



# REVETMENTS

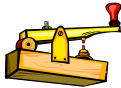
The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam

DECEMBER 2011



CQ



By: George R. Plunkett  
TSNA President

CQ - to make contact. Pronounced dah dit dah dit, dah dah dit dah. That is the name of my monthly President's Column.

Kudos to all who made the reunion so successful, particularly Colonel Harding, fellow member Harold Boone and TK Smith-Cole of Visit Charlotte. The hotel renovation issues we encountered were mostly overcome by the camaraderie of our members.

Our banner page proclaims that our mission is "To assist military personnel of all era and their families whenever and wherever possible." To that end, we have invited Taryn Davis, founder of the American Widow Project, to be one of our speakers at our 2012 Reunion. Taryn's husband, Michael, was KIA in Iraq four years ago. Her group now has more than 800 members. We look forward to hearing her story. Hopefully her visit will result in favorable publicity for both her organization and ours, as well as in offers of support for the American Widow Project.

Details on the 2012 Dayton Reunion will be released as soon as they are finalized and contracts signed.

## REGARDING BENNY'S ARTICLE IN THE OCTOBER 2011 ISSUE

By: Bill Grayson  
6922nd Security Wing, USAFSS  
Jul 66—Jul 67

Benny Goodman's article about the first C-5s in Vietnam caught my eye

and stirred memories. I can still imagine the excited anticipation of those called to a classified briefing and the sober resolve of all who heard it to protect the scheduled arrivals/ground time/departures of the giant aircraft. They would have been high-value targets for a mortar attack. In the meantime, however, each C-5 coming into theater used a monthly squadron tactical call sign and a fixed tail number in voice radio-transmitted position reports and landing requests. The latter were sent to the TSN Tower on a VHF frequency that never changed. The fixed frequency of their home base tower would have compromised new call signs as soon as they were used in a new month. Captured documents make it a near-certainty that the transmissions were intercepted by VC/NVN SIGINT units, which possessed a USAF "Air Order of Battle" that listed all tail numbers with the aircraft type and then-current unit/base of assignment. Unlike some other air forces, the USAF AOB was unclassified and unprotected.

Additionally, schedules for all aircraft flying into South Vietnamese airspace were reported at least 24 hours in advance (usually substantially longer) to the Saigon Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) in the TSN civil terminal building. The SAIGON ARTCC routinely retransmitted all the info it received to its counterpart ARTCC in Hanoi, as required by international agreements dating to the French withdrawal following Dien Bien Phu. The COMSEC/OPSEC unit I was with in 1966-67 (Det 5, 6922 Security Wing) had discovered and reported all the way to the Pentagon that B-52 strikes were being compromised in this way and corrections for the B-52s were put in place. The same weakness compromised LBJ's 1967 visit to Cam Ranh Bay. In all probability, Saigon ARTCC had word of C-5 schedules a

day ahead of C-5 radio contacts with the TSN tower and the MAC operations center. As in so many similar situations, tight security exercised by some organizations was completely undermined by naive security policies elsewhere.

Best regards,  
Bill

PS - I believe my article on the LBJ compromise was printed in *Revetments* some years ago.

## ON THE TSNA WEBSITE!

Have you been on the TSNA website recently?

If not, you are missing a lot of great information.

Charles Penley, our great Webmaster, has changed the titles of some of the "Buttons", and obviously, also changed what comes up under them.

You can now see information on all of the TSNA Board Members under the "Board Info" Button.

Be sure to keep scrolling down under the Board for pictures and details of former Officers and Board Members.

Also, don't forget to keep track of things concerning the Memorial Bench project, by clicking on that "Button".

And by all means, keep checking the "Bulletin Board" Button for the latest from members, prospective members and friends.

And don't forget to contribute yourself to the Bulletin Board section!

