



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

The Last Flag to Fly over Tan Son Nhut



{The last paragraph in the plaque on the left reads, “The last flag to fly over Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, South Vietnam. It was carried back to the United States on March 29, 1973, by Col David Odell, a USAF adviser to the South Vietnamese Air Force and the last man of the main group of American military to leave South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese Air Force gave him the flag as he left.”}



By: Johnnie Jernigan,
TSNA Director of Marketing
Nav. Shop
Feb 67—Feb 68

As you may remember from the Dayton TSNA Reunion in 2007, we had a very special guest, the last flag to fly over TSN. Colonel David “Digger” Odell, the last base commander of Tan Son Nhut, retrieved it when TSN closed on March 29, 1973 and brought it back to the states. After his passing (RIP) his sister, Mary Ruth Odell Barton wanted the flag to be preserved in a place of honor and arrangements were made to present it to the National Museum of the United States Air Force. Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Charles D. Metcalf, a TSN Vietnam Vet and Director of the National Museum of the United States Air Force, accepted the flag at a ceremony attended by many, including TSNA members and guests.

A large contingency of local active duty personnel also attended to pay tribute to the flag and what it stands for.

Wayne Salisbury, the TSNA President at that time, requested that we be allowed to “borrow” the flag so we could honor it at our banquet that Saturday evening. Gen. Metcalf gave his OK and arrangements were made to safeguard it until its return Monday AM. It was presented to the banquet attendees and put in a place of honor. Many pictures were taken.

That was then and this is now. Since I live in Beavercreek OH, I have the privilege of visiting the Museum any time I have out-of-town company.

Each time I have visited since the flag was given to the museum in 2007, I make it a point to look for it in the area where a display of flags that flew for the last time over a base are dis-

played.

The name of this display is: “Coming Home: The US exits Southeast Asia.” Each time there were five flags in the display. Flags from U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield, Ko Kha Air Station, Ubon Royal Thai Air Base, Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base, and Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base, all located in Thailand, occupied this display case.

I recently had company and we visited the Museum again. As I approached the area that has the display I was surprised to see six flags in the case. I was hoping against hope that the TSN flag had been preserved and put on display. As I approached the display and saw that number 6 was in fact the TSN flag, chills ran down my spine. It brought back memories of my time at TSN, the Dayton TSNA Reunion, and the flag at the place of honor at the banquet.

**St. Paul Dispatch
Mon. May 6, 1968
Saigon Battle Rages;
N. Viet Troops Seen
First Time in City**

By George Esper

Saigon --- (AP) --- The enemy attack on Saigon swept on in full fury tonight, with North Vietnamese reported fighting for the first time in the capital and a heavy explosion --- believed a rocket --- blasting the heart of the city.

The North Vietnamese were battling South Vietnamese troops from gravestone to gravestone in a cemetery near Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport.

The missile, believed to be a rocket or mortar, exploded near the downtown Saigon USO and International House, frequented by Americans. First reports said no buildings were damaged and apparently there were no casualties. The USO and International House were closed by curfew. Other accounts said the blast may have been caused by an explosive charge placed in a car that was destroyed.

U.S. military spokesman indicated the new enemy offensive, launched Sunday, was subsiding elsewhere across South Vietnam after only one day. They saw the attacks as more evidence that the enemy plans to keep fighting while peace talks go on. They also thought it likely the drive was to strengthen North Vietnam's bargaining position at preliminary talks with the United States expected to open this week in Paris.

While Hanoi radio claimed "brilliant victories," Gen. William C. Westmoreland's headquarters said in a communiqué: "Scattered fighting has taken place throughout yesterday and this morning; however, the over-all activities remain considerably lower than during the Tet (lunar new year) offensive."

Headquarters reported 122 locations were hit Sunday by mortar and artil-

lery fire but new shelling today was insignificant. There also was ground fighting in the north but this appeared to be a continuation of last weeks battles.

A U.S. spokesman said allied forces so far had killed 714 enemy troops in and around Saigon, including 177 inside the city itself. Some of the fights were spoiling actions, cutting off enemy units reported headed to attack Saigon.

U.S. officials said an estimated battalion of enemy troops, perhaps 400 to 500 men, fighting allied forces around Tan Son Nhut air base are predominantly North Vietnamese soldiers. This is the closest to Saigon that North Vietnamese have fought in these numbers.

The American officials said it was not immediately clear to what unit the North Vietnamese belonged. This led to speculation that the enemy forces actually are Viet Cong designated units made up mostly of North Vietnamese replacements.

The officials said that North Vietnamese prisoners have been taken and some of the enemy dead have been identified as North Vietnamese. U.S. officials estimated that as of early Monday there were about 300 Viet Cong troops fighting inside Saigon. Preliminary estimates also indicated there might be as many as 300 more female Viet Cong agents who in some cases have done some of the fighting but are being used mostly for political agitation.

