

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



Volume 5, Number 12

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

September, 2003

60 Issues of Tribute to the
brave men and women of
one of the great air bases
in history!

See Page 2



Photo courtesy of Member Tom Hildreth

"Past is Prologue"

Voltaire uttered those words several centuries ago. The phrase is not that original or profound, which I think Voltaire probably appreciated. It is just a simple pragmatic statement. Unfortunately simplistic comments are the easiest to be forgotten or disregarded. The simple message of the phrase is merely that for the universe, the species, the nation and definitely, for the individual, all that has gone on in the past is but the prelude for the events and evolutions that lay ahead in the future.



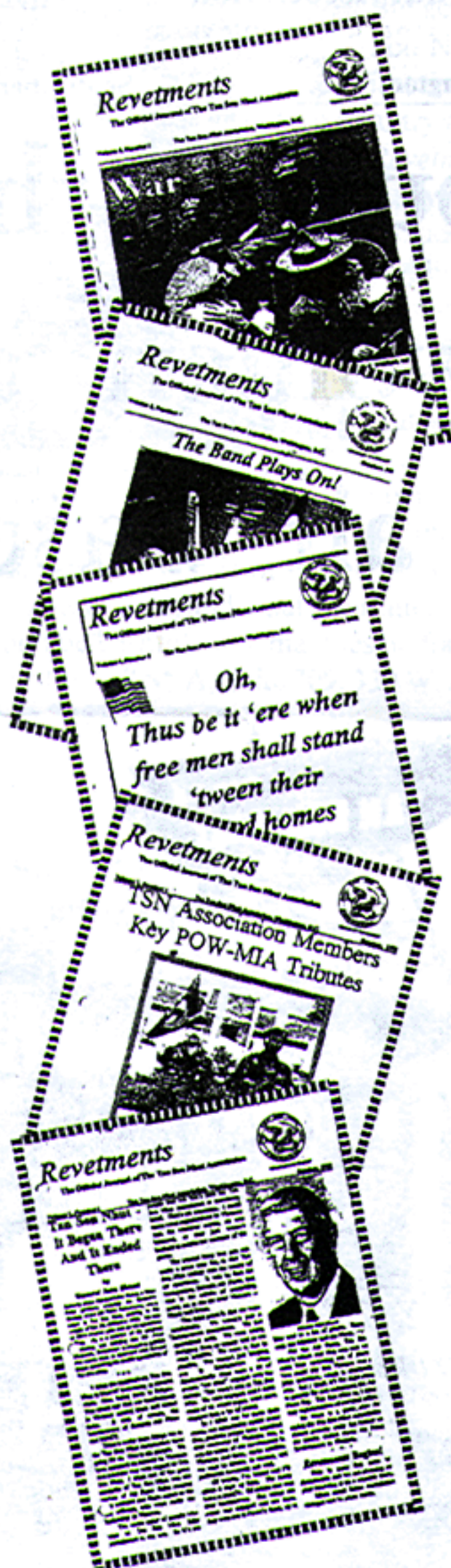
by Robert Stanley Need,
Editor of *Revetments*

Exactly five years ago, current Tan Son Nhut Association President, John Peele, and I were invited to an extremely pleasant lunch with then Air Force Association Executive Director, General John Shaud. John and I were planning to publish a monthly periodical for the Association, and John recommended that we ask General Shaud to consent to an interview of his experiences at, and feelings for Tan Son Nhut Air Base. The interview became the first front page article of Volume 1, Number 1 of the publication we named, *Revetments*. The article takes the reader back to Tan Son Nhut at the peak of its activities as the headquarters operation for the entire Vietnam War in the 1960s. And, mentioning Voltaire, General Shaud also gave us a simple succinct statement – "It began there and it ended there."

You are holding the sixtieth issue of *Revetments*. I have been privileged and honored to be allowed to prepare and publish this chronicle of the daily life and times of hundreds of men and women who served at, passed through, or were closely connected with operations at Tan Son Nhut. These stories and accounts are priceless. I know how I feel as I sit at the computer each month and compile the contents for that month's issue. But aside from my emotional responses, I am most moved by the responses of the members who tell me they laugh, they suddenly recall things they have forgotten, feelings of pride return, and there are the moments of renewed grief.