<http://www.tsna.org>

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

## MORE ON AGENT ORANGE

By: Ted Dodge  
377th Supply Squadron  
Aug 68 - Aug 70

According to Wikipedia, Agent Orange was discovered to be contaminated with an extremely toxic dioxin compound. In the 1970's, high levels of dioxin were found in the blood of U.S. military personnel who had served in Vietnam. The areas most heavily contaminated with dioxins are the sites of former U.S. air bases. Studies of veterans who served in the South during the war have increased rates of cancer, nerve, digestive, skin and respiratory disorders. Veterans from the south had higher rates of throat cancer, acute/chronic leukemia, Hodgkin's lymphoma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, prostate cancer, lung cancer, soft tissue sarcoma and liver cancer. Indeed, The Vietnam Red Cross reported as many as 3 million Vietnamese people have been affected by Agent Orange, including at least 150,000 children born with birth defects.

Other than liver cancer, these are the same conditions the US Veteran's Administration has found to be associated with exposure to Agent Orange/dioxin, and are on the list of conditions eligible for compensation and treatment. Veterans began to file claims in 1977 to the Department of Veterans Affairs for disability payments for health care for conditions they believed were associated with exposure to Agent Orange, or more specifically, dioxin, but their claims were denied unless they could prove the condition began when they were in the service or within one year of their discharge.

In 1991, the US Congress enacted the Agent Orange Act, giving the Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to declare certain conditions 'presumptive' to exposure to Agent Orange/dioxin, making these veterans who served in Vietnam eligible to receive treatment and compensation for

these conditions. The same law required the National Academy of Sciences to periodically review the science on dioxin and herbicides used in Vietnam to inform the Secretary of Veterans Affairs about the strength of the scientific evidence showing association between exposure to Agent Orange/dioxin and certain conditions.

We have done what was asked of us, yet we were treated poorly upon our return. We acted as bravely and commendably as any Americans in any war and we have earned the gratitude, respect, support, and continuing concern of the American Public. Among the many sacrifices we made in Vietnam perhaps the most significant was when we unknowingly sacrificed our current and future health.

I currently have a small disability and I receive monthly checks from the Veterans Administration for that disability. Early this year I discovered that I have COPD and Ischemic Heart Disease, I now qualify for a larger disability from the VA. I may also qualify for a Social Security Disability, but that is another matter and is totally separate from my claim with the VA. The VA is committed to ensuring Veterans and their families receive the care and benefits they have earned. If you earned it, go for the gusto. Good Luck.

You can file your claim with your local Veterans Administration Office. The process is very slow, I filed my supplemental claim seven months ago, no matter how long it takes you will be paid retroactive to the date you originally filed. I highly recommend your state's Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Office for assistance in filing your claim. They offer this service free to all veterans and they are very good. Check out <http://vfw.org/home/> for more information, even if you are not a member of VFW they have help to offer. Click on the ASSISTANCE tab near the top of the page and go to NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE, again - Good Luck.

Your VFW Service Officer will:  
Offer research and advice to veterans who wish to handle their own claims.

Assist veterans who are filing original claims for compensation and/or pension with the Department of Veterans Affairs and complete the required VA forms on behalf of the claimant.

Assist veterans in reopening claims for service-connected disabilities and complete the required VA forms.

Follow up on status of claims filed by veterans with the VA Regional Office. File Notice of Disagreement with the VA Regional Office if a veteran believes the decision made by the VA was incorrect.

Review statements of the case from the VA regarding denials of claim and assist veterans with the preparation of responses.

Assist veterans or surviving spouses in the preparation of appeals for denial of claims and file the appeals with the local VA Regional Office for forwarding to the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C.

Finally, listed below are the current Agent Orange Presumptive conditions, if you have any of these and have not already filed, I would urge you to file a claim. Vietnam veterans with one or more of these conditions do not have to show that their illness (es) is (are) related to their military service to get disability compensation. The VA presumes that their condition is service connected.

Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions:

1. Acute and Sub-acute Peripheral Neuropathy
2. Angiosarcoma
3. Alveolar Soft Part Sarcoma
4. Adult Fibrosarcoma
5. B-Cell Leukemias
6. Bone Pain
7. Chloracne (must occur within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange)

8. Clear Cell Sarcoma of Aponeuroses
9. Clear Cell Sarcoma of Tendons and Aponeuroses
10. Congenital Fibrosarcoma
11. Dermatofibrosarcoma Protuberans
12. Ectomesenchymoma
13. Epithelioid Malignant Eiomysarcoma
14. Epithelioid and Grandular Malignant Schwannomas
15. Epithelioid Sarcoma
16. Extraskelatal Ewing's Sarcoma
17. Hemangiosarcoma
18. Hodgkin's Disease
19. Infantile Fibrosarcoma
20. Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD)
21. Leiomyosarcoma
22. Liposarcoma
23. Lymphangiosarcoma
24. Malignant Fibrous Histiocytoma
25. Malignant Ganglioneuroma
26. Malignant Giant Cell Tumor of the Tendon Sheath
27. Malignant Glandular Schwannoma
28. Malignant Granular Cell Tumor
29. Malignant Hemangiopericytoma
30. Malignant Leiomyoblastoma
31. Malignant Mesenchymoma
32. Malignant Schwannoma with Rhabdomyoblastic Differentiation
33. Malignant Synovioma
34. Multiple Myeloma
35. Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
36. Parkinson's Disease 3
37. Porphyria Cutanea Tarda (must occur within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange)
38. Proliferating (systemic) Angiendoteliomatosis
39. Prostate Cancer
40. Respiratory Cancer
41. Rhabdomyosarcoma
42. Synovial Sarcoma
43. Type II Diabetes

For more information go to: <http://www.veteranprograms.com/id1071.html>.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHANGES

By: **George R. Plunkett**  
TSNA President

The TSNA Board of Directors has chosen Bill Coup and Kerry Nivens to be Co-Directors of Membership Development. This was my primary job prior to assuming the Presidency. These are tough economic times and Bill and Kerry will be hard pressed to maintain our 90% membership retention rate.

I want to thank Jimmy Avera and Tony Tidwell for also volunteering to work in these positions. We will certainly call on them to serve on our various committees.

If anyone else wants to volunteer to help the association, please email me at [viet62@aol.com](mailto:viet62@aol.com) or Dale Bryan, our Secretary, at [dale.bryan@gmail.com](mailto:dale.bryan@gmail.com).

Although the Blake Hotel was not fully functional for our reunion, a good time was had by all. Harold and Brenda Boone did a great job of procuring food trays, soft drinks, beer and wine each day. After all, our main goal each year is to greet old friends and make new ones.

To say that we were extremely fortunate to obtain Colonel Harding as our guest speaker would be a major understatement. For the third consecutive year we have been honored to have a real warrior speak about his exploits. To paraphrase Yogi Berra, it was "d'jà vu all over again".

George



Kerry Nivens



Bill Coup

## DD-214

Please pass on to other veterans.

It's official; DD-214s are NOW Online.

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214s online:

<http://vetrecs.archives.gov/>

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files.

Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents.

Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mailroom and processing time.

Please pass this information on to former military personnel you may know and their dependents.



Thanks to TSNA Member MSgt. Carl H. McKenzie for this info.

## THE CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

There are many commodities needed and used in war. Certainly bullets and bombs come to mind along with hot meals, gasoline, spare parts, and the list goes on forever. You have been there and know full well what it takes to get the job done. This article is about an event in late 1967 that speaks to the need for a very special commodity - - mail. Being in a distant place and separated from family and friends causes one to long for that feeling of knowing someone cares, someone remembers. It was a normal feeling to want mail and even a "CARE" package from someone. This was in a time long before "e-mail", digital photos, cell phones, and other modern day electronics. What has become known as "snail mail" was perfectly welcomed by all some forty plus years ago. Since we did not know anything faster, snail mail was perfectly acceptable and most welcomed. The speed of mail delivery has increased over the years, but the value in receiving mail has not changed. It was as welcomed then as it is now.

