

Volume 7, Volume 4

May 2005



A Memorial to the American Experience
in
Vietnam
“All Included—None Excluded”

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



Reunion 2005



Registrations Are Coming In!

The Reunion At Gettysburg, PA

Will Be One of The Best Ever.

September 2-4



Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot

Rev. Dr. James M. Warrington
Chaplain, TSNA



There was once a man named Henry Anderson who was faced with the progressive mental illness of his wife and he greatly feared that his two sons might be similarly afflicted. He wrote down in his last letter: I can neither face the awfulness of this fact nor endure the experience. I curse god and die.” And then he shot himself.

There was also a man named Charles Lamb, a famous English author of the early nineteenth century, who came home one day to discover that his sister, in a fit of insanity had killed their mother and seriously injured their father. Describing this incident in a letter to his friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

he wrote: “Thank god, I am able to be calm and controlled so as to do the best that remains to be done.”

No person is ready for life who does not have secrets of reserve strength by which he can face the inevitable crises of life. The final argument for God, and prayer, and a life of faith is that we cannot live without spiritual supports, any more than we can love without physical sustenance. The familiar hymn carries a message that is more than sentimentality. “I need Thee, oh I need Thee! Every hour I need Thee!”

The physical strength that a person needs in a long period of strain, or when fighting to overcome a wasting illness, is the result of sound habits of diet, exercise and physical care carried out for years in advance. Similarly the strength needed in spiritual crises cannot be summoned on a moment’s notice when there has been no advance preparation.

In a sense, all of life is a preparation for crisis. The best preparation is one that begins in a religious home at the time of birth, and is continued by habits of thought, prayer, worship, and study of holy scripture which enable a person to turn to God in trust and confidence at a moment’s notice.



Tristan, 21, PFC, 3rd Armored Calvary Regiment, lost his leg in a firefight in Fallujah on August 25, 2003. Two other soldiers in the APC also lost their legs. Wyatt has underwent 10 surgeries because of massive infections as a result of his wounds.

(See page 7 “Wounded Warrior Project”)



By Our Resident Artist ~ John Burke

Founded 1995

By
President Emeritus Don Parker
and
President Emeritus John Peele

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Traveling With The Carlson's

By Bill and Mary Ann Carlson

While traveling north on 1-5 in California several years ago, we spotted a neat metal sculpture of a bellowing cow in a large pasture beside the freeway. We were surprised and intrigued to see the sculpture, wondering how it had made its way to that rather unusual location.

A few days later an article appeared in our local newspaper concerning the sculpture and its creator, Dennis Smith. Dennis is a Vietnam veteran who was once stationed at Khe Sahn. In addition to the cow we admired, we learned that he and an-



other Vietnam Veteran, Jim Leach, had also created a Living Memorial Sculpture Garden dedicated to all veterans.



There are ten sculptures, a Memorial Wall, and a labyrinth in the Garden. Each sculpture expresses a different aspect of the life of a soldier, from enlistment to returning home from combat.

One sad sculpture captures the grief of a family member receiving the flag from a loved one's coffin. Another honors military nurses for their care of injured troops.

Most poignant of all the exhibits is the sculpture of a Prisoner of War languishing in a cage.

A spontaneous memorial has sprung up at that site, with people leaving items such as POW bracelets, dog tags, letters, and American flags. The most joyous sculpture depicts the return of a soldier to his family. Sculptures honoring the veterans of World War II and the Korean War are also an integral part of the Garden.

Adjacent to the parking lot stands The

Hot LZ Memorial Wall designed by Jim Leach. A helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War, he designed the Memorial Wall in memory of the 2,188 helicopter pilots who died during the conflict. Each Memorial Day and Veterans Day additional names are placed on the wall during special ceremonies. Attached to the Memorial Wall is a sculpture of two of these helicopters.

A large grove of Ponderosa Pines surrounds the Garden. The trees were donated by the United States Forest Service and planted—often during inclement weather conditions—by volunteers, including service groups, school classes, friends, and families of servicemen. Over 80,000 trees were planted in all, with the hope that one would survive for each serviceman lost in the Vietnam and Korean Wars—over 54,400.

We have found this to be a very moving memorial, and have visited it several times now. It is located on Highway 97, approximately thirteen miles northeast of Weed, California. More information concerning the Garden can be obtained by writing LMSG, P. O. Box 301, Weed, CA 96094. There are also several interesting websites available with information on how it was created, its creators, and pictures of the sculptures. I found these sites using Google, and searching for Living Memorial Sculpture Garden.

