

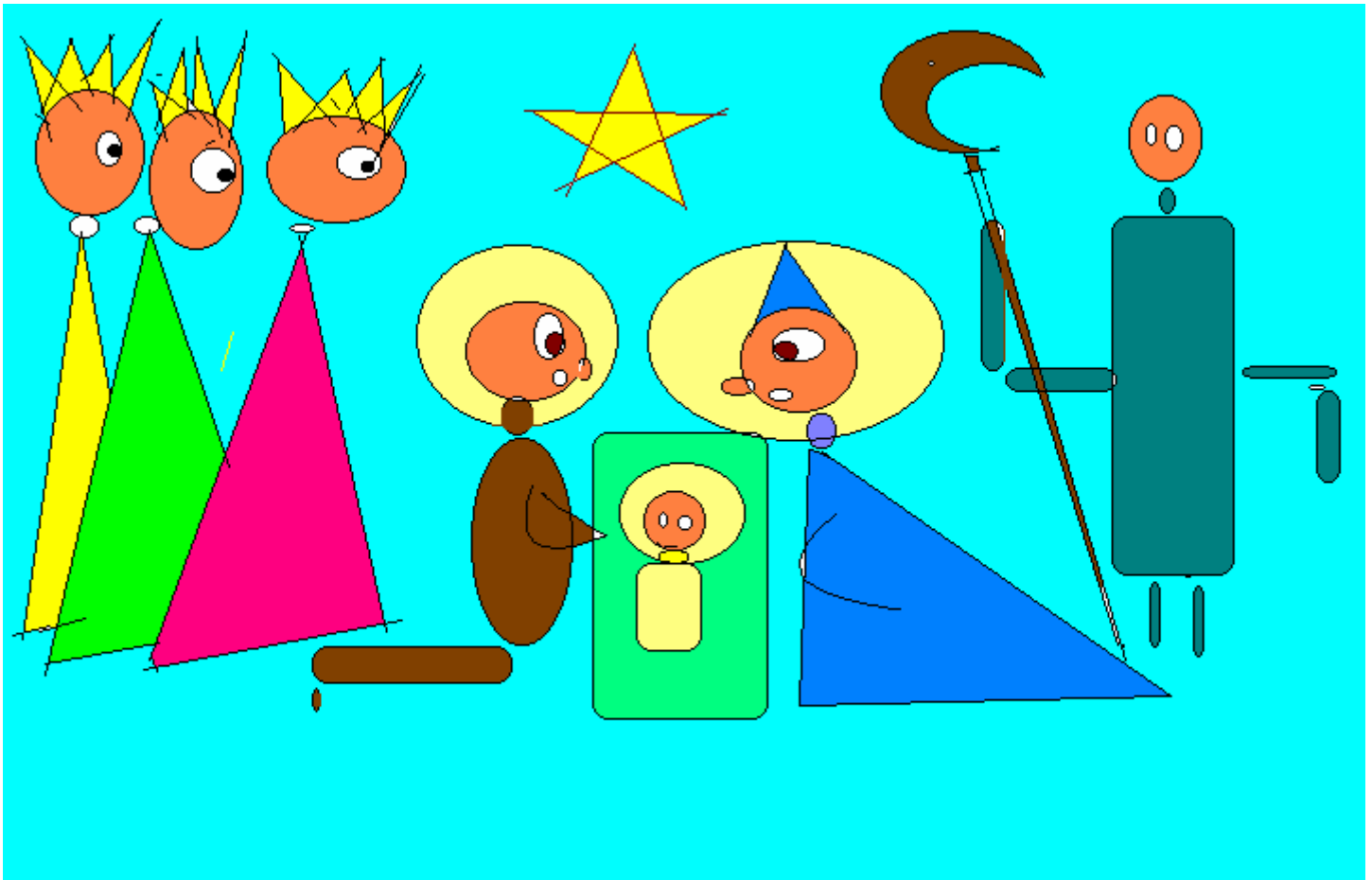
December 2006



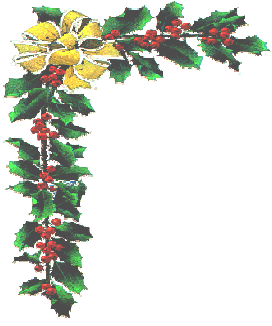
A Memorial to the American Experience
In Vietnam

REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



Computer Drawing by MSgt. Robert S. Need (Deceased)
Past TSNA Vice President
Publisher and Editor of Revetments



CHRISTMAS ABIDES

Chaplain Warrington
Christmas 2006

The joy of Christmas is
that as a fact in history,
and as a truth beyond history,
God, Who is the beginning of all

things, comes into the world to make all things new,
and, if we can carry that renewal into all our days,
we may lift even the modern world
out of its present grief
and nearer to its potential glory.

At Christmas we know what no man can guess
and no child can remember to tell.
Veil after veil is lifted--
the veils of habit, custom, fashion.
Then soberly we know
that it is our eyes that make us blind,
our ears that make us deaf,
our brains that make us dull,
our lives which make us dead,
and, weary of being Wise Guys,
we become...for a season...
the Wise Men who follow a star.