This story is about one Sergeant at Tan Son Nhut, who for the lack of mail, decided to make a Christmas request to the famed and nationally syndicated columnist, "Dear Abby". Abby was noted for providing advice on a personal level using a heavy dose of common sense. Each year Abby would ask the troops in Vietnam what they wanted for Christmas and devote a few columns to publishing a sampling of the responses. Naturally there were requests for very simple items such as books, foot powder, pens and paper, combs, food items, etc. As I read the column from October 30, 1967, I was amazed at how small and simple these requests were. Seemingly those needing the most asked for the least. Valuables were never asked for; only small personal items were on the wish list.

The Sergeant had a very simple Christmas wish list: I want mail. Read now his letter to Dear Abby published on October 30, 1967.

*DEAR ABBY:*

*I can't speak for all the guys in Viet Nam, but as for me, I would like to get some mail for Christmas. I spent 21 months in the Middle East and received only two letters. One wanting to sell me some land in Florida, and the other inviting me to join a record club. I went directly from there to Viet Nam, and still no mail. Disgusting, isn't it.*

Name withheld by writer

This letter was published along with others on that day. When this letter was published, many folks took his request to heart and sent a letter to him. Actually thousands upon thousands of letters arrived at his address. Well, as you can guess, he had more mail than he could read and answer. I was made aware of the mountain of mail and the need to help him answer back. I stopped by a building where he was storing his mail and picked up a fist full of letters and answered each one on his behalf. The building was somewhere between the flight line and base chapel. As I recall, the room contained bags filled with letters. I answered them using my name and explained how overwhelmingly the response had been to his Dear Abby letter. I was happy to help him answer his mail and hopefully my handwritten letters were accepted in the same spirit as if he had written them himself. It is a strange feeling to open mail addressed to another person and after reading it, write a reply. I later wondered what happened to all those letters. Hopefully he had many others stopping by and giving him a hand with the replies. In a "it's a small world" sort of way, I mentioned this story to a group a year or so later and one member of the group said she wrote a letter based on a Dear Abby article.

To say the response from the American people was overwhelming would be an understatement. The airman followed up with a second letter to Dear Abby and it was published on December 18, 1967. Read now the second letter.

*DEAR ABBY*

*I am the Sergeant who wrote to you from Viet Nam. I said I was lonesome and wanted some mail for Christmas. You published my letter in your column and so far I have received over 100,000 letters and 1,000 packages. They're still pouring in, and I've quit counting, but I am passing them around to the others who want mail. I've heard from all 50 states, and even some foreign countries. (I don't know why, but the two cities I received the most mail from were Dayton, Ohio and Las Vegas, Nevada.)*

*Tell your readers that some of them may not receive a reply instantly, but I will personally do my best to answer as many*



as I can, if I'm still at it when I'm retired in the Old Soldiers home. And if it is possible to answer mail in the world beyond, I'll do that, too.

Someone suggested that I have "form letters" made up, saying, "Dear Friend, thank you for your letter, etc." But, Abby, how can you answer a 6-year old girl, who wants to know if she can send you a Bible, with a form letter? And how can you answer a mother, whose only son was killed in Viet Nam, with a form letter? And how can you thank teachers with a form letter for having the whole class write to you? And how can you send a form letter to an 8-year old boy who says he wishes he could send a big box of cookies over here for our fighting men, but his family is on welfare?

I heard from a 10-year old girl in Rome, Italy. She said if you answer my letter, please don't put your return address on the envelope because my mother might wonder why a strange man is writing to me." Another girl, age 12, wrote, "I have 10 brothers, 4 sister, 7 rabbits, 2 dogs, 3 cats, and 21 kittens".