The first five years of *Revetments* were merely the brief preliminary efforts in the establishment of what will gradually evolve into being as the living memorial to the men and women who served in the honorable operations in the brave defense of Tan Son Nhut. During the last year, the Association's Board of Directors have become more cohesive and have started down the pathway towards attaining broad goals. Among those goals is the strengthening and expansion of inter-membership communications, including *Revetments* and Charles Penley's admirably professional Tan Son Nhut Association internet website which has been an extremely effective instrument in recruiting new members.

At the end of this month, I will be preparing the first issue of Volume Six. It will open the door to another cycle of presenting your stories, your feelings, and your memories. At present, *Revetments* is a small and modest publication, and it does not avail me sufficient space to extend my deep gratitude to the hundreds of members who have written and contributed material and have provided the seeds for future growth.



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Members Continue Moving Us "Down The Road"

In last month's issue of *Revetments* (August 2003) the summary of the Board of Directors' proposed Tan Son Nhut Association Long Range Planning Report was published. Many members found it a very interesting set of proposals.

In addition to the formal proposals, several members' responses were also published, from Dan McKegney (Auburn, California); Ken Moll (Alexandria, Virginia); and Taylor McKinnon (San Bernadino, California).

President John Peele's comments underscored the need for wide participation in establishing our Association's future and its ultimate goals - "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."

Two more longtime strong supporters of the Association responded this month.

* * *

WILLIAM C. (BILL) CARLSON, of Central Point, Oregon.

I disagree with Member, Dan McKegney, on the reason the last (TSNA) reunion had to be canceled. I will agree with him that it is a long way to go for us on the West Coast, but I believe the reason was "Short Notice." We knew a reunion was in the mill, but as it got nearer to April, figured there wasn't going to be one this year and scheduled and paid for another trip. My friends from Fresno, who went to the last reunion and couldn't wait for the next one, are both doctors. They have to have several months warning in order to arrange their schedules. We also have to work around our frequent medical appointments to free-up the time of the reunions.

I think the two objectives brought up by Kenneth Moll were right on the money - friendship renewal and, of course, a little BS'ing on the tour of duty at Tan Son Nhut. To me, this should be more like a school reunion, and we should not be setting goals that we many never reach. His second objective of preserving Tan Son Nhut history would be a great goal for the organization.

I also agree about how hard it is to keep any organization up and running. I am a life member of a Veterans of Foreign Wars post with several hundred members. Their monthly newsletter is now down to one sheet of paper. Recently they almost lost their building which I know they have had since the 1940s. I was also in a Vietnam Veterans of America chapter. It seemed like every weekend we were washing cars or something to raise funds. It got to where only a few of us showed up. The chapter went downhill rapidly and finally suspended its charter. Later it started back up in a different town and the same thing happened.

I didn't join these organizations so we could raise money to do something good for the community - which we did by providing a small college scholarship. However, this "good deed" helped "scuttle the ship" I guess you could say.

377th Supply Squadron
Tan Son Nhut 1969 - 1970

* * *

JAMES F. (JIM) DUGAN, Lindenwold, New Jersey

(Editor's Note: Jim sent us his comments beautifully written out in pen and ink script. He accompanied them with a short note that he probably didn't want publicized. Yet I feel

compelled to share it with the rest of you. "Dear Bob, Please forgive my writing, spelling, etc. I don't know if I mentioned in any of my past correspondence, but I am a stroke survivor (for the last 8 years) and had to learn to write all over again using my left hand. The mind of a stroke victim has to struggle with the spelling of simple words, and the creation of complete sentences. Thanks, Sincerely, Jim.")

Jim writes - A little over a year ago, I attempted to make contact with the guys I served with at Camp Alpha, Tan Son Nhut. We were the 178th Replacement Company, 90th Replacement USARV. Our main job was to process personnel for R&R flights.

I received five responses to an ad I placed in the *Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine* and the *Vietnam Veterans of America Veteran*. Only one response was from a guy I actually served with between 1969 and 1970. The others either served earlier or later in the war. Only one from my unit served at Tan Son Nhut.