Christmas makes all things new--and young.
Nearly two millennia have passed
since the wedge of God
split history into a Before and After;
yet Christmas is still the youngest season in all the world.

Still the songs and carols bid the faithful to come,
joyfully and triumphantly.
The Wise Men still follow a star
that is not of this world
and only so come at last
to the heart of the world.

Still even the children of the Wasteland hear the tidings of great
joy,
and forget for a season "the rats feet over broken glass" in "the
dry cellar."

Still the Shepherds...kneel before the only Good Shepherd.
For a season, the Josephs of the world...
bow in adoration before the Carpenter of Heaven.

Still Herod,
sensing that the Lord of Eternity has come
to judge the lords of time,
draws the streamlined sword
to liquidate the terrible God
whom his heart hates
even while his lips deny.

For a season,
Even in the loss and lapse called time,
the world transcends time in the newborn child.
Who is to say: "Before Abraham was, I am."

Christmas, like dawn, forever is.
Dawn stands in changeless glory above the world.
Earth makes her own night...
but dawn abides
though earth fails to hold it;
and even so Christmas abides ever,
though the day passes,
and the weak world forgets.
For Christmas is
the dawn of Eternity upon time,
of God upon man.

Founded 1995

By
President Emeritus Don Parker
and
President Emeritus John Peele

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Tet 1968

By Frank Walker

360th Tactical Warfare Sq.

EC-47 Crew Chief

TSN May 1967 - Mar 1968



I was stationed in South Vietnam from March 1967 to March 1968 in the USAF serving with the 360th Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. I was one of the crew chiefs on the squadron's EC-47 aircraft and we were located on what was known as the Navy PSP right on the main taxiway at TSN. I spent 10 months of my tour at TSN and 2 months Temporary Duty at Hue Phu Bai North of Da Nang AB.

I worked on the grave shift which was from 2300 hours to 0700 hours the next morning. I know this is only an 8 hour

shift and we were told to not tell anybody about this since we were all supposed to be on 12 shifts. I can now let this out. Sorry. But, we had enough people and the good old C-47 was such a good, dependable, trouble free aircraft that we were able to do this. It was 90%+ thing on them to fuel them up and check the oil. Unbelievable with these oil leaking and oil burning radial engines, but this is how it was.

I have to start out with the evening of the 29th of January. Our shift made it to the flight line around 10:30 as usual for a head count and to go over aircraft status and aircraft flying the next morning. At 2300 hours we went out to the line to relieve the swing shift guys. On this night the whole base looked like it was covered in a dense fog. But, it wasn't fog at all. It was smoke blowing in from the Vietnamese in Saigon celebrating Tet, the Lunar New Year. Things were all festive with all the celebrating going on.

The next evening, which was the 30th of January and the evening before payday, a bunch of us hit this big Vietnamese night club on base. We put the last of our money together to have enough to buy a round of Pepsi. We had heard that

there was a "round eyed" Australian exotic dancer performing there that night. In other words, a stripper. Sure enough, she was there and did she ever perform. We then made it to the flight line as it was time for our shift to begin. But, on this evening, a 1st Lt. was there to talk to us. He had us all gather around him and said "Listen up men. Tonight you're going to get it". We all collectively said "Ah bull." He then came back with "I'm serious. The first thing you men do tonight when you get out there is get your bunkers repaired and ready".

We took him at his word and when we got out on the flight line we went to work.

Right next to the taxiway where we were was a pile of sand left from a previous bunker that had rotted down to this. We got fresh sand bags and shovels and using that pile of sand we filled bags, and rebuilt the bunker. It was probably around 6 or 7 feet across and around 3 to 4 feet high. We then went to midnight chow. When we returned to the flight line, we quickly preflighted the morning take off aircraft and then just kind of hung around looking and listening and, of course talking among ourselves, wondering if anything was going to happen.

At last, around 0330 to 0345 on the morning of January 31st, things started happening. There was a Seaboard World DC-8 jetliner heading down the taxiway in the opposite direction from us doing around 80 MPH! Lights started being turned off all over the flight line, and we could hear the SP troops chambering rounds in their M-16s. In the meantime a thin little A2C airman named Coil, who was in one of our aircraft sitting at the top escape hatch way up in the air was yelling to us "You should see what's going on" to us. He could see the area around the 051 bunker that we couldn't see due to the revetments being in the way. We were yelling back to him to get down. One of the guys finally went in the aircraft to get him.

About this time the jetliner came down the runway on take off roll heading in the direction of the fire fight. It eventually rotated and took off and was probably around 800 to 1000 feet up when it flew over the fighting. When it went over the whole sky lit up with tracer bullets shooting at it. We all grabbed our chest and said "Oh my God! There must be a million of them out there!" We then jumped into our newly build bunker along with one of those wonderful Security Policemen with his M-16 rifle and radio. The fight was on!