Welcome Home The Best Super Bowl Ad ...yet!!

By Bob Laymon

I may be an old fuddy duddy, but when I watched that video during the Super Bowl game, of our military arriving at an airport, I welled-up and shed a tear or two.

My Welcome Home was on Monday, September 18, 1972. It was a defining moment in my young life, but almost a “non-event” for our fellow American citizens in the CONUS. Just another “freedom bird” coming back from SEA. Routine.

When that white Continental Airlines Boeing 707-320, with the tail painted gold, taxied onto the ALCC transient ramp at Travis AFB, there was no reception. No base commander. No salute. No hand shakes. No “Thank You.” No “Welcome Home.” Certainly no brass band. Just Transient Alert and the Travis Pax Services Rep: “Keep moving across the ramp to Aerial Port in/out processing.”

Some on that flight would continue on

PCS to their next assignment (mine was to the 36th TFW at Bitburg AB in Germany) and others would be discharged from the military at the Travis Aerial Port, into a hostile, anti-military and unappreciative American society.

However, my then 18 year old bride, Gayle, had flown out to Travis AFB from the cornfields of central Illinois. Pretty gutsy for a very young lady, traveling on her own the first time, back in 1972.

That's all I needed for a home coming. And like the rest of my TSNA brothers, I just got on with my life, career and family. I left Vietnam in the rear view mirror for the past 33 years and focused on looking out the windshield....to the future.

But now I'm damn glad that American society and attitudes have changed towards our present day combatants returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. Today's service members deserve a big Welcome Home now, and we deserved a big Welcome Home...back in the day so long ago.

Welcome Home to each of you!

See ya in Gettysburg!

A New Member Remembers

By James “Skip” Miller

I discovered the TSN Association website thru Dr. James Stewart, whom I correspond with due to our affiliation with the 377th SP Association. I would very much like to join the TSN Association also.

For the record: I arrived at TSN 1 Apr 66 when the AP Sq was still the 6250th. I was stationed at TSN from 1 Apr 66 to 1 Apr 67. Initially housed in “hootches” by the main gate, later moved to the old French two story barracks by the orderly room/armory/base chapel area.

On Apr 10, 1966 I with several other troops were out on the firing range for day and night fire training when the base came under attack. When I arrived at the range, I was an A1C (E-4). During the attack, I and other E-4/E-5s became “slick sleeves” because we rapidly discovered that Silver/Blue stripes truly shine a long way in the dark. No issued BDU stripes at that time, but we found out later, you could buy those kind of stripes from the “locals” on your dime.

I came to TSN originally to be a Corrections Supervisor, but found out that the Army was performing that duty. I was

See Next Page

then assigned to the Customs section for approximately 3 months.

I was then selected for special duty in the 50 foot tower which was designated by call sign Alpha 15 and located in the "bomb dump" near the 051 gate. I also worked for a two week span in old French tower, call sign Alpha 9 which was located out in front of our "Checkpoint Charlie" machine gun bunker. This tower was used due to some modifications being done on Alpha 15. This being the adding of a ZEON Searchlight and generator for it along with a sandbag bunker at the base of the tower.

Alpha 15 worked in concert with Echo 12 which was the base water tower, my counterpart there was a AIC Charles Starr. We were members of the "select six". The six were the 2 full time assigned "cops", the two relief assigned "cops" and the two "in training" "cops."

You were "hand selected" and I do know two of the requirements were eyesight at 20/10 and ability to read and understand specialized maps and overlays. We also had received one week special map reading training from the US Army so we could call into Counter Mortar Radar and give them proper grids/azimuth directions for firing locations. We were also in constant communications with the Base Joint Command Post and our 377th CSC personnel. A-15 and E-12 did a lot of triangulations to come up with proper firing points as needed. Although we were "cops", we actually were doing "forward Artillery Observer" functions for the three aforementioned sections.

I was on duty in Alpha 15 when the base was again attacked and was considered instrumental in helping other "cops" from being killed or captured and getting assistance to them as fast as possible.

Chuck and I were both put in for the Bronze Star and AF Commendation Award for our actions AND WERE SHOWN THEM IN THE MAILING PACKAGES THE WEEK PRIOR TO OUR ROTATING TO CONUS, BUT I NEVER SAW THEM AFTER THAT.