Abby, I did not receive one smart-aleck letter. Everyone who wrote expressed appreciation for what we are doing over here. I want to thank them all the bottom of my heart. God bless you, Dear Abby. And God bless America.

Name withheld by writer.

Within the same column was a short thank you from Abby to all the readers who responded to the request for mail. I suppose in a sense I, too, shared in making his wish coming true as I answered those letters for him. The recipient of my replies must have felt some level of satisfaction in knowing their letter was received and answered by someone. Sometimes a very special gift can come in a small package, even as small as an envelope.

The Christmas wish list is ingrained within our society. Retailers know this very well as promotions of products start earlier each year. Many a child has written a wish list in hopes of waking up Christmas morning and finding all those wanted gifts. I would guess many members of the Tan Son Nhut Association have created at least one wish list in their life time. Now we can say our children and grandchildren have created such a list. The value of the list is not in the dollars involved, but in the fulfillment of those dreams and wishes. Nothing can compare with seeing a wish or dream come true. Since I am in the September of my years, my wish list has changed and the things I now want are not found in catalogs or department stores. I am looking for things that will add value to my heart and soul. My wish list now contains things such as good health, happiness and success and for my daughter's family, watching my granddaughters grow up, talking with old friends, and continuing a love story of forty three years with my wife.

This story is about one man with a very simple and short wish list. A little mail and nothing more. Once published by Dear Abby, the story drew widespread attention and with responses beyond belief. Wishes do come true. And thanks to Dear Abby, the wish of that Sergeant for some mail did come true.

Such is the story of a Christmas wish list long ago in a far away place, a place called Tan Son Nhut.

Harold Boone  
460<sup>th</sup> TRW  
1967-1968

I am deeply indebted to Dear Abby and her fine staff for taking time to find these letters after forty four years and making them available to me. Also a sincere appreciation to Abby for her permission to reprint the letters in our newsletter, "Revetments". I have long wanted to write this story for Revetments and much like the request for mail in this story, Abby made my wish come true also.



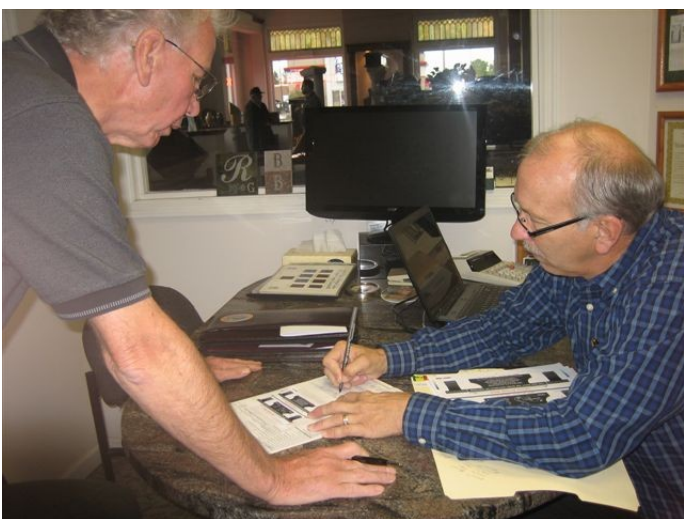
**MEMORIAL BENCH UPDATE**



**This is a picture of the entrance to Dodds Monuments.**



**This is Johnnie Jernigan signing the contract.**



**This is Larry Morrison annotating the amount paid onto the contract**



**This is Johnnie Jernigan handing the check to Larry Morrison**

Johnnie notes that we will be keeping you all up to date on the progress of the Memorial Bench via the TSNA Website and Revetments. While visiting the Museum on November 10th, he saw our contact, Ms. Jane Leach. She indicated that our monument design has been submitted for final approval. On the 14th, he received word from Ms. Leach that the design had been formally approved, and that she had received very positive comments from the approval authority at Maxwell AFB, and from Lt. Gen Hudson, the Museum Director.

**TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**

Dedicated to the men and women who served at, or passed through, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam 1959-1975. The names may fade from memory, but gratitude for their deeds will remain in our hearts forever.

Dedicated by the Tan Son Nhut Association October 2012

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION MEMORIAL BENCH

**Dedication October 12, 2012**



## TK & ASHTON VISIT TSNA

By: George R. Plunkett  
TSNA President

On February 16th of this year Harold Boone, one of our Charlotte area members, notified us about the Mark Syrkin Monument of Valor. A retired WWII Marine Corps fighter pilot, Mark wanted to create a program that would honor living veterans of any American conflict.

In 1998, after years of fund raising by Major Syrkin, the Monument was dedicated. Every military reunion that meets in Charlotte is offered a bronze plaque. This year it was our turn. I am sure that all members present were as emotionally touched as I when the plaque was unveiled.

My contact at Visit Charlotte was TK Smith-Cole, the Convention Services Coordinator. She is a petite ball of fire. TK guided us thru the proper procedures to make the plaque presentation possible.

In appreciation of her efforts, I invited TK and her son, Ashton, to visit us at the hospitality suite on Friday night. We presented her with a TSNA Challenge Coin. Ashton was given the opportunity to speak with Colonel Harding and we had several pictures taken of them together. We will mail the pictures to Ashton when they are available.



Never refusing a request to speak with individual members or have his picture taken with them, Colonel Harding is truly possessed with infinite patience.

On Monday, 10-10, I received this email from TK.

"Thank you George.

Thank you for taking the time to meet my son Ashton. It placed me in the "Best Mom in the World" category. He has not stopped talking about Vietnam Veterans. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for making us feel like family. We will cherish it forever.  
Yours Truly -TK".

Ashton also selected a piece of militaria from an assortment that Trish and I had brought from home. Several Blake Hotel employees did also. We are downsizing and preparing to sell a tri-level home for a smaller home on one level.

I am certain that Ashton will remember his visit to the 2011 TSNA Reunion for many years to come.



### TSNA REUNION TREAT GINGER CRINKLES

2/3 C. veg. oil	2 C. flour
1 C. sugar	1/2 tsp. salt
1 egg	2 tsp. baking soda
1/4 C. molasses	2 tsp. ground cinnamon
	2 tsp. ground ginger

Extra sugar

Combine oil & 1 cup sugar. Add egg. Beat well. Stir in molasses.

Combine flour, salt, soda, cinnamon, & ginger.

Add to molasses mixture. Stir well.

Roll dough into 1" (or smaller) balls. Roll in sugar.

Place on greased cookie sheets.

Bake 350 deg. For 10-12 minutes.

Thanks and enjoy.  
Rena Csordas

### 2012 REUNION

Fellow Members:

The 2012 reunion will be held in Dayton, OH beginning on Thursday, 10-11 and ending on Sunday, 10-14. Negotiations are in process with a number of hotels in the area and our choice will be announced on the web site and in Revetments in the near future.

Events will be announced as they are finalized. Our search for a guest speaker is continuing.

Please mark your schedule now and begin budgeting for the reunion.

We look forward to a large turnout next year.

## AMERICAN WIDOW PROJECT

By: George R. Plunkett  
TSNA President

Fellow Members: Taryn Davis, founder of the American Widow Project, has been selected as one of the ten CNN Heroes of the Year. Please visit the web site below and cast your vote for her. She will be one of our speakers at the 2012 Dayton Reunion. Thanks, George