Somewhere beside the runway two of those beautiful Huey gunships took off and headed for the fighting and you talk about putting on a show! They flew round and round the fighting firing Mini guns and 2.75" rockets. I think they were members of a group known as

Razorbacks, and I'd hate to think how the battle would have gone if it weren't for these guys. They literally were spraying thousands of .30 bullets at the VC and NVA troops that were coming into the base.

Early on back at the other end of the taxiway revetments we saw a big fuel truck driving and speeding as fast as it could with a trail of tracers all around it. It was obvious that some of the enemy had penetrated pretty deep into the base. When the Huey's ammo ran low two more would come in and take over. All the while, Vietnam Air Force C-47s were dropping hundreds of those big flares over the area. There was also Air Force trucks speeding down the flight line carry more reinforcements to the battle. Again, it was those brave Security Police troops we had stationed there. Did these guys ever put up a fight! It was the Security Police that prevented the enemy from getting possibly hundreds of troops on the base. I, and those airmen with me that night will be eternally grateful. I think they were members of the 377th Security Police Squadron, if I remember right.

Just before daylight there were a couple of VNAF A1E's that came in and dropped some bombs on the enemy. I also heard that there were ARVAN troops hitting the VC and NVA troops from the outside.

Finally that wonderful sun began to lighten things up. Something we sure wanted to see. About this time we left the bunker to look at our aircraft and check for damage. Many were hit with small arms fire as there were bullets flying past us all morning coming from the heavy fighting at the end of the taxiway. While out looking we were hearing the sounds of these bullets flying past and the sound of aircraft getting hit. We soon made it back to the safety of our bunker.

Needless to say we didn't have pay call that next morning. We didn't make it back to the 1200 area and our barracks until around 1730 hours covered with dirt and dead tired. We grabbed all the rest we could get before having to go back in

that evening.

It was during this time that I had mess check duty at that big terrible chow hall right across from those two giant radar domes. I think it was Mess Hall #4. Worse food in the Air Force! Just can't help here but add that when I was TDY at Phu Bai we ate in a US Army mess hall and I gained weight while there. Back at TSN I lost it and when I left Vietnam I weighed 143 pounds on my 5'11" frame. This was thin! Anyway, during this mess check duty that day the mess hall was feeding everybody. Thousands walked in that day for food including thousands of Army troops. There were no Vietnamese workers getting to work; there was a mountain of dirty dishes waiting to be cleaned, and the floor was covered with dirt and mud. Who eventually cleaned up that place I still don't know. I never did see a KP duty roster go up anywhere.

From the morning of the 31st of January until I departed TSN and Vietnam there was always something going on. Fire fights on the perimeter, gunships doing their thing, fighter support dropping bombs near the base, etc. I also witnessed a SP jeep one morning come flying around a building heading for the terminal building with its M-60 firing constantly.

Snipers were up there and had been firing at us working just outside a hanger doing a wing change on one of our Gooney Birds. It was just after midnight on the morning of February the 18th that we got hit by the first of many rocket attacks. The 122mm rockets. What stands out in my mind that morning was that I saw the things coming in. I was off that night and I and the guy that slept above me were just getting ready to turn in when I looked out the side of the barracks and saw these red flames coming in toward us. I told my bunk mate "Look at that. I wonder if that's rockets". It didn't take long and I knew that is what it was. We immediately jumped into our jungle boots and headed for the big bunker between the barracks. Looking outside the end door all was red from all the fires that were burning on the base. One of the big

contributors to these fires was the base Chapel. It burned to the ground. This was one of several rounds that were obviously aimed at 7th Air Force Headquarters.

It was one of these rocket attacks that brought the only injuries to any of my squadron mates and it occurred around 0530 one morning. At the time I was on one of our tugs getting a cup of coffee at the radio shack near our orderly room. I took cover in the small bunker behind the corner of one of the taxiway revetments.

Our guys, SSgt. Howe and A2C Coil were standing on each side of the big bunker on our ramp when they were both hit by shrapnel. One in the face and the other in the shoulder area. Nether were serious wounds but it was funny they were both just inches from the safety of the bunker. There were several specialist working on our aircraft were seriously wounded with one losing an ear and an engine troop suffering a bad leg wound.

When the shelling ended I grabbed another cup and drove back to the big bunker. I walked in with flash lights all aimed at me when I entered standing there with a steaming cup of coffee asking "what's going on"? This kind of broke everybody of the shock they were in. They had been doing all they could to treat the wounded and had just sent them off to the dispensary in our panel truck.

Finally March came and time to process out. Considering when I was headed to I thought sure they'd have me flying out of Nam in a C-130 just as I had arrived coming from Clark AB following an in route TDY there as I was heading for Mactan AB in the Philippines. My four year enlistment was up after my tour and I was trying to make up my mind about reenlisting or getting out. I extended my enlistment to give me more time to think about it. This was, after all, a big decision. Of course this was going from an isolated to a remote tour and the guy at Personnel told me they can't do this. I told him I guess I had asked for it by smartly writing "World wide" across my

forecast sheet. I figured someone at the big Personnel headquarters at Randolph AFB got a good laugh when he put my name down for this assignment. Anyway, I extended again and took the assignment.