It's A Small World

By Benny Goodman

I vividly remember a day in November 1971 when Sgt. Randy White, Ramp, Day Shift, came into Load Planning and told me that one of our troops had been caught in a mortar attack at the helo pad. I ask him who and was he seriously injured. Randy said that it was a guy named Dan Pearl who worked in the ammo loading

area. He said that he didn't know the extent of his injuries, just that a troop from the 8th had been caught in the middle of a mortar attack. He told me that he would be checking and would keep me advised. The next day he came in and said that Dan had been hit pretty badly and was in critical condition. Having one of our own Aerial Porters injured made the situation very personal with me. I asked Randy to find out where Dan was located and could he have visitors. Again Randy was off.

The following day Randy was back and said that Dan had been air evacuated out to Clark, then it changed that he was evacuated to Japan, and still later, I heard he was air evacuated to Travis. All this happened within 45 minutes.

I went upstairs and talked to a Major to see if he had updated information. He knew even less than I did, which wasn't unexpected as he had been in country a total of three days and was still in processing and attending briefings..

About 10:00 the next morning I got a call from the MAC Airlift Command Post that the C-141 mission inbound at 11:30 would be a quick turn for an urgent Air Evac outbound. I told my load planner to cancel the planned load and went over to ramp and talked with Randy. The Airlift Command Post had requested the Port's assistance in converting from cargo configuration to Air Evac configuration for 20 litter patients.

Randy had his crew and half of the warehouse cargo processing troops standing by when the aircraft pulled on the spot. 10 pallets of cargo was off the aircraft in less than 5 minutes and the reconfiguration began in earnest. Comfort pallet on and hooked up, rollers turned, aft facing seats installed, litter stanchions set-up, medical equipment loaded and enroute maintenance performed.

Not much needed to be said as everyone knew their job, med crews, med tech, maintenance, life support, and of course the Aerial Porters. Then 20 litter patients and 17 ambulatory patients were loaded and the aircraft blocked out exactly one hour after blocking in. The entire operation was a "work of art." The entire operation was immensely impressive. Maximum effort, minimum talk. It even impressed the Aerial Port Group Commander and 7th Air Force Commander.

By the time all the dust had settled, we still could not get any information as to the condition or whereabouts of Dan Pearl. Through out the years I often wondered about Dan Pearl. Did he survive? What was his condition?

Then one day not too long ago as I was reading guestbook comments on the TSNA website. I ran across someone's comment requesting assistance with making contact with former 8th APS personnel. . Noting that he was an Aerial Porter assigned to the 8th APS, I just had to write a few lines. After a couple of emails from him, it dawned on me that David Perelman and the Dan Pearl who damn near bought the farm in a mortar attack at the helo pad at Tan Son Nhut, must be one in the same.

We were looking for Dan Pearl, not David Perelman. The time frame is the right one, and the Aerial Porter from the ammo area just kind of confirmed it for me. No wonder we couldn't find out any info, Randy and I had the wrong name. After 33 years, it was a heart warming and joyous experience to find that indeed he had survived, put his life back together, and was doing well in Las Vegas. I would like to think that he was on that record setting air evac out of Tan Son Nhut. Who knows, maybe the cargo portion was cancelled just for him. I would like to think so.

I want to extend my personal thanks and gratitude to the Association for being the catalyst that resolved my long unanswered questions and establish a friendship that in reality began at a most unforgettable place, Tan Son Nhut AB.

La Casa Grande?

By Craig Campen

I was curious if anyone has come across any photos of the club-run, Mexican restaurant, *La Casa Grande*, on TSN. I believe it was on the main road, left side, a ways down after entering the main gate. From the main gate, I recall my hootch was in an area taking a left turn after the restaurant and back near the double perimeter fence. There was also a mosquito flick near the hootch. I can't remember the number of that area.

I have enjoyed David Koopman's web site and writings also.

Thanks for your work in the TSNA.

(Editor's note: I was at TSN late 1966 to late 1967. I don't recall a Mexican restaurant anywhere on base. It must have been after my time. The area you are referring to must have been the 1200 area, the large hootch area on base.)

He's Coming Home!

Submitted by Alfonzo Celaya

ISSUED IN SOLEMN WARNING, THIS DAY OF _____ 19 _____

FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, AND RELATIVES OF: _____

Very soon the above will once again be in your midst. De-Americanized, De-Moralized and de-hydrated, ready once more to take his place as a human being with freedoms and justice for all. Once more to engage in life, Liberty and the somewhat delayed pursuit of happiness.

In making your joyous preparations to welcome him back into respectable society, you must make allowances for the crude environment in which has suffered for the past twelve months. In a word, he may be somewhat ASIATIC, suffering from stages of VIET-NAMGITIS, or to much BA-Muoi-BA beer.

