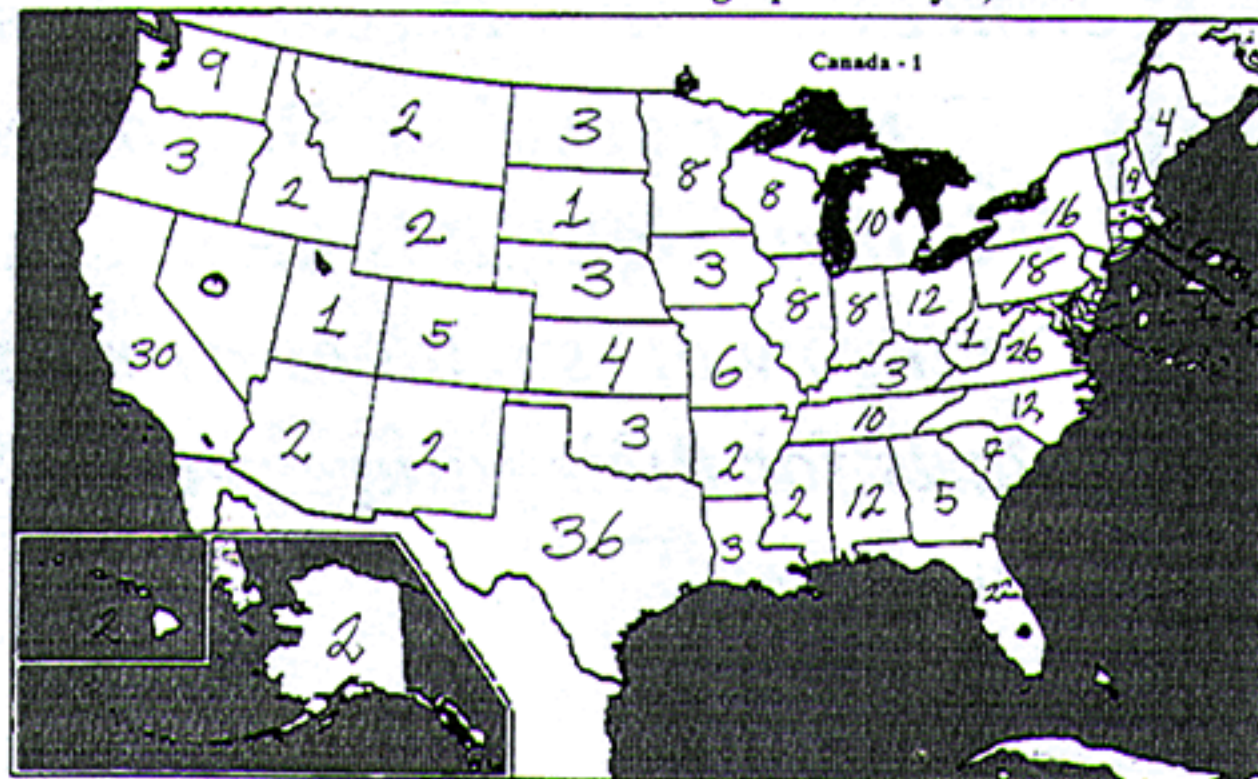
George Kinnaird, Loveland, Ohio, whose VVA (Vietnam Veterans of America) Chapter is hosting a Veterans Reunion on August 9 (See Page 7) wants TSNA recruiting and membership materials "for I will be happy to set up a table to help grow our organization. I have a bound looseleaf book of all my issues of *Revetments* and will be happy to make space available for other items that will help us reach and make others aware of our organization... I have not had a chance to read the "Plan-to-Plan" meeting set for June 21". I will be sending my own views in a follow-up before the meeting. I hope and pray that the stated goals and actual goals remain within the scope of the plan."