I talked with all at length, and none knew of the Tan Son Nhut Association. In fact, most do not even belong to any veterans group at all. They found my search ad by accident, and decided to contact me.

At a local gathering of veterans in my area this past march, I talked with some members of Rolling Thunder in an attempt to recruit Vietnam veterans for my local VFW post. They were not interested. The only reason they joined Rolling Thunder was a common interest - motorcycles - other than that, they said, like most Vietnam veterans, they are not joiners.

To survive, the Tan Son Nhut Association needs members - not just a scattering across the country. In New Jersey you have indicated only one member - I know that it is me! I find it hard to believe that not one other person in this state, considering the number of Vietnam veterans who reside in New Jersey, the number of years the United States spent in Vietnam, and the number of people from all military services, and civilians who may have been stationed there, cannot connect with the TSNA as I have - times that by fifty, the same applies in all states.

The bottom line is - we have to put ourselves out there - we have to advertise on the internet, in Vietnam Magazine, in veterans newspapers, wherever we can be seen.

I wear my TSNA patch proudly. I had a blue ball made up that says, "Tan Son Nhut Association." I was not a "Rambo" in Vietnam. I processed R&R personnel through Tan Son Nhut. It's where the Army put me, and what it ordered me to do.

I'm proud of it

TSNA Life Member
Tan Son Nhut 1969 - 1970

"And now, please let me hear from you..."

As Jerry works on completion of the final plan he would still like to hear your ideas and suggestions. Send your comments to 588 Lake Caroline Drive, Ruther Glen, Virginia 22546, or E-Mail: noville@bealenet.com Better still consider giving him a call at (804) 448-4533 for a valuable one-on-one exchange of ideas.



Executive Secretary
Jerry Norville

THESE OPENING YEARS OF WAR

Observations of a New War by a Vietnam veteran — Robert Stanley Need

Two years ago, on the 11th of this month, I sat here in the Public Affairs Office of the Tan Son Nhut Association, in Norfolk, Virginia. There is a large television set in the office, but I rarely watch television programs on it. It is intended to be used for screening of tapes that I produce from slides and still photographs, often on matters pertaining to Tan Son Nhut and the Vietnam War. Just before 9 o'clock, a close friend in New York who knows me and my habits, called me and said vehemently, "I know you don't watch t.v. in the daytime, but turn the damn thing on now!" Without another word, he hung up.

I turned around and faced the television and turned it on. I sat here paralyzed by many conflicting emotions as I saw the second plane heading straight into the upper floors of the south tower of the World Trade Center — where I had my office when I worked there in 1977. And, within the hour I sat there and watched the attack on the Pentagon, where I had worked and visited while on active duty in the United States Air Force.

They tell us the death toll for that bright September morning was in the neighborhood of 3,000 souls — a figure I personally find far too conservative in view of my experience with the activity in the World Trade Center at that time of the morning. I think their estimates are solely based on those actual remains recovered and identified.

This totally indescribable, overwhelmingly monstrous attack on the American people overshadowed all previous hostile attacks on our civilian population and thundered forth the awful trumpet calls of what will probably be the greatest war thus far in American history.

Our President, George W. Bush, responded with a majestic compassion for the victims that moved all but the most callous around the world. And, with a clarion call of historic stature he asked the nation to take up arms, not only to preserve the safety of this nation and its citizens, but to rid the entire world of the deadly organized

regimes that are dedicated to destroying modern civilization and subjugating the peoples of the Earth of an eternal rule of terror.

At that point in time, the focus was on the infamous Osama Bin Laden, supposedly holed up with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Being considered the architect of September 11, he became the prime target of public interest, and Afghanistan was designated the first objective in the War on Terrorism.

With lightening speed and terrific military acumen, Americans quickly invested Kabul and Kandahar, swept through the mountains to the Kyber Pass, and chased the remnants of the Taliban into Pakistan.

For all intents and purposes, objective number one had been attained with what could be called moderate success.