About Mactan AB, this is a whole story itself and I ended up there for 15 months. Anyway, I ended up flying out in a big orange Braniff International Boeing 707 jetliner. I couldn't believe it.

I hope I didn't overlook too much about this time of my tour at TSN. It is certainly a time I will never forget. Except for some action at Phu Bai my tour was pretty much uneventful until Tet hit. In the end it made it just that much sweeter to get out of there.

What I did get out of my tour in Vietnam is some wonderful life- long buddies. We were true brothers-in-arms and we still

The weather was ideal for placing the Tan Son Nhut Association wreath before the polished, black panels of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial on November 11. If the first frost of the season had arrived before this day, it could have been called Indian Summer.

I joined with fellow members Bill Grayson and Vic Brown to participate in the ceremonies at 1300 hours. I'd delivered the wreath to the National Park Service at 1000 hours and rendezvoused with Bill and Vic near noon to stand and wait for the procession to the wall to commence. I estimate there were over thirty in the march. Waiting and marching. Does life ever really change for the veteran?

The tributes and benediction were

and asked if he could be honored by allowing him to have his picture taken with Bill, Vic, and me. He was from Hanoi, interested in our association and what it represented, and was too young to have any memory of the war. I believe he was attracted to our wreath because its banner represented a place in Vietnam and not a military unit. This incident also tells me that after many years the wounds have finally begun to heal.

Though the wounds have begun to slowly heal, we can never, ever forget the sacrifices of those with whom we served. We must continue to go to The Wall on an annual basis, and I will do so as long as the association honors and allows me to perform the duty. Bill and Vic feel the same way, and we are



Frank Walker

have this bond. We knew we could depend on each other no matter what and in a war zone this is a must. And I was stationed with so many that more than fit the bill.

Just goes to show there is always good that comes out of our trails life brings to us.



From Left - Dale Bryan, Bill Grayson and Vic Brown

Veterans Day Wreath

By Dale Bryan

The chaplain's benediction was still a few hours hence, but prayers for a perfect day had already been answered.

moving as we all remembered those we served with long ago. Eyes cannot remain dry when we speak of those who did not return but have their names etched upon The Wall. Then we finally placed the wreath before it.

An interesting event occurred after the wreath was in place and while we were taking some pictures. A young Vietnamese gentleman approached us

looking forward to next year.

(Editors Note: Thank you, Dale, Bill and Vic for representing the Tan Son Nhut Association. I am very proud to be associated with each of you.)

Please see back page for additional photos.

Getting There And Settling In

By Tom Hildreath
1876th Comm Squadron

It was late 1967 and I was looking forward to putting my 18-month assignment to Incirlik AB behind me. I had filled out my "dream sheet," knowing I would have no problem in getting my base of choice, Tan Son Nhut AB in Vietnam. My motivation for doing this is unclear at this late date. I was 22 years old, single, curious about Vietnam, and certainly tired of eastern Turkey, where there was no contact with the opposite sex and no social life. I had spent way too much time bending my elbow at the club.

In the 307X0 Telecommunications Systems Control career field, the Air Force had three requirements for service in Vietnam, and I met two of them handily. First, the applicant had to be a 5-level (certified competent at the job), and second was the applicant had to have at least one overseas tour under his belt. The third requirement, a few days advanced M-16 training at Hamilton AFB, California, would be taken care of before departing the USA. The M-16 training was excellent overall, as was most of the advice we got from the instructors. One exception to the good advice was being told not to bring much in the way of uniforms, as we would be issued SEA lightweight fatigues right away when we got to Vietnam. I brought only one set of fatigues, a big mistake. I didn't get my SEA-issue uniforms for a couple of unhygienic months. The supply chain's flaws were obvious, but my own lack of thought was inexcusable. Oh well, live and learn.

My recollection of final approach into TSN on 2 June 1968 involved some sort of briefing by a nervous flight attendant, fighters working over a target not far from our flight path, and quickly emerging from the plane into the hot, bright, humidity of Saigon. We were hustled across the ramp, I assume to the passenger terminal, though I think we

stopped at some sort of shelter for a while first.

In-processing at the 1876th Communications Squadron began shortly thereafter. In keeping with tradition, as a newbie I was assigned a top bunk on the top floor in one of the green two-storey barracks. I quickly mastered the free-fall from the bunk at 0300 while grabbing flak jacket and helmet. It became one quick motion, once I learned which part of the plywood floor belonged to me bunkmate, and which was my bunkmates. One night a 122mm rocket hit a C-130 across the street. The aircraft exploded and though I was a few hundred feet away, the concussion and heat seemed to go right through the screen sides of the barracks. Lots of hot metal fell in the 400 area that night. One night we thought we were going to be issued our M16 rifles, which were secured in a locked CONEX container. I distinctly recall that the person who had the keys could not be found. One day I eventually I got my hands on an M16 from the CONEX for a minute or two and then it was put away in the box again. No target practice, no real familiarity with the weapon. The training at Hamilton would have to suffice. Ultimately, I never had to fire the weapon in Vietnam.