*Help Us in a Big Way!*

American Widow Project Founder, **Taryn Davis**, has been selected as one of the ten CNN Heroes of the Year! The winner will be named the CNN Hero of the Year and win a \$250,000 grant from CNN. Voting is open until Dec 7th and the results will air live on the Tribute Show with Anderson Cooper on Dec 11th. You can vote 10 times per day (per email and Facebook account) until Dec 7th and we would really appreciate it if you could vote and spread the word. That is one great way to volunteer for the AWP from the comfort of your own home! You can vote for Taryn Davis and the American Widow Project here: [http://heroes.cnn.com/vote\\_en.aspx](http://heroes.cnn.com/vote_en.aspx)

## THE ORIGINAL TAN SON NHUT MAIL ROOM

By: Larry E. Fry  
Det 8, 2nd ADVON  
Dec 61—Mar 62

While working with Harold Boone on his story for this issue, I had some thoughts about the mail situation in the early days of TSN.

Although my primary AFSC was 70150, Chaplain Services Specialist, I helped out an awful lot in the mail room, with incoming mail. I even painted the exterior of the mail room.

I just went through the log of "Daily Activities of Detachment 8 Chaplain Section", of which I have original onion-skin carbon copies, and counted the number of times I helped out in the mail room, and it came out to 20 of the 69 days I was in Vietnam.

There was a note on one day that there was "very large amount of mail", and on another day I "helped out in the mail room until 1930 hours". That also must have been a large amount of mail.

It must have been interesting to sort it all out, because probably 90% of the Army and Air Force folks using that mail room were TDY, and like myself, didn't even have a chance to do any mail forwarding paperwork before we left our PCS stations.

Technically, we weren't even supposed to tell anyone where we were, since everyone was either an "advisor" or just plain wasn't supposed to be there.

## REGARDING THE TSNA SURVEY

I am answering this briefly. My husband passed away a few weeks ago, so I am overwhelmed with responsibilities, bills, etc. I am not able to attend the reunion and am not likely to attend future reunions at this point. However, I really like receiving the Tan Son Nhut newsletter and enjoy the stories. I just held a party in late August to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my safe return from Vietnam where I was Assistant Director of the USO Tan Son Nhut in 1970-1971. Over 100 people came to celebrate with me. It was amazing how happy they were. They sensed how novel the celebration was—not something that happens every day. Many remembered that Vietnam veterans and others who were there received little if any recognition when they returned. It was truly a joyful celebration.

Nancy D. Joyner

Nancy D. Joyner, Ph.D., Dean  
Lutheran College Washington Semester  
1025 Arlington Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22209

## EDITOR'S NOTE: HAVE YOU SENT IN YOUR SURVEY?? PLEASE DO SO!

To date we have received "around" 100 return surveys.

Our thanks to all who have participated in this endeavor.

We appreciate your continued efforts and interest in TSNA and what we are doing!

We intend to compile all responses. We plan to use the info to identify possible locations of future reunions and see where the reunion can be improved to include members' desires.



## VETERANS DAY A DAY TO REMEMBER

By: Ira Cooperman  
HQ 7th AF  
1965-66

Veterans Day: A day when we remember and honor all those who served our country -- especially those whose courage and devotion to duty caused them to make the ultimate sacrifice.

On a day when some of us feel particularly haunted by the past; a day when my memory takes me back to Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, I salute every veteran who has honorably served our country, as well as those who have experienced the loss of a loved one in military service, and who remember the legacy of the past.

Most of us are creatures of our time. I've been fortunate to personally know many individuals who were considered to be creators of their time. Like the relatives of the vanquished, I miss these individuals -- sons & daughters, husbands & wives, brothers & sisters.

But while I miss them, it is comforting to know that their legacies will outlive us all. For as a philosopher once said, "People live in deeds, not in time."

As long as we, the living, do not betray the ideals of those we've lost, as long as we approach their lives with integrity and honesty, their spirit will live on. The lives of those who have died challenge us -- not only to remember them, but to give meaning to their lives for their lives will mean what we make of them.

On Veterans Day 2011, a day of remembrance, I recalled a distinctive and compelling person: Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Vincent Chiarello, someone to whom I owe a great deal, for he was my Air Force partner when we shared intelligence duties in Saigon and Udorn, Thailand, 45 years ago.