The AASD and OHSS Epidemic Sweeps America

Thanks to social forces in America that are eroding the quality of public education, actively attempting to subvert the concepts of personal responsibility and other such Victorian concepts of duty and honor, mutual respect and honor of country, a virulent strain of AASD has effectively

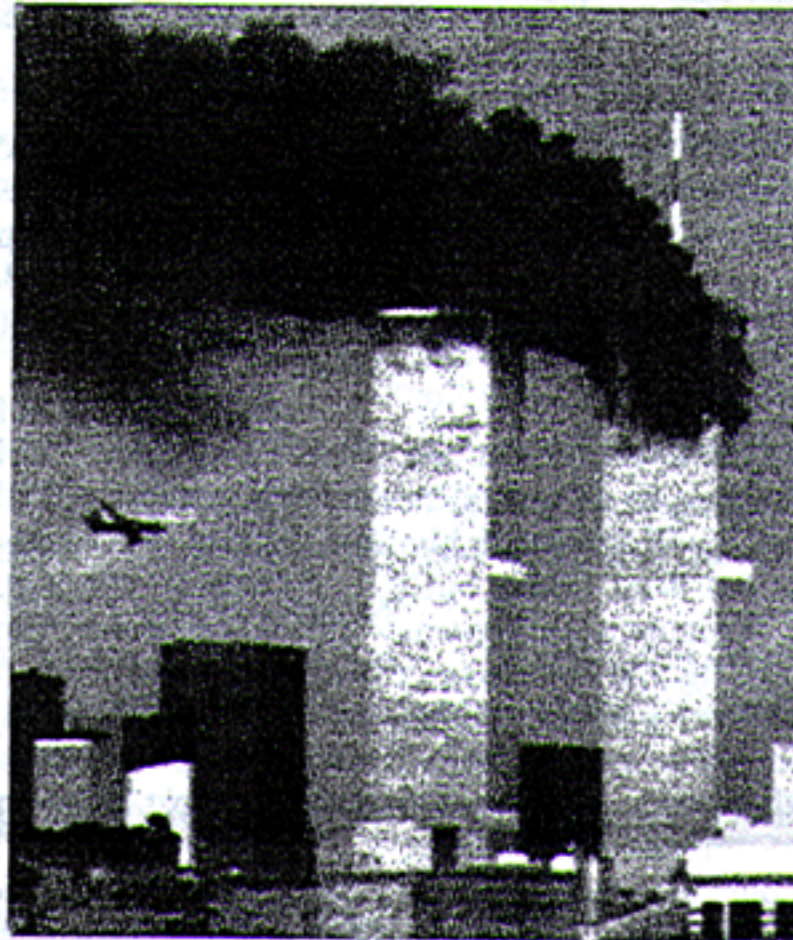
diluted the horror and minimized to irrelevancy the obligations laid upon us on September 11, 2001.

AASD is the American Attention Span Disorder. It manifests itself in widespread forms. It is a mental phenomena that, built on barely rudimentary education, incorporates an amnesia that retains little if any of the facts of a given subject. It cuts off and rejects critical examination of a subject, and ends up being expressed as totally absurd and non-objective statements.

A much older affliction prevalent in America is the OHSS, or Ostrich Head in the Sand Syndrom. This is the old insular attitude that has been around in human society for a long time. Often, it is an effective placebo that comforts the individual during episodes like September 11 — "It can't happen here in Hicksville" — "We probably deserved it" — etc.

The progress of these two afflictions can be easily observed and charted. Within hours after the collapse of the World Trade Center two thirds of the flag makers of America were sold out and feverishly producing (or desperately ordering from China) millions of new ones. They flew from every barn, bank and bordello from Maine to San Diego; they festooned cars, trucks and motorcycles until weeks later as they rotted away through the night air and rain into bleached out rags. But by last year, September 11, 2002, they were all gone, the only ones still flying were those over the Post Office (by order of law) and the ones over veterans' and retired military homes (by order of the heart).

(Continued on Page 5)



Founded 1995
By
Don Parker & John Peete

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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.

The hole in the ground at Ground Zero has been mostly covered, the tourists have lost interest and the souvenir vendors have had to find their prey elsewhere, already work has begun on new structures at the site.