Therefore, show no alarm if he prefers to squat rather than sit on a chair, pad around in thong sandals and towel, slyly offers to sell cigarettes to the Postman and picks at his food suspiciously as if you were trying to poison him. Don't be surprised if he answers all questions with "I hate this place!" or "Number One! Be tolerant when he tries to buy everything at less than one half the asking price, accuses the grocery clerk of being a thief, doesn't enter a place that doesn't have a STEEL MESH SCREEN over the doors and windows and last but not least runs for cover every time someone slams a door.

Any of the following sights should be avoided since they can produce an advance stage of shock: People dancing, Television and round eyed women! In a relatively short time his professional like profanity will decrease enough to permit him to associate with mixed groups and soon he will be speaking English as well as he ever did. He may also complain of sleeping in a house and will probably refuse to go to bed without a mosquito net.

Make no flattering remarks about the EXOTIC ORIENT, or South East Asia. Void mention of the benefits of overseas duty, seasonal weather and above all ask before mentioning food delicacies of the Orient such as "Fried Lice (Rice). The mere reference of these particular subjects may trigger off an awesome display of violence.

For the first few months (until he is house broken) be especially watchful

when he is in the company of women, particularly young and beautiful specimens. The few American girls he may have seen since arriving overseas are either 88 years old or married to personnel who outrank him, therefore, his first reaction upon meeting an attractive "Round Eye", may be to stare. Wives and Sweethearts are advised to take advantage of this momentary shock and move the young lady out of his reach.

Keep in mind that beneath this tanned and rugged exterior there beats a heart of pure gold. Treasure this, for it is the only thing of value he has left. Treat him with kindness, tolerance and an occasional fifth of good whiskey and you will be able to rehabilitate this shallow shell of the man you once knew.

Send no more letters to APO 96307 after _____ days, for he is leaving the tropics in _____ days and heading for the land of the Big BX.

Future mailing address _____

FILL THE ICEBOX!

The Saigon Parade

By James "Skip" Miller

Here is a little more on the parade in Saigon in November 1966. The parade was being conducted to commemorate the 3rd anniversary of the overthrow of the Diem regime.

As I mentioned we (377th SPS) were there to be the rear guard in case something happened. We all complained about the entire idea of the parade and got nowhere. I informed my Congressman about such an idiotic idea and he said to write him.

I wrote Rep. Floyd Hicks D-WA, who did check with the Pentagon who informed him, "The odds were in our favor and the parade would go on." The powers that were in charge did agree to supply an armored vehicle for our support, and also told us there were going to be Marines with us.

We showed up 50 strong, full combat load and equipment, at the river front. We were driven there early in the morning in a Deuce and ½'s. After arriving we finally got our armored vehicle, a 716th MP Jeep (3rd MPS). The jeep had ¼ inch plate all around and a machine gun. I don't remember if it was an M-60 or a 50 cal.

The Marines finally showed up – A BAND!, followed by a Navy unit in

whites! But none of them had ever seen the weapon prior to that day and had not been given any ammo. Oh yes, we were a happy little group .

The Navy got a very rapid, important weapons training, given one clip each and told them: DO NOT SHOOT US – WE ARE THE GOOD GUYS!

About 9 a.m. RVN President Ky drove by standing up in a jeep to "review the troops." The papers I have in my foot locker say he did it under fire which was BULL! After that I noticed a couple of people on top of a high building and asked the MP's if we were supposed to have any people on guard there pointing them out. The MP's got on their radio, then hauled butt toward the building.

Maybe 10-20 minutes after that there was a large explosion, but not near what I had seen. We were all wondering what was up when the MP's came back. We were talking with them when the Navy OIC came up and asked what was going on. The MP Sergeant said, "Well there is now a current opening for a Lt. Cmdr. and Corpsman as they had been blown up. I never did hear if they lived or died.

Shortly after that, we did get some shelling from across the river but all of it went over us and into JFK square by the Catholic Cathedral and some government buildings. Many locals were hit there, but I don't believe any allied troops.

Right after that people came by and said we were starting, but the original route of 7 ½ miles was now 1 ½ miles. We almost flew the route and at the end our Lt. yelled, "Disperse and get on the trucks." We really boogied out of Saigon. I told people later I hoped whoever thought of the parade thought the possible deaths of the Commander, Corpsman, and the locals were worth it.

So that parade goes down infamously in history.



Saigon

Have Things Really Changed? A Friendly Flashback

By Lynn Patton

Having been bumped from my original flight to Tan Son Nhut, I arrived in country at Bien Hoa. I will always remember that bus ride down Highway 1 to Saigon. It was then it first hit me, I can't catch a Greyhound and go home from here! But like the good troop, I settled in fast to the routine at the 377th Security Police Squadron counting the days.