The officials noted a definite increase in fighting during the day inside Saigon around Tan Son Nhut and on the fringes of the capital. American officials were reported deeply concerned about fighting on the north eastern edge of the city.

Enemy troops were said to be advancing slowly rather than being driven back. They reportedly were nearing a bridge leading into the city. The fact

that they were able to move forward during daylight caused concern because it was feared under the cover of darkness they may be able to move in even closer and set up mortars.

U.S. infantrymen moved in closer toward the city to back up South Vietnamese rangers, paratroopers and marines battling the enemy in three places inside Saigon and trying to cut off infiltration attempts on the east and west sides.

Two companies of infantrymen from the U.S. 199th Light Infantry Brigade were locked in fighting with an unknown sized enemy force in the Phu Tho race track area not far from where the battle raged in the cemetery near Tan Son Nhut on the western edge of the city. Twenty-five enemy were reported killed. U.S. casualties were not disclosed.

By mid-afternoon, fighting raged in the area of the old French cemetery on the edge of Tan Son Nhut, the Phu Tho race track area on the south western edge of the city, and along two bridges connecting Saigon with the northeastern suburbs.

Contributed by Dave Koopman
460th FMS
Sept 67—Sep 68



AND I QUOTE

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.
John F. Kennedy

Our defense is in the preservation of the spirit which prizes liberty as a heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism around your own doors.
Abraham Lincoln

THE SEPARATION BLUES

By: Jim Dugan
178th Repl Co, 90th Repl Battalion,
USA

During the Vietnam War, the greater number of those serving in the U.S. Army were draftees. That comes as no surprise to anyone, for we were engaged in a foreign conflict, and had an active Selective Service Act still in effect. At draft boards across the nation, thousands of young men who had reached an average age of 19 years, were being ordered for physicals and eventual induction into the military.

The Vietnam War resulted in thousands entering military service who otherwise never gave a serious thought to being a soldier. While the anti-war draft protesters gained most of the attention in those days, a greater number accepted their fate and donned the uniform.

For others, it was a somewhat different experience. Knowing that the draft was in their future, they enlisted. Enlistment gave them a choice of how they were going to serve their country. They had choice of branch of service, MOS and, in some cases, where their first duty assignment would be. But all knew there was a war going on in Southeast Asia, and Vietnam was in their futures.

I can still remember my basic training experiences at Fort Dix, New Jersey. There was hardly a place that was safe from some small bit of anti-Army graffiti. "FTA" was seen in the strangest places. Usually it was written in small letters in mess halls as basic trainees waited in line. Latrines were another place. In the 60's, FTA became the new "Kilroy was here." Military service was a shock to these kids. What was to come was an even bigger shock.

Vietnam and the war there, was a shock to the systems of all America. The effects of the war were so ad-

verse to Americans, they can still be felt today, some forty years later. Perhaps it is because the war was, and still is, misunderstood. To the thousands of veterans of that war, to still not understand the whys and wherefores of the war only serves to prolong the pain of what they endured.

By 1970, when I returned home, the Army had instituted an early separation policy for returning overseas personnel who had 90 days or less remaining on their enlistments. I fell into that group.

My separation took place in June instead of September. The first emotion was one of elation. It was great to be free of the uniform and all that it brought with it. Like so many of my brother Vietnam vets, I packed my uniform, medals, and other mementos of my experience away for twenty years, and never looked at them. What I didn't pack away, was my photographs. They were the constant reminder that I had been a part of something important at one time.

In the early 70's, the feeling against the Vietnam War was greater than it had been when I left to become a part of it. I found that few people cared to see the photographs I had taken, or even cared to hear about the war. There were friends still there that I had served with, sweated with. Guys I knew were still experiencing rocket attacks at Tan Son Nhut and Long Binh, and no one cared. No one cared! I soon began to feel like I had left the real world, and had come home to a make believe one. I was separated from the Army, and couldn't seek solace of anyone who cared. The only Vietnam veterans organization in existence at the time was the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, but I had, and still do have mixed feelings about that group.

The VFW and American Legion were frowning on the membership of Vietnam veterans at the time, and it would be another eight years before Vietnam Veterans of America would be formed.

Although not everyone received an early separation like I did upon their return from Vietnam, I believe that policy was as much a contributor to the cases of PTSD that Vietnam veterans are experiencing today. That is not intended as a political statement but rather, a statement of lessons learned. Anyone returning from a war experience needs debriefing time. They should not just be released in a world back home that has no concept of what they experienced.