Because of a quirk of fate, I came home alive -- instead of him. Like me, Vince was a recent college graduate and an Air Force officer. But unlike me, he was aboard an

unarmed C-47 aircraft that was shot down over Laos on July 29, 1966. For 22 years his status continued to be listed as "missing in action" -- until his remains were found and returned to American soil in 1988.

His mother, Mrs. Anne Chiarello, never ceased to work on behalf of her son and the other families of the vanquished of Southeast Asia as an active member of the organization known as the Gold Star Mothers. She was a remarkably strong lady, one I was proud to call "Mom." Everyone she touched became strengthened and more loving for the experience.

The last time I saw Mrs. Chiarello was in 1991, at a ceremony involving the "Moving Wall," a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial while it was in Philadelphia. She had accepted my invitation to visit The Wall and pay our respects to her son, whose name is inscribed on Panel 9 East, Line 85, of what has become the most visited memorial in our nation's Capital.

She was happy to see her son's name again, to be in the presence of other Gold Star Mothers, and to share some powerful feelings with others who know the meaning of the word "sacrifice."

Now mother and son are buried next to each other in the same quiet Pennsylvania cemetery. It is truly astonishing how much each of them taught me with their dying.

Many of us who have survived wars believe that the difficult events of our lives teach us to have the courage to accept history, to love one's own time without vain regrets, and to accept the fact that life is a gift and a richness that must be given -- whether the times are peaceful or troubled.

The time for us this Veterans Day may be troubled, but it is ours to do with as we wish. May we understand the real meaning of life: that each of us has the opportunity to be and to do what Emerson called "a multitude of things." And may we bring to all our endeavors an appreciation for those who embraced through sacrifice and service to country the most fundamental and cherished bonds of our democracy, so

that what was once endured can never be forgotten.

(Originally published in the "Clinton [NY] Courier")



### CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

The December meditation from the pulpit or the printed page has become the hardest for most clergy. There is a reason -- The conflict between the theological and the commercial. Before I go on let it be known I do not hate/despise or even don't like merchants! My Grandfather, Father, nephew and even me (at one time) operated sales that were part of the "Christmas" season as merchants.

In reality there has been little conflict! The "Church" celebrated the birth of our Lord. The merchant "originally" said God gave us a gift so by gifts to others we tell how we express this.

Well, that is the way it started. (Now, I become "socially incorrect".) I saw many "Hallowed Eve" witches being removed and "Santa" replacing them: BAD! The first day of Advent is November 27.

Has Christmas become a waste? During the depression of the '30's it became the only day of joy for millions of people. During WW II the day was one of combat and also one of prayer and thinking of family.

In Vietnam it was a day of loneliness and also of fellowship with our "new family" members around about us.

Christmas and Hanukkah are so close in the calendar we are tied together.

It is a time of God's gift to mankind. I give a gift to my wife, son and daughter out of love for them but above that because God loves us and gives us special gifts!

As a clergy person Christmas is not my most loved celebration: Easter is; but I enjoy the loving, the giving and the child in the manager of Christmas. I'm sure God says "Bless you my Children".

End of Sermon.  
Chaplain Bob Chaffee

**Tan Son Nhut Association**  
**P. O. Box 236**  
**Penryn PA 17564**

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### **VETERAN'S DAY 2011** **"AT THE WALL"**

It's always a question of whether the weather will cooperate when your association places our wreath before the polished granite walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This year, the weather was marginal because it was windy, and it was cold enough for it to bite. Better that it was just wind without rain, however. I was joined by fellow TSNA member and recent recipient of The Tan Son Nhut Association Military Order of the Dragon, Gary Redlinski, and Gary's friend, Dick Palmetier. I consider it a high honor that you have allowed me to represent our fine organization over the years on Veterans Day. Dale Bryan, Secretary



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