Completed Plan in the next issue

Director Norville is completing the Draft Plan which will be published in the August issue of *Revetments*. This is a new beginning for the Tan Son Nhut Association, so please send us your comments and suggestions as soon as you can. Public Affairs, TSNA, Suite 709, 330

Continued next page

Tan Son Nhut Association Demographics May 1, 2003



Australia - 2

West Brambleton Avenue Norfolk, Virginia 23510, or contact Director Jerry Norville, 588 Lake Caroline Drive, Ruther Glen, Virginia 22546, or call him at (804) 448-4533. His e-mail is: norville@bealenet.com

Going back to Member Fred Stein's comment that the "TSNA needs a project to support... do something for others..." the following areas are offered for your consideration and comment.

Regions or State Chapters

To be effective, especially when, as was pointed out, we are spread so thinly across the whole Nation, with even some residing overseas, we have to first improve our operational structures and communication abilities.

The current Board of Directors is trying to take the bull by the horns and establish an effective executive level operation capable of launching meaningful and constructive nationwide programs that are beneficial for all of our membership and associates.

And, as with most of our society, we prefer structures of organization where the power, the origination of ideas, and the stimulation for action (for the want of better words), flows upwards from the body of participants instead of downward from an autocratic central authority. It is only the upward flow of energetic participation that provides for the growth and expansion of the organization.

To start off with, let's look at the map shown at the bottom of Page 2. These are the demographics as of May 1. The figures may not be overwhelming, but they are a start. There are many veterans organizations that are considerably smaller than the current Tan Son Nhut Association.

Please consider volunteering as a regional or state, if you wish, representative. Perhaps you'd like to request the membership records for those residing in your state for the purposes of holding a statewide election. Creating such an office becomes the establishment of a clearing house for the ideas and projects being suggested by the members of that state.

Please give these ideas consideration and let Jerry Norville know how you feel about this as soon as you can.

... or, What about "Unit" Chapters?

Over the past couple of months there have been a number of interesting discussions regarding the formation of "chapters" in the Tan Son Nhut Association.

Nearly all the members of the Association have sincerely commented at one time or another about how "proud" they were to be a member, and at the reunions they have shown deep respect and, yes, affection for the other members attending.

At the same time, many, if not most of the members privately nurture a touching and vibrant pride in the particular unit in which they served during and in the

Vietnam War. Because of this, there have been several interesting proposals. We would certainly like to hear what your views and opinions are.

The conception of the Tan Son Nhut Association should figuratively conform to the literal conception and position of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. The air base was the operational seat of every facet of the Vietnam War, the sum of its whole was the multitude of separate units operating from it.

The Tan Son Nhut Association should offer itself to Vietnam veterans and provide the same sense of unity of purpose that the base demonstrated.

Instead of numbered or state designated chapters, it has been suggested that unit chapters be designated. At present, there are over thirty members who are veterans of the 377th Security Police Squadron. The suggestion has been made to establish a "377th SPS Chapter."

The recent visit of VNAF Colonel Phung Van Chieu and the exchange of citations, plaques and tentative planning for closer association leads to the conjecture of the formation of a "VNAF Chapter."

As the door opens to the concept of these "unit chapters" correlative revision of the Tan Son Nhut Association's governing documents (constitution, by-laws, etc.) would be amended to establish "presidencies" of these chapters, chapter executive bodies, and equitable distribution of income and expenditure. Chapter presidents, or a designated chapter officer would obtain a permanent seat in the National Tan Son Nhut Association Governing Conference.

As new chapters are formed their current public relations and publication functions (if any) would be consolidated within the TSNA and broaden the dissemination and support of chapter goals and projects to a wider and wider national and international audience.

As shown in Figure 1, "unit chapters" would be distinctively represented in the Association's seals, patches, flags, and for other official uses.

You are asked to consider this concept carefully. Discuss it with friends and

comrades from units other than your own, and other services. Let Jerry Norville know how you feel about this, and by all means, give us your suggestions for change or a better way to approach the subject.

Membership Programs

What are your views on recruiting new Association members? Better and more visible advertising of our goals and programs is one way. Are membership drives with prizes feasible? Since press gangs and the shanghai concept are no longer in vogue, we will heartily welcome any and all of your comments and suggestions.

Doing something for others

Referring to Stein's comment for the last time, help us look at what the Tan Son Nhut Association should be doing for others.

Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Etc. Would you assist in setting up a Tan Son Nhut Association Benevolent Program to provide services and support of veterans hospital and care programs? You are invited to go to a very interesting website that addresses this subject and has been established by a number of veterans in California. It is called The Kitchen Table Gang. Should we formally support them, join them as associates? Let us know after you've seen what they do. www.kitchentablegang.org

Educational functions. Already the Association has been accruing a modest but important body of objects and documents that need to be archived and preserved in support of a Tan Son Nhut Air Base historical program. This indicates that down the road there should be a serious program for the establishment of a museum and library program. Some members have been lecturing and delivering historical courses on Tan Son Nut and the Vietnam War era.

What are your thoughts on this area, would you participate in forming historical programs? Please let Jerry know as soon as you can.

Why all this fuss over a dead base?

If you are reading this, and were there or affiliated in any way with the operations at Tan Son Nhut for sixteen years, across the entire breadth of the Vietnam War, you have obligations to posterity more serious than those of any other American veterans in history.

Most of the units we served in then are still active today and continuing to defend America. To subscribe to the fabricated theories of defeat that laid a smokescreen over the dedication and heroism of those individuals and units that prevailed in a continuous pattern of victories is to do them an unconscionable disservice.

Certainly well-deserved, the veterans of all other wars, including the current conflicts, are lauded as heroic victors. There is not one person who served honorably in Vietnam who deserves less. You and I, and the Association are adding long overdue truth to history, we are telling the story.



Figure 1



Founded 1995

By

Don Parker & John Peele

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Secretary Jerry Norville

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Dir./Corporate Agent, John Evans

Dir./Membership Wayne Salisbury

TSNA Chaplains Service

(Available for pastoral service; contact

Public Affairs for information and appointments)

James M. Warrington

Rev. Dr. Billy T. Lowe

Rev. Dr. Julian Mills

* * *

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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.



Visit the TSNA
Terrific Website

<http://www.tsna.org>

Thoughts of our Sky Pilot

by TSNA Chaplain
the Reverend Dr.
James M. Warrington



Our Nation Battles On

Someone has pointed out that civilization is like a garden area which generations of men and women have cleared and beautified through the centuries, but it is constantly threatened by a jungle around it which seeks to take over and destroy it.

We can see this in all of human social relations and group activities. Even the highest forms of religion have a constant battle against secularism, superstition and fanaticism; there is a need for continuing reformation and renewal, as is being so widely recognized these days.

In our political life there is a fine line between a wholesome discussion and disagreement about basic policies for the common good, and the efforts of those who would make the political area a place for mass hysteria, mob pressures and demagoguery.

In business and economic life the balanced relationship between the producer and the consumer and between management and labor is always threatened by ruthless competition, false advertising, inhuman working conditions and other "jungle" influences.

We can see this equally clearly in our personal life. For every impulse toward goodness we have a contrary pull toward hatred, cruelty or selfishness. The threat is so constant it is personalized in our conception of the devil or satan, who is "forever going about seeking whom he may devour."

Nowhere is the danger more constantly underlined than in the pages of the Bible. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, man's soul is revealed as a battlefield between good and evil, between the garden and the jungle. Even such leaders as King David and the Apostle Peter are presented in their weaknesses as well as their strength. There is no mincing of words concerning the reality of temptation and the constant possibility of moral collapse. We as a nation must regard the warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

(Chaplain Warrington is available for pastoral assistance to all members.)



Fly your flag every day in July!

The Communications Center

Member Recalls A Close Shave – I was assigned to the 6250th Support Squadron and worked at Headquarters, 7th Air Force in the Directorate of Material Division, responsible for replacement parts for battle damaged aircraft.

I can remember Tet '68 as if it happened yesterday. I guess I always will.

I remember the around the clock filling of sandbags, since before Tet we didn't have many bunkers. We sure did afterwards.

I remember Red Horse had this site all laid out for a new field hospital where the new port office and finance building was. But when we got done, it was emptied to a level of four feet below ground level from filling sandbags.