The Deliberately Forgotten Message

The President and the Department of Defense moved on to threaten, and then in the Spring of 2003 invaded Iraq. For over ten years Saddam Hussein bragged about his massive mass destruction powers as he defied the United Nations mandates. That body reviled him for a decade as a "rogue" state. But as Bush moved towards opening hostilities the U.N. and the AASD Americans screamed at the top of their voices about the "innocence" of Iraq. Now that Iraq has been occupied and the Hussein regime wiped away, the hue and cry is all about how the "poor people" of Baghdad are "suffering" at the hands of the arrogant U.S. "Invaders." The media howls about "stagnation" and "being bogged down" and how the Iraqi campaign was a "disaster from the beginning."

First of all, it is conveniently forgotten that President Bush said that we would root out terror from wherever it was sheltered. People are saying that Bush declared the war was "over" recently. He did no such thing, he said the heaviest fighting was over. In fact, from the very first he has maintained that this will be a long war, even saying it would probably continue long after he would no longer be in the White House.

The media is exerting all the emphasis it can muster to denigrate the President and the armed forces. They have a better ploy now than they used in Vietnam. Today, the "poor" soldiers are the victim of the White House and the Pentagon, and the press pulls out all the stops to report as graphically as possible each and every casualty every day. This is in stark contrast to those dozens of poor bastard "baby killers" who got killed every day in Vietnam. In those days, who gave a damn anyway. If Jessica Lynch had gotten zapped in the 'Nam she wouldn't have returned home with a Caesar's triumph and a Bronze Star, instead she would have, at best, been shunned, and at worst tar-brushed as a "war criminal."

But The Truth Is Astounding!

Recently a Tan Son Nhut Association member shared a letter with us from an Army Lieutenant Colonel on duty in and near Baghdad. He was thunderstruck at the way the media is "reporting" the conduct of the war and the conditions in Iraq. He cited the flood of cooperation that he and his men are receiving as they rebuild communities, open schools, volunteer with the communities to teach and train Iraqis in a number of useful

homespun occupations. Just before the conflict began, Hussein opened the doors of the prisons and turned tens of thousands of criminals and brigands loose in the streets. They, of course, are being egged on by the hidden members of the fallen regime, and are certainly a source of harassment but are being quite effectively handled and will not be a threat forever.

This is all well and good, but what the media is apparently incapable of comprehending, and what the leftist political pundits do not want the public to discover, is that the United States and its very real and capable allies (another area treated with sarcastic contempt) is that the coalition, no matter how badly harassed, stands as a mighty colossus, one foot firmly anchored in Iraq and the other firmly planted in Afghanistan.

Military historians and international political affairs experts, whether publicly or not, must marvel at this achievement. And, if they won't admit it to others, they realize that, like the term or not, a mighty "Pax Americana" influences western and central Asia that no other power in history has been able to attain. There has

just got to be grudging admiration in both Moscow and London, after their futile attempts to attain such a position for centuries.

President Bush's vow and his promises have not been fulfilled yet. But the results are already being graphically demonstrated.

The colossus straddles a nervous and unstable, yet amazingly quiescent Iran that no longer bellows hysterically about the "Great Satan." Especially when the Great Satan is on either side of the border.

Syria and Lebanon, and of course, Saudi Arabia, are sneaking people into Iraq, but there are no strident

threats anymore. The calming and stabilizing military presence of the Coalition seeps down even to the chaos in Palestine and tends to make new outrages by Hamas simply wild demonstrations of terror. and even to many Palestinians this has stripped away Hamas' claims to be a legitimate patriotic defense organization..

And to the east - Pakistan continues to behave, at least within reason, because the Americans are not that far from Islamabad either. And as I write, "Red" China is hosting a nuclear "peace" conference with "Axis of Evil" member, North Korea.

I am hoping that world terrorists have now learned through our firm commitment to a worldwide war, they can no longer think of attacking, us or any other free society with impunity, or without the guarantee of swift and terrible punishment no matter how many years it takes!



**The greatest strategic campaign in modern military history
U. S. and its allies positioned at the core of Central Asia**



Commander-in-Chief Bush

Life Along the River - Downtown Saigon Potpourri

by Mark Reveaux, Stony Creek, Connecticut



Sometime ago I sent in a large photo of the Saigon River. Some of the houses there were always impressive.