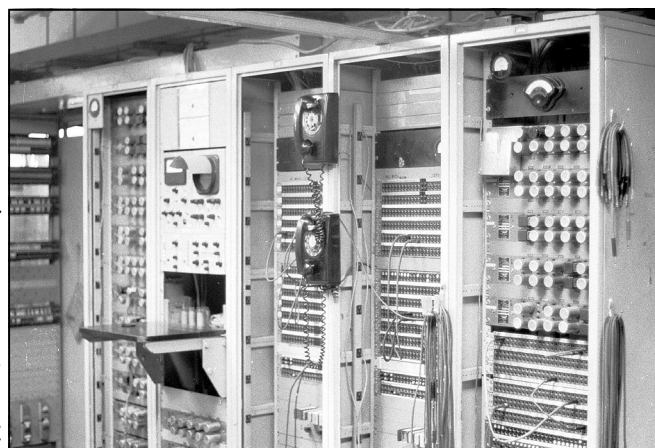
THE 307X0 CAREER FIELD

AT&T Long Lines personnel performed the Tech Control function at most US bases. The USAF bases in the States that had Tech Control facilities (TCF) were the larger installations with their own direct military trunks to other bases. These were often run over USAF radio systems. Andrews, McClellan, Offutt, and a few other bases were in this category. This meant that there was a permanent imbalance in the manning requirements for the 307 career field, with a great need for tech controllers overseas, and much less need stateside.

Because of the classified nature of the messages that we handled, a TS clearance and the need to know was required

to enter a TCF. Once inside, you saw a room filled with old-fashioned switchboard operator's panels. These were actually patch panels for voice and teletype (TTY) equipment. Instead of operators sitting in front of the panels, several controllers with long patch cords draped over their shoulders would be walking the panels while talking to people on push-to-talk telephones, or typing madly on a keyboard. Several rows of printers would be off to one side, with one or two of them printing out the old "quick brown fox" message used as a basic check of TTY circuit quality. Data circuits were in use at the time, and these often appeared on the same patch panels as the TTY circuits. Normally there was no way to monitor these in the TCF, as they went to punched card machines, their signal codes appearing as *punched chads* on an 80-column wide IBM card.

A separate set of panels was populated with voice and tone group circuits. The former included most of those used by the base switchboard operator. If the base operator could not establish contact with the phone operator at a distant base, the "go to" shop to get a problem fixed was tech control. Mind you, tech control didn't actually "fix" anything at the TCF, they used the patch panels to identify the location and possibly type of



equipment that was defective, and issued a work order to the appropriate maintenance shop to actually get the work done. At TSN, the Army's Integrated Wideband Communications Stations (IWCS) did most of the work on voice circuits.

The tools the controllers used on this job were racks of test equipment such as oscilloscopes, signal generators, voltage and decibel meters, as well as various types of analyzers. If the problem was with nearby equipment or lines, the controller would call the associated maintenance shop on base. If the problem seemed to be off base, the controller would pass on the problem description to the next TCF up the line. This could be thousands of miles away.

Individual TTY circuits were combined together by multiplexing, and this process resulted in what was called a *tone group*, which sounded like an angry hornet's nest buzzing away. A single such tone group would occupy one voice channel. The voice channels in turn were multiplexed into subgroups and supergroups, sometime containing thousands of voice circuits for in-theatre transmission. For longer distances, such as spanning an ocean, a tone group might travel by submarine cable, or it might be placed on a high-frequency radio system. Many tone groups could be found on these short wave frequencies well into the 1970s.

If there was a problem with a given TTY trunk, such as a shortwave broadcaster illegally using a frequency assigned to a TTY trunk (not that unusual) this meant the trunk would have to be routed on alternate paths, perhaps thousands of miles longer than its normal. Interoperability for these communications circuits was excellent, and a troubled Air Force trunk could be alternatively routed over systems operated by any branch of the service. This was possible because the Tech Control facilities were standardized under the Defense Communications Agency (DCA), and inter-service cooperation was a daily event. At this time the Army, Navy, and Marines had TCF's operated by dedicated tech control personnel. Again, at TSN most work of this nature was done by IWCS, which I believe was run by the Army's 69th Signal Bn.

At TSN in 1968-1969 there were four different locations on the base where Air Force tech controllers worked. All of these Air Force facilities were connected

to IWCS. We worked daily with the Army tech controllers, many of whom were draftees with considerably less experience than their USAF counterparts. Still, they were quality troops and the service we got from them was outstanding. I talked to them daily, but never got to meet any of these guys. So big was TSN that I only had a hazy idea of where the Army controllers worked, and I recall it was somewhere near the antennas for the Time-Division Mux (TDM). I know, that didn't clear it up one bit, but that's my best shot.