Today, I take pride in saying, "I am a Vietnam veteran!" Vietnam veterans are now the largest group of still living war veterans. The old veteran organizations that shunned us in the early 70's, now beg for our membership. The top positions of the VFW are held by Vietnam veterans. We have arrived in the community of American veterans. But it is still hard to forget those days when we were left out in the cold to fend for ourselves alone. Perhaps our experience was a learning experience for the rest of America. Perhaps, without knowing it, Vietnam veterans were continuing to serve America by their ill treatment during the post-Vietnam War period of the early 70's. As we look around today it is evident that things have changed in America's feeling toward its returning war veterans since those days. Let's hope so.



NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

Sgt. USAF. Worked in Nav. Aids shop. Worked on RF-4Cs, RF-101Cs, ED-47s. RB-57s, Ac-119s, C-123Ks, T-39s, and transient aircraft. I have now been an avionics technician for 42 years and have been employed by Stevens Aviation for 39 years in South Carolina.

Keith B. Lewis
460th Avionics Maintenance Sqdn.
May 69—May 70



Tan Son Nhut Association 2009 Reunion Registration
October 15—18, 2009
Pigeon Forge TN

OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY AND LEGACY OF TAN SON NHUT AND
THE VIETNAM CONFLICT

YES, SIGN ME UP FOR THE REUNION!

NAME _____ BRANCH OF SERVICE _____
ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

NAME OF YOUR GUEST(S): _____

PLEASE LIST ANY SPECIAL NEEDS: _____

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY NOTIFY: _____

IS THIS YOUR FIRST REUNION?: _____ (IF NO, WHAT YEAR(S) DID YOU ATTEND TSNA
REUNIONS? _____

REGISTRATION FEES:

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING REUNION _____ X \$130= _____

OPTIONAL BUS TOUR

Smoky Mountain Special 9:00AM – 12:30PM Friday October 16

Enjoy a three hour journey to the upper reaches of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. As you tour on the Smoky Mountain Special you will experience some of the most spectacular panoramic views of the Smokies. Visit the Sugarland's Visitor Center, beautiful mountain overlooks and Newfound Gap, where President Franklin Roosevelt dedicated the National Park in 1940. Your guide will give you the history of the park along with information about the area wildlife and legends of the region.

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING TOUR _____ X \$27. _____

TOTAL REMITTANCE \$. _____

PAYMENT MUST BE MAILED NO LATER THAN October 1st, 2009

PLEASE MAKE PAYMENTS PAYABLE TO THE TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION AND MAIL
PAYMENTS TO:

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION
C/O GEORGE PLUNKETT
587 WILLIAMS CIRCLE
WEST COLUMBIA, SC 29172



T S N A G o l f e r s :

If you would like to arrive early for the reunion and play golf in the Pigeon Forge area, please email me with your name and phone number. Tee time reservations are not accepted more than 30 days in advance. I will contact Eagles Landing Golf Course on Sept 14 and give them a list of interested participants.

There is an internet link to the golf course at URL: <http://www.sevierville.org/DepartmentPages/Golf.htm>.

And don't forget - the MainStay Suites will honor our special Reunion rate for three days before AND three days after the Reunion - so come on down to the Reunion to meet old friends and to play golf.

George Plunkett
TSNA Director of Membership Development
TSN 1962-63-64-66-67



REUNION BUS TOUR

Smoky Mountain Special
9:00 AM- 12:30 PM
Friday October 16

Enjoy a three hour journey to the upper reaches of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. As you tour on the Smoky Mountain Special you will experience some of the most spectacular panoramic views of the Smokies. Visit the Sugarland's Visitor Center, beautiful mountain overlooks, and Newfound Gap where Roosevelt dedicated the National Park in 1940. Your guide will give you the history of the park along with information about the area wildlife and legends of the region. **Adults- \$27.00**

2007 DAYTON REUNION



TSNA Reunion Registration



Presenting TSN Flag to NMUSAF



Presenting the Colors



Retiring the Colors

2008 ST. LOUIS REUNION



St. Louis Table Setting



"And there I was, in the middle . . ."



Adrian Cronauer 2008 Speaker



"Animated" Adrian

**SO COME ON DOWN TO
PIGEON FORGE. SEND IN THE
REGISTRATION FORM FROM
PAGE 4, OR AT LEAST LET US
KNOW YOU PLAN ON ATTENDING.**

SEE YOU THERE!!



Stolen Valor

By: Richard Carvell
12th RITS

An October 2008 story in the Chicago Tribune reports that “scores of Americans, from clergymen to lawyers to CEOs, are claiming medals of valor they never earned.” (http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-valor-oct25_0,4301227.story)

Al Tomkins, a member of the Poynter Institute faculty and leader of the Broadcast/Online Group at the St. Petersburg, FL, organization, calls the Tribune story a “remarkable piece” of journalism.

The Trib investigation said the problem of stolen valor is more extensive than one would think. Its investigative team looked at the online edition of Who’s Who and found “of the 333 people whose profiles state they earned one of the nation’s most esteemed military medals, fully a third of those claims cannot be supported by military records.”