I had only been there a couple of months, which was March 1971, when I got the notice to stop by the Red Cross office on base. I learned that my Grandfather had died and that my parents requested that I call home. Call Home, the thought hadn't occurred to me that I could do such a thing. So the Red Cross gave me a slip to take to the USO in downtown Saigon. Apparently, it would allow me to have priority on making the telephone call since it involved a family emergency. And it was good to talk with my Mom and Dad, even though it was under such sad circumstances.

I used the telephone service at the USO one more time a few months later. This time it was to call my girlfriend on her birthday. This was a birthday present from my parents for my 21st birthday. Needless to say, it was something that couldn't be done very often due to the expense. I later found out that my first collect call in March cost approximately \$1.00 per minute.

Then I discovered the Mars Station on base. I think it was really M.A.R.S. It was just down the road from the 1300 area where I lived. I remember the few times I used that service. They would radio state-side to a Ham Radio operator, who would then make a collect call to the number you wanted. Each party would have to say "over" with everything they said, so the radio operator would know when to throw the switch. It was a very awkward system, but at least it gave you a little taste of home.

I don't know if that memory was brought to mind because it is once again the month of March, and I was reading the latest issue of Revetments, Or the fact that I just mailed calling cards to the young soldier my wife and I just "adopted," now stationed in Iraq. I think in this case, the latter. I know the value of a little taste of home.

As I said then, I will say now....God Bless our Troops.

The Legacy of the Vietnam War

By Ira Cooperman

It seems impossible to me that it has been thirty years since the Vietnam War ended with the fall of Saigon and the cessation of hostilities on April 30, 1975.

In a larger sense, the war has not yet ended for the families of the 58,000 Americans who died in Southeast Asia between 1960 - 1975. Or for the 300,000 who still carry serious wounds from the war. Or for the families of the 1,500 American soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines whose remains are in some foreign fields - the *missing in action*. Or for the families of the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese soldiers who died and whose final resting places are also unknown.

There is hallowed ground that former enemies alike share in the modern-day nations of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. I know, for like you and millions of other servicemen and women, I was there - stationed first at Tan Son Nhut (attached to the USAF's former 2nd Air Division in 1965 and then to the 7th Air Force Indications Center where I was a briefing officer in 1966), then later at 7th/13th Air Force at Udorn, Thailand, with occasional temporary duty visits to Vientiane, Laos.

Was it "destiny" or just pure luck that I returned home instead of my partner, Vincent A. Chiarello? For on a hot July day in 1966, the combination USAF-CAS intelligence mission for which we both volunteered - but had room only for one us - ended in tragedy.

Like me, Vince was a young college graduate and was a native New Yorker. Like me, he was an Air Force first lieutenant and was counting down his 365 days of duty in Southeast Asia until he would be rotated home. But *unlike* me, he was aboard "Dogpatch 2," an unarmed C-47 that was shot out of the sky near the border of Laos and North Vietnam on July 29, 1966, resulting in the deaths of all aboard.

For twenty-two long years, he was one of the American airmen whom the Pentagon continued to list as "missing in action." Finally, in June 1988, his remains were recovered, positively identified, and flown home for burial. In the words on his tombstone, Vince was "safely home at last."

For his family, some measure of closure had finally been achieved. But for me Vince's death remains a constant reminder - a metaphor - for the insanity

that seemed to characterize the protracted history of the Vietnam War. And the recounting of that war has absorbed many of us who are its veterans, who can never forget.

The toll war - any war - takes is incalculable. It is for the poets to attempt to explain what meaning there might be in the horror of these deaths. Vietnam was a particularly difficult war, for many - Asians and Americans alike - never accepted the necessity for it.

Writing of a much earlier Twentieth Century conflict, Archibald MacLeish, in his poem *The Young Dead Soldiers*, speaks for the vanquished of every war:

*The young dead soldiers do not speak.
Nevertheless,
they are heard in the still houses:
who has not heard them?*

*They have a silence that speaks for them
at night and when the clock counts.*

They say:

*We were young. We have died. Remember
us.*

They say:

*We have done what we could but until it is
finished it is not done.*

They say:

*We have given our lives but until it is finished
no one can know what our lives
gave.*

They say:

*Our deaths are not ours:
they are yours; they will mean what you
make of them.*

They say:

*Whether our lives and our deaths
were for peace and a new hope
or for nothing we cannot say;
it is you who must say this.*

They say:

*We leave you our deaths.
Give them their meaning.
We were young, they say.*

We have died. Remember us.