The primary USAF tech control facility and administrative office for the 307 career field at TSN was through an insignificant doorway in a non-descript building. To get to this TCF you walked past a little pond populated for a while by ducks that were put there by the Comm Squadron commander. Though we had no radio gear, we retained the call sign "AGL" at the main control. The function of this control facility was primarily to support the big PAFCO TTY communications center nearby.

Inside PAFCO, a single tech controller worked in support of perhaps a dozen TTY operators who were members of the 291X0 career field. The Air Force was using a dated system for TTY messaging known as *torn tape relay*. The name implies relaying a message from one place to another. These relays had been replaced at most other locations around the globe. USAF was certainly capable of fielding newer, smaller, faster, more reliable TTY systems operated by fewer people. The answer to why USAF TTY communications at TSN were mired in obsolescence needs to be sought from someone higher up the chain of command.

One day while at the AGL patch panel there was a "wump" outside. A Huey had crashed and burned in the nearby parking lot. There were fatalities, but brave witnesses saved a couple of passengers from the fire that consumed much of the chopper. AGL had many circuits that came through DaNang, and one other day while I was working they all suddenly became "garbled" (unintelligible). What could have happened at DaNang?

This turned out to be a big munitions explosion. Years later, while training for the Air Force munitions career field, I would learn of the details.

Speaking of new technology, it was at PAFCO in 1969 that I saw my first electronic "memory", a device that appended four-letter station identifiers to the TTY messages. Most of the TTY circuits ran at less than 75 bits per second, the speed at which unencrypted channels operated for a throughput of 100 words per minute (WPM). The crypto equipment used in those days required a lot of support, which accounted for perhaps 20% of the tech controller's time on the job. About 15 years later, we would learn that the notorious Walker family had compromised much of the military communications security (COMSEC) of the Viet Nam era for small payments from the Russians. My feelings about these traitors are strong.

The third location for USAF tech controllers was at 7th Air Force Headquarters. This facility had its own TTY torn tape communications center, which if I remember correctly primarily handled MACV traffic. A single 5-level controller manned the tech control position at HQ. There was no need for the tech control NCOIC to sleep here, but he did. Nightly he could be seen behind the panels on the floor, without benefit of blankets or pillow. Apparently the security of the steel reinforcement around the bottom floor of this building is what caused him to endure the visible sores and discomfort.

Through this TCF passed the "Red Rocket" TTY messages which were "heads up" for the overflight of the SR-71 Blackbird. I recall a series of messages at 7th AF HQ that originated in South Vietnam, and may have gone as far as Washington. They were about an unfortunate Vietnamese farmer who had been killed by a phone pole that fell loose from the sling of a helicopter. Much of the message series had to do with determining the worth of this hapless soul, with a lot of deliberation being based on how many animals he owned.

If the Vietnam War was micro-managed,

much of this was accomplished through HQ 7th AF via TTY messages. I recall countless frag orders that were sent to Washington for review. All the details of upcoming air strikes were contained in these sensitive messages that went back and forth halfway around the world over what may have been a compromised communications system. How many American lives were lost because of this? Perhaps my feelings towards the Walker family can be better understood in this light.

A fourth Tech Control location opened up late in my tour in the Pulsed Integrated Automated Communications System (PIACS or PIAACS). I think this was not far from PAFCO, and as I recall, the PIAACS scheme was a very large and complex one. All sorts of equipment bays, fresh from the states, were wired up at a half dozen places in Vietnam for this system. Lots of programming was involved, and I recall volunteers being used to wire up little matrix boards. The purpose of this system may have had something to do with real-time bomb damage assessment. It was still in the construction phase when I left for "the world." A typical shift at the various USAF TCF's at TSN had one 7-level and three 5-level USAF tech controllers on duty working the circuits over which moved many hundreds of TTY messages per hour. I think the Air Force had

on to other SEA bases. In addition to the people mentioned above, there were several other 7-levels and at least the one 9-level at the AGL administrative office during the day shift, and two PIACS 5-levels. The traffic load for TSN was immense and unrelenting, a 24/7 operation for sure.

Here is an attempt at describing 15 minutes on shift at AGL tech control:

Customer at TSN calls AGL on the phone reporting that his TTY circuit XX59 is unreadable. He knows this because there is random "garbage" printing on his roll of paper.

AGL controller uses a patch cord to plug in his "monitor" printer, and verifies that it is indeed garbage. Calls out to others on his shift that, "we lost XX59."

AGL controller calls the Army IWCS tech control and advises them that XX59 is out of service. At the same time, he plugs in a "distortion analyzer" to see if there is a pattern to the problem, which would be visible on the instruments screen. No pattern is seen, just garbage.

IWCS calls back a few minutes later advising that a high-frequency radio trunk has been lost between Clark AFB and McClellan. Reason unknown at this time. XX59 has been down for six minutes at this point.

Customer on XX59 has called his boss, and AGL tech controller is now hearing from a Major about the need to have "his" circuit back in service quickly. "Working on it, sir" say the AGL controller, with a couple of other comments on the side when the push-to-talk button is not pushed. XX59 has a restoration priority (RP) of only 2 Alpha, and the controller already has several higher priority circuits out of service that he is working on.