Those were some long days – work your twelve hours, then six more filling sandbags.

I was living in the

compound right between the Vietnamese Rangers and the chopper pad, right next to the drainage ditch where Charlie came through.

Luckily for me I had two friends who worked in the passenger terminal who had some weapons from some Army buddies of theirs that most of the others didn't have. That saved our butts since one of them picked off a VC with 20 lbs. Of explosives while he was headed for our hootch.

And – they killed the guy who used to cut my hair every week as he was trying to blow up 7th Air Force Headquarters. And this guy used a razor on me – sure made me sweat some cold bullets thinking of what he could have done to me with that razor. Take care,

MSgt. Paul Gwynn

Burkburnett, Texas

(Ed. Well thanks for the story, Paul, you certainly didn't split hairs telling it.)



One Weekend A Month My Ass!

This was sent to us by Ron Huegel, a Marine who fought in Vietnam, and a Battlefield Expeditions director (See Page 7). It is from a friend in Iraq. We were discussing with contempt the people who single out National Guard and Reservists as "draft dodgers." They seem to forget that during the Vietnam War it was the Air National Guard that was responsible for air defense at home because everybody else was in Asia. Thanks, Ron, we needed this. A salute to the National Guard and Reservists!



Shadows from the past

(Editor's Note: As Editor of *Revetments* I am responsible to you the reader and Association member for preparing, editing and delivering the publication to you. Most importantly, I am responsible for the content. I received the following letter in early May. Since I also handle the membership files, I had a choice of quietly filing this away in Thomas A. Allen's file, or publishing it in *Revetments*. Tom sent it to just a single person. I have a feeling that he will not object to my sharing it with the rest of his brothers and sisters in the TSNA.

Bob Need, Editor)

I received your May 2003 *Revetments* and thoroughly enjoyed the reading, and felt an immediate response would be appropriate. But first allow me to properly introduce myself.

I served at Tan Son Nhut from September 1970 to the following September 1971. My assignment was with the 8th Aerial Port Squadron, where my first duties were in

the In-Country Terminal Passenger Services Section, in turn, the Out-Terminal and finally the Lost and Found Section on Grave Shifts. My experience was a varied one considering working multiple locations in a short period of time. But invariably an experience that will never leave my mind – nor my very soul.

I served with a friend, Thomas G. Hafner, and we two served for the same period of time. But in his case, he died shortly after returning to the 'States. He was assigned in Florida where he died. He was sleeping in the back seat of a car when someone hit them from behind – killing him. To this day I only wish we could have traded places – but that can't be.

You see, he was my brother and as I write this my

(Shadows, Turn to Page 6)

Shadows, from Page 5
heart is in great pain. He is my brother. I can't see why to survive the 'Nam, the crazy things that we did, putting our very lives at risk going to the Far East.

Myself, I did a few more, but that's not important. I only wish and pray that Tom is at peace. I also see my brothers on the streets of San Francisco. I have spoken to a Marine, his name is Jimmy, who served and was decorated with the Medal of Honor. He fought on Hamburger Hill and is one of two who survived to tell about it. Our Brothers are homeless and I see no reason.

As Thomas Jefferson wrote concerning our fellow Americans — that we shall not turn our backs on our fellow Americans. Not a quote, but the meaning is clear.

Simply said, too many of our brothers died and are dying as I write this letter. I look at my service, all twenty-one years and think — what exactly did I accomplish? I served for the American People in order that they would have Liberties and Rights.

My heart cries and has cried many times. I hear many say, "Thank you," but they are few and far less. We were taken for granted. Our brothers died, and many are dying. All I learned is that this country is too important and I will give my life a thousand times to preserve who we are.

My friend, Tom, died too soon. I can't say what's in my heart — it still hurts. I can't say! It's been thirty years — and it's just like it was yesterday.

I dedicate my life to his

Distant Voices by Ira Cooperman

* * *

SAIGON, Vietnam, Feb. 1967 — One of the enduring images of the Vietnam War was the sight of American aircraft taking-off and landing at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. But in this war there were many dramas that took place out of public view and away from the front line.