Tomkins calls attention to the Tribune’s coverage in a column he subtitled “Lying About Military Service” (<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=2&aid=154391>).

Claiming that a military medal has been awarded when it has not is a crime. In 2005, President George W. Bush signed into law “The Stolen Valor Act.” Under the provisions of that law, “...people who falsely claim military service can be prosecuted.” The law makes falsely claiming a military decoration or medal a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and/or a fine.

Although there have been some prosecutions under the provisions of the Act, the problem with enforcement is that there is no database to verify claims of military medals. The only military medal database is maintained by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society (<http://www.cmohs.org/>).

www.cmohs.org/). While there is a bill pending in Congress (S2610), observers think it has little chance of passage.

Some believe a database is needed because the problem apparently is growing. One person posted this comment about the pending bill: “There is a pandemic of military awards imposters throughout the United States. Many make false claims of combat valor for respect; others do it to bilk the Veterans Affairs Department for millions in disability compensation. This legislation would give law enforcement officials the tools they need to go after those who make false claims to valor awards and sully the sacrifice of brave men and women who legitimately rate them.” (see <http://www.washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/110 SN 2610.html>).

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Justice cracked down on “fake veterans” in the Northwest U.S. A DOJ news release on the investigation says, “In a dozen cases under investigation in the northwest, the fraud totals more than \$1.4 million.” The fraud the DOJ alleges was against the Veterans Administration in false claims. See the news release, along with names at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/waw/press/2007/sep/operationstolenvvalor.html>.

B.G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley write about the problem as it relates to the Vietnam War in their book Stolen Valor.”

Several cases of false stolen valor claims filed with the VA are cited in its latest quarterly report to Congress (<http://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-SAR-2008-2.pdf>).

One of the most recent cases of alleged stolen valor is reported in the Dec. 16, 2008, issue of Army Times. The report quotes sources close to the investigation as saying the Army has alerted the FBI of the potential violation of the Stolen Valor Act.

Rules for Rendering Hand Salute of U.S. Flag

A New Law Allows Retirees and Vets to Salute Flag

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 contains an amendment to allow un-uniformed service members, military retirees, and veterans to render a hand salute during the *hoisting, lowering, or passing of the U.S. flag*. The amendment does not address saluting the flag during the playing of the national anthem, pledge of allegiance, honors (i.e. Taps), or any other saluting situations.

Excerpt from H. R. 4986

SEC. 594. CONDUCT BY MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS OUT OF UNIFORM DURING HOISTING, LOWERING, OR PASSING OF UNITED STATES FLAG.

Section 9 of title 4, United States Code, is amended by striking “all persons present” and all that follows through the end of the section and inserting the following: “all persons present in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute. All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Citizens of other countries present should stand at attention. All such conduct toward the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes.”

FAVORITE SAYINGS

Living on a budget is the same thing as living beyond your means—except you have a record of it.



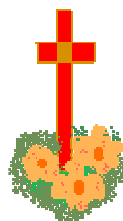
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Annual Membership: \$20.00
Five Year Membership: \$80.00
Life Membership: \$180.00



MEMORIAL DAY
MAY 25, 2009
LET US NOT FORGET

Editor's Note: When checking the VFW calendar beside my desk to get the date for Memorial Day, I noticed a flag image flying at half-staff, with the note: "(Until noon)." I never knew that. Did you?

My Hooch Buddy at TSN

By CMSgt. Hugh Ames
HQ 7th Air Force

After I had been at TSN, General Jones took over and brought CMSgt. Bob Mauck as office manager. (Bob had the same job with Gen. Hunter Harris at PACAF earlier!)

Bob could have lived in an air conditioned trailer, but refused and came to live with the rest of we chiefs. I wonder how many others would do this?

What was great having Bob with us, he chose to bunk with me. And I, as well as others, really were the beneficiaries of a lot of good things.

We were gifted with many of the General's eats and other benefits. Bob

always shared. He worked one heck of a lot of hours, but he always had time for us and kept us well informed as to what was happening.

Now Bob went with Gen. Jones when the General became both Chief of Staff of the Air Force and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Bob still always had time for those of us in the Pentagon and elsewhere whenever we wished to shoot the breeze with him.

Great jobs in the past? But now Bob became Manager of the Daytona 500 Raceway!

Alas tragedy struck Bob in that he was struck with a brain disorder that required that he have close care and thus he did not recognize or could he speak to any of us again.

When Bob passed away, a great representation of Air Staff and Joint Staff General Officers and their staff attended his funeral.

I pray none of us will suffer Bob's last days, but I hope he is aware how much we all appreciated his comradeship, no matter his station in the Air Force.



We regret to inform you of the death of former member Robert B. Atkin on Feb 6, 2009. He was with the 6994th Security Squadron '69-'70.