Four of us Air Force people rented a house off base. That lasted about four months until Viet Cong activities stepped up and we were pulled back on base. Our house was of French design with an open air kitchen with tiled roofing surrounding it.

We used to go down to the river and eat at the My Canh Floating Restaurant, which is where a 1930's Humphrey Bogart movie was made. It still had the shrapnel marks from a sapper charge, exploded from a parked bicycle next to the hull which killed several people on board in 1965. The food was pretty good. They served a kind of veal steak with vegetables. Never knew what it really was, although we could almost bet it's origin was from the base mess hall.

That was the year when we found more Base Exchange merchandise on the street than we did at the BX. All the cyclo drivers seemed to have a ready supply of spark plugs that also happened to be the same that the vehicles used at the motor pool.

At one restaurant I paid 30 cents for each pat of butter, as I discovered when given the bill.

The German hospital ship, *Helgoland*, came in port to treat wounded Vietnamese. A very pretty German nurse happened to appear next to me while I was eating papaya with a slice of lime on the verandah of the Continental Hotel overlooking the Saigon River. I didn't know German then (learned it twenty years later). Bad timing. Boy, was she nice.

Went to the Cholon Post Exchange a few times. I bought an attache case made from water buffalo. That street was very busy at the time, with a lot of traffic. Ferns grew in the center median of the road among closely spaced trees. The PX was featuring the Nikon *Nikonos* waterproof camera - should have bought it - and Seiko watches.

It sure sounds like we were living the life of luxury, but our work week was from 0700 to 1800, six days a week. The guys in the warehouse had no air-

conditioning and they were moving materiel in 110 degree heat. It was so hot that you could hear the corrugated tin roofs creak. No complaints, though, we could have been out in the bush instead.

Many of the streets had lots of markets. A Filipino friend and I used to buy aluminum cookware. In the monsoon we would skip from one shop to another on the street, walk on wet cardboard that the shop keepers put on the floor and browsed through thin aluminum cookware and utensils throughout the shop.

* * *

I recall Jane Fonda, she wasn't the only Hollywood personality who visited Vietnam - Robert Mitchum was another one. The difference between them was that Robert Mitchum visited Saigon and gave some support to all of us listening to the radio one night. The announcer, an Army specialist, I think, asked Mitchum, "Do you have any messages for the troops out there?"

"Keep your heads down," was Mitchum's reply in his typical low, commanding voice. I think lots of us appreciated that.

Meanwhile Fonda was busy helping the North Vietnamese treat our P.O.W.s with cruel and unusual punishment and calling all of us "baby killers."

She didn't have her facts straight. We didn't do anything like that and neither did anyone else in the Army or Marines. If they had, we would have heard about it. There were many incidents with responsibilities on both sides.

Instead, many of us at Tan Son Nhut bought toys, blankets and donated needed supplies that the C-130 people flew out to orphanages throughout Vietnam. Some of us had relatives send us care packages that we in turn donated to the orphanages. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of children at that time are alive and well today because of all that many of us in the armed services contributed - besides volunteering our time.

Many pictures of the river and Saigon appear on our Tan Son Nhut website. I visit it often, and maybe someday I'll spot that house we rented.

Meet At Tan Son Nhut in November!

Former Marine, Ron Huegel, Military Tours, will be leading another tour from November 3-14. The tour will include Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Dalat and many other interesting Vietnam locations. The cost will be \$2,550 per person, includes round trip air from Los Angeles, all hotels (3 star and above), all ground transportation within Vietnam and most meals. Itinerary is posted on www.battlefieldexpeditions.com

For more information and reservations, contact Ron at 90 Stonewood Place, Catasaugua, Pennsylvania 18032. Phone: (610) 231-3475, FAX: (610) 231-0389, or E-Mail: shutin40cal@enter.net



Vietnam Era Seabee Reunion

George McDanel, Vietnam Era Seabees Public Relations Representative announces the annual reunion to be held February 6 -8, 2004, in Hampton, Virginia. This event is open to all Vietnam era Seabees. Interested parties should go to www.tet68.org (overall event host) and download thier reunion registration form and follow instructions for attendance. You can also contact Dave Schill, Newsletter Editor *Vietnam Era Seabees*, Post Office Box 36781, Richmond, Virginia 23235, E-Mail: <http://vnes.50megs.com> or Phone: (856) 232-2273. Dave's E-Mail is: dwschill@aol.com George McDanel can be reached by phone at (618) 259-4694



Leadership Breakfast to hear Perot

The National Vietnam & Gulf War Veterans Coalition invites you to attend their Leadership Breakfast, to be held Friday, November 7, in Room S.R.325, Caucus Room, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. The breakfast will begin at 9 a.m., ending at noon.