I will never forget - on this anniversary or any day - the many men and women proudly known as "Vietnam Vets," who served with distinction during difficult times - those who were fortunate to come home and those who didn't. Bless them all.



Camp Alpha

By Jim Dugan, Life Member

After MACV ended in-country R&R, they decided to let personnel travel to selected sites throughout Southeast Asia. They assigned that mission to USARV who, in turn further assigned the mission to the 90th Replacement Battalion. If I remember correctly, the 90th decided that Tan Son Nhut would be better for R&R processing than Bien Hoa. To carry out this new mission, the 90th formed the 178th Replacement Company at Camp Alpha, Tan Son Nhut. Thus, Camp Alpha was the R&R Processing Center in III Corps. The 22nd Replacement Bn. handled the same job for the northern sector of Vietnam out of Cam Rahn Bay.

In the year I was there, we processed thousands of military, and civilian, personnel from Camp Alpha. We provided orientation, baggage handling, and transportation to and from the commercial flights, which at that time were Pan-Am, and World Airways. We would handle anywhere from 7 to 8 flights a day, not to mention any flights returning to Vietnam. We worked a long, hard day from sometimes 5AM to 8PM a day, 365 days a year, 7 days a week, and loved it! We were not combat troops, and took a lot of ribbing from Infantry-types because of it, but without us at Camp Alpha, they were going nowhere.

I read somewhere in the past year, that Camp Alpha was the last place the U.S. flag was lowered in 1973, signifying the end of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. After we left, the Vietnamese looted the place.

About four years ago, Bob Need wrote and told me, that a historian from the U.S. Army Center for Military History was trying to contact former members of the 90th to give some input on a historical paper he was doing on the R&R program in Vietnam. I contacted him and provided a written interview. The result was a 35 page paper on the history of R&R from Vietnam. Tan Son Nhut is mentioned prominently in that paper. In his opinion, the R&R program out of Camp Alpha, Tan Son Nhut, was probably the greatest success story of the war. I'm proud to have been a part of it.

That's why I think more veterans of the 178th Replacement belong with the TSNA, and why I'm as proud to wear the Association patch as I am the USARV patch. When we're young, we don't give it much thought. But now, 35 to 40 years

later, we can put it all in perspective. What all of us did in Vietnam, whether infantry, truck drivers, clerks, cooks, or whatever, mattered.

We all made a difference in some way. It wasn't just infantry troops who were snubbed when we came home, it was all of us who served in that war. We all have earned the right to call ourselves by the greatest description I know: Vietnam Veteran.



The USARV patch
(U.S. ARMY, VIETNAM)

~The New Experience~ Adobe Reader

It wasn't easy, but we've succeeded in obtaining the vast majority of members email addresses. The "Special Edition" was emailed to 242 members. Hard copies were photo copied and mailed to 88 members. This was a savings of \$ 89.54 in postage alone.

I ask every member that does not have an email listed with the office to please send an email to: tansonnhut@aol.com. Check the web site (www.tsna.org), and if your name is not in blue under the column "Email Address", then more than likely we do not have your email registered on the office membership listing.

We need to email as many editions of *Revetments* as possible. Your cooperation is vital.

Some members could not download the PDF files. Some said all they could see was the front page logo and the pictures. I am not certain what the problem is. By all means go to the Adobe web site and download the latest version of Adobe Reader, version 7.0. One member was able to download the Special Edition after downloading 7.0.

A special **THANK YOU** for your cooperation. I know many of you probably wanted to scream at me for the "test" emails I sent, but in order to ensure things were operating properly it was something that had to be done.

Wayne Salisbury



Wounded Warrior Project Mission

The Wounded Warrior Project was founded on the principle that veterans are our nation's greatest citizens. The Project seeks to assist those men and women of our armed forces who have been severely injured during the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other hot spots around the world. Many of the injuries are traumatic amputations, gunshot wounds, burns and blast injuries that will retire these brave warriors from military service. These wounded soldiers will return to civilian life minus one or more limbs, or with serious wounds or disfiguring scars, and will face greater challenges today obtaining assistance and finding opportunities that would enable them to provide for themselves and their families.

The Wounded Warrior Project was founded to give a voice to this new generation of veterans facing unique issues and problems. The Project fills the vital need for a coordinated, united effort to enable wounded veterans to aid and assist each other and to readjust to civilian life.