AGL phone rings again, it's the tech controller at PAFCO relay, and they lost contact with Hickam AFB on all four circuits. Though the problem with XX59 is fading in importance, it is now eight minutes since it went down. In two more minutes a report needs to be written and a message sent to the Defense Communications Agency reporting the loss of XX59.

AGL phone rings again. TTY maintenance wants AGL controller to patch over a piece of gear so he can perform scheduled preventative maintenance (PM) on it. "Gimme a minute-real busy right now", says the AGL controller. "Yeah, sure, I've seen you guys on the night shift before, I know how busy you are" says the TTY maintenance troop jokingly.

PAFCO calls, advising all Hickam circuits are back in service. Though no report to DCA will be necessary, it can take PAFCO hours to recover from this interruption, because the lost messages will need to be retransmitted via the slow, overloaded TTY circuits.

Major from XX59 calls again, "What are you guys doing to help me? I need an explanation!" XX59 has been down for 12 minutes now.

AGL calls the IWCS controller, requests status of trunk that carries XX59. "Gonna be down for along time, microwave system at San Miguel was taken out by a typhoon. But guess what, I got your XX59 on alternate routing and it's looking good. How come your not passing traffic on it yet, Air Force?"

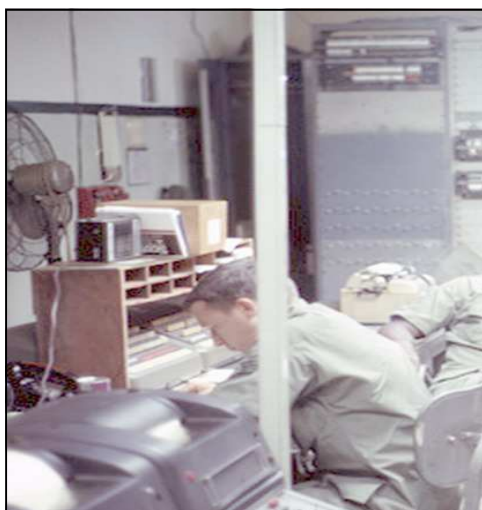
AGL controller looks at the analyzer and sees a good signal on XX59. Damn, "I hate it when Army gets the jump on me" he mutters.

AGL controller calls customer at XX59, advises him circuit is back in, go ahead and resume traffic. Airman at XX59 says, "we got no traffic going on that circuit until day shift. No big deal." AGL controller concludes there will be no sweat "fudging" on this one, no lost traffic on a 12 hour minute means no report to DCA necessary. Good deal, he thinks, "I'll get to look at that new Playboy magazine."

PAFCO calls, "Hickham circuits are down again-get an alternate routing, will 'ya?"

So much for the centerfold.

That's how it went at AGL, 24/7, for a very long time.



Tom Hildreth—1969

perhaps 250 dedicated TTY circuits had terminated at TSN, and there may have been a similar amount for the Army. Surely the Army handled hundreds if not thousands more "through circuits", those which did not terminate at TSN, but went

My Thanks To The Tan Son Nhut Association

**By Gilbert Estrada
7th AF Hq.
Operational
Intelligence Directorate**

I became a member several months ago but haven't had time to write anything or even look at the Web site, thanks to a hurricane that wiped out a good portion of my town — Biloxi, MS.

I just wanted to thank the Tan Son Nhut Association for being here. For years I have tried to find former members of my unit, Operational Intelligence Directorate, Hq 7AF, to no avail. Then it happened. About a week ago one of my former airmen saw my name in the members list and contacted me.

During one of the rocket attacks after Tet began, he was severely wounded, but thankfully, he survived and was able to finish out his enlistment. We have had quite a time emailing back and forth and talking on the phone.

He was one of my boys. Most of them were 18 or 19 — I was 40 — and after he was wounded, he was shipped off to Japan so quickly I didn't get a chance to visit him at the Field hospital, and then after leaving Vietnam, I forgot his name.

So for 38 years I had been kicking myself about that, and now he is back and we are planning a Spring meeting.

Thanks to the TSN Association and you guys who formed it. Many of us are lucky enough to find each other — it's a good feeling.



What It Takes To Make The New CD's

**By Charles Penley
Director of Communications
TSN Association Webmaster**

One of the members asked me what happens when a Tan Son Nhut 2006 CD is purchased:

1. I acknowledge the email that Johnnie Jernigan sends me, containing the name and address of the individual who purchased the CD.

Then I Go To Work

2. A personalized graphic is made for the person who purchased the CD. (10 minutes)
3. The graphic is then placed into the folder and coded with the proper html code.
4. The code is then checked to ensure it is working properly.
5. A laser is used to burn the design into the top of the disc. (23 minutes)
6. The CD is then burned with the information and photographs onto the proper side of the CD. (6 minutes)
7. The CD is then checked to ensure that by placing it into your computer's CD drive, it will open automatically and then I check various pages, to ensure they are working properly.
8. The CD (s) is then packed for mailing and the buyer is notified.