The saga of the Jewish holiday of Passover in 1966 was one of them.

Thirty-six years ago, Rabbi (Chaplain) Alan M. Greenspan, wrote to me of his "reflections" as he ended his twelve month tour of duty as the Jewish chaplain assigned to the U.S. Military Assistance Command (MACV) in Saigon. This is what he wrote —

"I have had many gratifying experiences and would like to recount some of the highlights to you. The day after I arrived in Vietnam, almost a year ago, I visited my first patient in the hospital. He had been wounded by a bullet earmarked for his chest, but deflected by the Star of David that he wore. As a result, he is alive today.

"It is difficult for a Rabbi to visit hospitals for he sees raw pain and suffering. But the men that I have spoken with at these hospitals were more concerned with their friends who were out there fighting than with themselves.

"Shortly after I arrived, Passover came, but for a spell it seemed as though it might not. Vietnam was in the midst of name and pray that I am worthy. I pay a heavy toll every time — if it must be — so be it. Sometimes I wish that I could join him, but in good thoughts, it's not right. I grow tired. Your Brother,

Tsgt. Thomas S. Allen
San Francisco, California

political
turmoil with
the Buddhists

involved in street Over Salamis). There are many demonstrations. On the eve of the holiday, a curfew was imposed on the city and it looked like the Seder would have to be canceled. But the Military Command authorized an exception to the curfew for some of the Jewish servicemen and permitted here. We are here because we our observance of a day that commemorates Freedom from Bondage.

"I have been honored to have served you and served with you. Your inspiration has given me the strength to see through some of the difficult times over Jewish servicemen and permitted here. We are here because we must be here to defend this world for freedom. We must never forget this."

"Who will ever forget I only recently found the walking back to quarters with above letter. It brought my tear gas in our eyes? We too thoughts back to the Saigon of saw the bitterness of oppression. 36 years ago.

"Many hours were spent I will never forget walking going to and from Tan Son Nhut back to quarters near Tan Son Nhut with tear gas in my eyes, to catch aircraft to bring me out following the April 1966 to the field where men were Passover Seder. That evening, I stationed throughout Vietnam, too personally experienced "the and at times my flights were bitterness of oppression."

I apologize for What an experience that keeping you waiting when I was! So too was the honor I couldn't make it. shared with others to serve as a "While I speak of field units, I cannot tell you how very much "Jewish lay leader" in 1966, first I appreciated the support of my at Tan Son Nhut, and later at assistant Rabbis (lay leaders). Udorn Royal Thai Air Base, Without their help and leading our Friday evening cooperation I could not have services, praying for friends of all faiths who had been killed or begun to have a program. I think I must have flown in every wounded, or declared "missing aircraft the Army has, some of in action." I even was a two of the Navy's. It has been "SOS" volunteer!

an inspiration to see you, living I believe in the message of under poor conditions, yet Passover; freedom for the individual. dedicated to our rich heritage.

"The High Holiday period But we also need to recall comes to mind next. More than that "if it were not for the Brave 375 of us gathered at Tan Son — there would be no Land of the Nhut for services and it was Free."

perhaps the most memorable Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that I have ever spent. To hear such a large congregation lifting their voices in prayer cannot help but move a person.

"Thanks to organizations in the 'States, we were able to deliver care packages to some of the field areas. One of these organizations even had a campaign called 'SOS' (Send

War Out of Public View



Places to go! Great gifts!

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, Catasaugua, 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



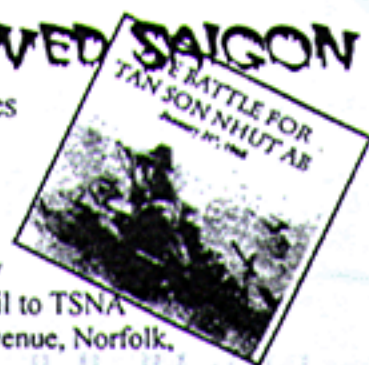
Where was the P.O.L. dump? Charles knows!



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, Tudu 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 comnet 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.)



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 Ariele 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 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.



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