The Wounded Warrior Project is a program of [United Spinal Association](http://www.unitedspinal.org), which is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations to the Project are tax deductible

Please go to their web site:
www.woundedwarriorsproject.org



*The End of The Line:
MSgt George Holmes*



MSgt George Holmes, left, talks with Warrant Officer Chet Colby, middle, and MSgt Tom Rafferty, right, at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, on May 3, 1948.

When Master Sergeant George H. Holmes retired in 1957, he did so as the last enlisted pilot of the United States Air Force. Holmes was the final aviator of the 3,007 enlisted pilots who had served in the United States Air Force and its predecessor organizations between 1912 and 1957. During their 45 years of service, "Sergeant Pilots," like Holmes, distinguished themselves by serving in peace time as well as during World War I and World War II.

George Holmes' service as an enlisted pilot spanned four decades and began just after the end of World War I. Holmes, who had served in the aviation section of the Navy in WW I, departed the Navy in 1918, after the war ended. George's post-war career began with a job as an auto mechanic in Syracuse, New York.

It only took a few months back in civilian life for Holmes to realize that flying was in his blood. He considered reenlistment in the Navy in 1919 until he learned he would be stationed on a destroyer. Knowing this, he decided instead to enlist in the Army, asking for duty in the Army Air Service (1918-1926). His wish was granted, and he was assigned to Hazelhurst Field, New York. By the summer of 1920, he found himself at Kelly Field, Texas. In August, the Army Air Service asked for volunteers for pilot training. George pounced on this opportunity.

At March Field, California, Holmes received his primary flight training on a Curtiss JN-6H Jenny biplane. In August of 1921, after finishing his advanced training at Kelly Field, 23 year old Corporal George H. Holmes earned his pilot's wings. George had a tough decision to make—remain a

Corporal with the 94th Pursuit Squadron or be discharged. "I was getting married," stated Holmes, "I needed more than a Corporal's pay." Once again, Holmes left the military for civilian life, taking a job with the nearby San Antonio Air Depot. In 1924, George joined the Army Air Service Reserves. In 1928, technological advances that were being made in aviation prompted George to re-enlist with the Army Air Corps (1926-1941). Holmes' second stint with the Army's "air arm" would last just 13 months as he left in 1929 to take a job flying in Central and South America for Pan American Airlines. When George reenlisted for the third time, in 1931, this time as a Sergeant in the Army Air Corps, it began his longest period of continuous service—fifteen years.

From 1931-1933, Sgt George Holmes served as a test pilot for the engineering section at Randolph Field, Texas. In 1934, when the United States' commercial mail contracts were canceled by President Roosevelt, the Army Air Corps was called upon to deliver the mail. George did his part, flying Fokker C-14s out of Chicago. Holmes' mail delivery had him flying to Nebraska, Missouri and Ohio. Even though he was flying long missions with no crew to help him, George was making just \$126 a month plus \$5 a day for each day he transported the mail. Within three months the airmail problem was solved and commercial airlines began delivering the mail again. This allowed Holmes to return to his test pilot duties at Randolph Field. During this time, George also helped instruct some of the student pilots with their primary training.

Holmes was well known at Randolph, not only for his flying ability, but also for his fun and adventurous nature. It was during these years at Randolph Field that SMSgt (Ret.) Robert H. Ritchey got to know George Holmes. "He radiated friendliness and he always had a smile," recalled Ritchey. Ritchey went on to say,

"One time in 1937 or 1938 they were desperate for four-engine pilots to test fly a B-17 that had previously made an emergency landing. Pilot records were searched and no four-engine pilots were found. George told them he had experience with four-engine planes. After he took the B-17 for a test flight, George, with a twinkle in his eye, told us, "Now I've finally got some four-engine experience."

By January of 1940, George had risen to the rank of Technical Sergeant. By March of the following year, he was a Master Sergeant. When the U.S. entered World War II on December 7, 1941, it soon became

apparent that experienced pilots were at a premium. Many "Sergeant Pilots," such as MSgt Holmes, were given temporary commissions as officers in the new Army Air Force (1941-1947). George was commissioned as a Captain. In the early years of the war, he served as a flight engineer, maintenance officer and test pilot at Luke Field, Arizona; Randolph Field, Texas; Roslyn Field, New Mexico; and Kelly Field, Texas. By 1945 he was a Major and the commanding officer of over 1,800 men of the 301st Air Depot Group. By the summer of 1945, he was a Lieutenant Colonel and stationed at the allied air base at Biak, New Guinea. There, as a member of the 4th Air Service Group, George flew B-25s on numerous combat missions to help bring about an end to both the Japanese "war machine" and WWII.