That's forty minutes to make the one CD. For those who buy the 2nd CD it takes approximately another twenty minutes.

It took over two hundred hours and approximately ten months, to make the Tan Son Nhut Association 2006 CD and the Revetments Archive CD. Many emails were written or phone calls made to individuals asking permission to publish their material.

Time and money was spent to obtain the declassified documents and scan each page to be placed on the CD's.

Major Thien and The Fall of Saigon

By Mr. Aaron Bougourd



Major Thien on left, his niece, Hong Nguyen in sunglasses

Major Ly Kim Thien was born the 22nd of August 1945 in the village of Tan Phuoc in Go Cong Province, South Vietnam. He was educated at Petrus Ky in Saigon. In 1964 he decided to follow in his older brother's footsteps and joined the South Vietnamese Air Force (SVNAF). Thien's family had strong government connections; his father was a Security Administration official, his brother was a Lieutenant Colonel in the SVNAF, and his brother-in-law, Pham Van Nhan, was chief of police of one of the districts of Saigon.

Tien was commissioned as an officer of the Republic of Vietnam Air Force in 1964. After completing officer training at Nah Trang Air Training Center, he was assigned to the 1st Air Division and stationed at Da Nang Air Base from 1966-68, where he served as section chief of a ground transportation squadron under the 4th USAF Advisory Team. Members of this team included Major Martin and MSgt. O'Donnell. Ground transportation units of the 4th USAF Advisory Team were charged with the service and maintenance of all airfield ground equipment such as fire-fighting equipment and vehicles used to transport ordinance from ships in port to aircraft.

In 1968 Thien was assigned to the 2nd Air Division based at Nha Trang, and served in progressive leadership roles as Deputy-Chief of the General Service Squadron and then Deputy-Chief of the Transportation

Squadron /Ground equipment maintenance. After additional training in accounting and commissary management, Thien was assigned as Chief of the 2nd Air Division Base Exchange. He worked closely with members of USAF Advisory Team 6; team members that he remembers include Captains Freeze and Dugan and Major Wilson. Tien received in-country USAF training in programs and planning in ground equipment maintenance for the F5E fighter. In 1974 he attended the Squadron Officer's School (SOS) at Tan Son Nhut, where he underwent 4 months training and study in international communist political theory and organization. He was promoted to captain in 1970 and was awaiting his scheduled promotion to major when the South collapsed.

The 2nd Air Division evacuated Nha Trang in March 1975. Falling back to Tan Son Nhut airbase in Saigon, Thien's brother, Lt. Colonel Son, arranged for the evacuation of his family from Nha Trang to join him in Saigon. Thien's Squadron was ordered to stand at Tan Son Nhut, but the planned air evacuation of airmen's families to Con Son Island on the 29th April was thwarted when the base came under heavy rocket attack.

Major Thien remembers the last days leading up to the fall of Saigon as if it was just a week ago. His family was staying in the SOS Officer's Barracks with no news of what was going to happen. On the night of the 26th of April 1975 Major Thien decided to go to the former HQ compound of General Westmorland to see if any aircraft were going to be sent to evacuate the families of officers and airmen. At 7:30 pm a USMC helicopter landed full of marines in new combat uniforms. The marines told Thien he could not enter the compound, but Tien produced his ID card and told the marine officer he was on duty and that he had orders to go to the compound, so the marines let him pass. Thien did not realize that this would be the last Americans he would see in Vietnam.

When Thien finally gained access to the compound he could not believe his eyes; it was complete chaos. Officers and men were discarding their weapons and uniforms en masse. Unable to get any information on plans to evacuate, he returned to his family in the SOS Barracks. On the night of the 28th of April at 8.30 PM the base commander gave the order to "Secure the base,"

and that "Everyone must stand and fight. Anyone attempting to enter the base should be shot." Thien helped man floodlights on the perimeter and at 2 am on the morning of the 29th the base came under heavy mortar, rocket, and small arms fire.

Later that day, Thien witnessed a bomb blast near his family. Seeing this and realizing the situation was hopeless and that all of the senior officers were gone, Thien made his way to his family in the SOS barracks. He was stopped on the way by a friend in the Air force Security Police who gave him an M16 and wished him good luck. Thien made it back to his family and moved them to a trench near the perimeter of the base. When the time was right, they escaped.

After the fall of Saigon, Thien was sent to a communist reeducation camp, where he was tortured and forced to denounce his anti-communist beliefs. In 1994 he escaped Vietnam on foot through Cambodia and on to Thailand where to this day he is a refugee.

I have known Thien for 6 months now and he has been through hell. Thien is still proud of his service alongside the Americans in Vietnam. I work as a volunteer with an organization that is helping Thien and I am proud to call him my friend.



Aaron Bourourd and Major Thien



Staging Area of wreaths



From Left - Dale Bryan, Vietnamese visiting the Wall, Bill Grayson and Vic Brown

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