The principal speaker will be the founder of the American Reform Party, Mr. H. Ross Perot, one-time presidential candidate.

Reservations should be made by sending a check for \$25, made payable to the "NV&GWVC." Mail to: Mr. William T. Bennett, General Secretary, National Vietnam & Gulf War Veterans Coalition, 3001 Veazey Terrace, N.W. #716, Washington, D. C. 20008 For further information call (202) 244-1326, or FAX (703) 931-9170. Cancellations will be accepted up to 48 hours in advance of the breakfast.



H. Ross Perot

Proudly Wear A Tan Son Nhut Patch

or put on airs with a MACV patch. \$5 for TSNA, \$7 for MACV. Send check made out to TSNA, at Public Affairs, TSNA, Suite 709, 330 W. Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510



Give a TSNA Gift!

CDs That Are Treasure Houses of Precious, Poignant Memories!

Member, Taylor McKinnon has already brought a lot of veterans back in time with the humor and poignancy of his CD "The Victors," dedicated to the heros of the 377th Security Police Squadron at Tan Son Nhut, including musical vignettes that sweep across the Pacific from Korea to Japan. (\$11.95)



Now he adds the powerful new 2CD set of "Vietnam: a Sublime Homecoming." (\$12.95) This superb 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 (no cash)

payable to TaylorMac Productions, Post Office Box 381, Patton, California 92369. ORDER BOTH FOR ONLY \$19.95!



THE BATTLE THAT SAVED SAIGON!

This powerful 4 CD Set, at \$49.95 receives raves from everybody who has purchased it. Beginning in the middle of the night of January 31, 1968, it follows the 377th Security Police Squadron's comnet into the heroic defense of Tan Son Nhut. This is a brilliant transcription of the original communications by Thomas Joyce, USAF. Please make check or money order (no cash) payable to: ANACHRON STUDIOS and mail to the Public Affairs Office, TSNA, Suite 709, 330 W. Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510



Books by Boyer

The Association is lucky to have a fine and gifted writer in Denis Boyer. His recently published *Prairie Whistles* is a trip into the past, weaving together tales of railroading from times gone by. The perfect Christmas gift for rail buffs, armchair historians, your children, and for yourself. Make out check or money order for \$16.95 to Trails Books, Post Office Box 317, 11321 Mills Street, Black Earth, Wisconsin 53515, or Call (800) 236-8088. When you call ask about Boyer's first book, *Northern Frights*, a superb study of rare folk legends, including one touching on Vietnam. E-Mail: www.trailsbooks.com



Can't Remember where your hootch was?



Go online to our TSNA Website www.tsna.org and ask Charles Penley. He has maps available for purchase that pinpoint all locales, where you worked, ate and favorite stops in 100 P Alley.



But actually, your pictures ought to be in your Tan Son Nhut Association membership file. Over the last five years, member after member has asked us to try and run a "member of the month" feature in *Revetments*. We have published many stories involving members that included pictures of themselves, buddies and the various locales of the story.

But now, we'd really like to get serious and establish a standard feature each month. Please send us a copy of a picture (please keep your originals) of you on duty in Vietnam, and a current picture.

Include a brief synopsis of your unit, what you did; and also mention what you are doing and what your interests are today.

Don't be bashful, time marches on for all of us, who cares! Send to Public Affairs, TSNA, Suite 709, 330 W. Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510.



2003, Member, Wayne Salisbury, now a powerful mover and shaker of the TSNA Board of Directors.

**Tan Son Nhut Association
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Suite 709, 330 W. Brambleton
Norfolk, Virginia 23510**



If this date ends in 2002
this is your last issue →