In 1946 George left the service again. However, six months later he reenlisted for the fourth time, this time as a MSgt, in the Army Air Force. Initially, he was stationed at Kelly Field and given the job of flying B-1 7s with Munitions Board members as passengers. "You should have seen the looks from the brass when they saw a Sergeant was in command of the plane with a Major serving as my co-pilot," said Holmes. When the Army Air Force became the United States Air Force in 1947, MSgt Holmes was one of only two enlisted pilots to trade in their old uniform for the soon to be blue uniform of the new USAF. Master Sergeant Tom Rafferty was the other.

Unfortunately, George Holmes didn't have his fellow "Sergeant Pilot" around with him for long. In 1949, near the ill fated Donner Pass on the California-Nevada border, a C-47 piloted by MSgt Rafferty crashed. Tom Rafferty was killed in the crash; thus becoming the 155th and last enlisted pilot to die while serving in the Air Force or one of its previous organizations. George Holmes now stood alone.

The year 1949 not only brought the beginning of MSgt Holmes' legacy as the last USAF enlisted pilot, but a new assignment as well. Starting in 1949 and continuing for the next 2 ½ years, George would call Brazil his home. His job was to pilot planes carrying members of the Joint U.S. Brazil Military Commission on their inspection trips. When he returned to the states in 1952, Holmes was assigned to the Military Air Transport Service and stationed in Great Falls, Montana. March of 1954 brought about George's last duty station with the Air Force when he was assigned to the Mobile Air Materiel Area Headquarters at Brookley Air Force Base, Alabama.

In 1957 at Brookley, after 38 years, 4

enlistments, and 9,057 hours of logged flying time, MSgt George H. Holmes retired at the age of 59. This marked the end of an era. There have been no enlisted pilots in the United States Air Force since.

MSgt Holmes retired in Tampa, Florida, where he was able to enjoy another activity he had always had a passion for—fishing. As George would sit in his boat upon the water, he would catch glimpses of Air Force planes taking off from nearby MacDill Air Force Base. This would often cause him to reflect about his experiences in the Air Force. "I had some close shaves," remarked Holmes. "One time in a crash, I sustained a broken back and was in the hospital for six months."

George had also flown with some of the most famous airmen of all-time. These included both Colonel Eddie Rickenbacker, the WWI "ace," and General Jimmy Doolittle of WW II Air Force fame. Holmes could also tell tales of having flown the famous WW I Army General, John "Black Jack" Pershing. "That isn't well known," remarked SMSgt Ritchey. "George had more clout than a lot of people reckoned."

Ritchey remembers George Holmes more for the man he was than for his accomplishments. "He was imperturbable in situations which could upset any of us," stated Ritchey. "He enjoyed being an enlisted man. He declined commissions many times. He used to say, "I don't care about a commission. If I have a house, clothes, beer in the refrigerator and good friends, then that's all I need."

When MSgt George H. Holmes passed away at the age of 66 on February 11, 1965, in Tampa, Florida, he did so having left his permanent mark on enlisted Air Force history.

Article from Airmen Memorial Museum Library



Tan Son Nhut Base Theater
Photo by Al Celaya

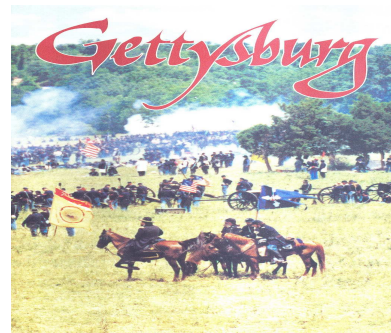
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Photo by Daniel McKegney

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Tentative Schedule of Events

Friday, September 2nd, 3 PM

**Hotel Check-in at the front desk and Registration in the TSNA Hospitality Suite.
The Hospitality Suite will be open until midnight for the greeting of friends and making new ones.
Heavy snacks and beverages will be available.**

Saturday, September 3rd

Breakfast Buffet 7:30 to 8:30

Tours of the Battlefield and Eisenhower Home will be done in two groups. The first group will be picked up at the hotel at 8:45. The second group at 9:15.

Hospitality Suite opens at 3:00 PM. Beverages and snacks until 5:30 PM.

Dinner Banquet and Program beginning at 6:00 PM. (Informal Dress Wear)

Hospitality Suite opens after Program and closes when Bill Carlson thinks everyone should go to bed.

Sunday, September 4th

Breakfast Buffet 8:00 until 9:00

Membership Meeting and Award Presentations at 9:00 AM

Farewells at 11:00

**Tan Son Nhut Association
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