



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



OCTOBER 2011

THIS PHOTOGRAPH ALMOST GOT ME IN TROUBLE



By: Rich Carvell
12 RITS
Jun 70-Jun 71

I took hundreds of photographs during my tour at Tan Son Nhut June 1970-71 as a USAF Photographic Services Officer with the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron. I also had the additional duty as the RITS Civic Action Officer, a job for which I volunteered.

Our civic action project was the Phu My Sanctuary, an orphanage, old folks home, tuberculosis sanatorium, etc., run by an order of Roman Catholic Nuns.

We visited Phu My about once a week, taking supplies sent from home, helping with minor repairs, and playing with the children for whom Phu My was home.

I shot with a 35mm Asahi Pentax camera, purchased through the BX system. Since the RITS had the only coloring film processing facility in SEA, processing my slide film was "free" (when other, more important, imagery was not in the machine, of course).

On one occasion, I found this mother and child at the sanctuary. I pointed at my camera and did the motions of "taking" a picture in an effort to make sure it was OK with the mother that I take a picture of her and her child.

She consented; I snapped the picture, nodded, and mouthed a polite "Thank you."

Then, the "trouble" began.

She couldn't speak a word of English, and I could not speak a word of Vietnamese. But it was plain to me that she wanted that picture, and she wanted it NOW. How do you explain that I cannot open the camera and hand her the picture? What was going on?

It was then that I noticed a Polaroid picture in her hand and remembered seeing one of our airmen earlier in the compound with a Polaroid camera. He apparently had taken a picture of her and her child and – wah-lah – handed her the picture. She had watched it magically appear before her eyes. That's why they called it instant photography.

I was able finally to convince her that mine was a "different" kind of photography and that I would bring a picture on the next visit (which I did).

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By: Bob Chaffee
TSNA Chaplain

And now it's October. In a few days many of us will gather at the Tan Son Nhut Association annual assembly. We will talk a lot about the future and plans for the 2012 gathering in Dayton to dedicate our Memorial at the Air Force Museum.

October is a busy month spiritually as well as historically. The U.N. Day, Jewish special days of worship and the month ends with the most corrupted religious day, All Hallowed Eve, the night before All Saint's Day. We for some reason called it Halloween

and have diverted the Eve to "trick or treat", "ghosts and goblins", "witches and treats". Lost is the real meaning, the awareness of the men and women who carried the faith for many of us through the ages and allowed us to know the history of our lines of belief and practice.

At Charlotte we will gather to dine on Saturday night and have the vacant chair commemorative and the calling of the names of our fellow TSNA members who have left this earth during the past year. It boils down to the idea of memorials, commitment and service.

There is a lot of tension when we think of memorials. So what do we say when we get together this year and plan for next year's October Memorial? Every one of us has a "brain bucket" of memories from the 60's to the departing from the soil of Vietnam.

Just remember, a memorial is not a funeral! It is a statement of honor to the past and an announcement of pride of what we believe and stand for.

End of Sermon
Chaplain Bob



REUNIONS

As you are reading this, many of us are heading for Charlotte, NC for this year's reunion at the Blake Hotel.

We look forward to meeting and greeting old friends, and making lots of new ones as well.

If you couldn't make this one, please start planning now for October 11–14, 2012 in Dayton, Ohio, and the Dedication of the TSNA Memorial on October 12.

HISTORY OF THE SERVICE FLAG

The Service Flag is an official banner authorized by the Department of Defense for display by families who have members serving in the Armed Forces during any period of war or hostilities the United States may be engaged in for the duration of such hostilities.

The history of the Service Flag is as patriotic and touching as the symbolism each star represents to the families that display them.

The service flag (also known as "blue star banners" or "son in service flags") was designed and patented by World War I Army Captain Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry who had two sons serving on the front line. The flag quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in service. President Wilson became part of its history when in 1918 he approved a suggestion made by the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defenses that mothers who had lost a child serving in the war to wear a gold gilt star on the traditional black mourning arm band.

This led to the tradition to cover the blue star with a gold star on the Service flag to indicate that the service member has died or been killed.

The color of the stars is also symbolic in that the blue star represents hope and pride and the gold star represents sacrifice to the cause of liberty and freedom.

During World War II, the practice of displaying the service flag became much more widespread. In 1942, the Blue Star Mothers of America was founded as a veteran service organization and was part of a movement to provide care packages to military members serving overseas and also provide assistance to families who encountered hardships as a result of their son or husband serving during the war.

Virtually every home and organization displayed banners to indicate the number of members of the family or organization serving in the Armed Forces, and again, covered those blue stars with a gold star to represent each member that died. In 1960, Congress chartered the Blue Star Mothers of America as a veterans service organization and in 1966, the Department of Defense revised the specifications for the design, manufacture and display of the Service Flag.

The Department of Defense specifies that family members authorized to display the flag include the wife, husband, mother, father, stepfather, parent through adoption, foster parents who stand or stood in loco parentis, children, stepchildren, children through adoption, brothers, sisters, half brothers and half sisters of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States. The flag should be displayed in a window of the residence of person who are members of the immediate family.

The Service Flag may also be displayed by an organization to honor the members of that organization serving in the Armed Forces during a period of war or hostilities.



This Service Flag, which measures approximately 54 x 56 inches has been made by T.J. Lawson's wife, Janeth. Jan enjoys doing quilting projects and thought this might be a good vehicle to raise money for TSNA. Jan's quilting group has made the Service flag for members of their local National Guard when they were deployed to the Middle East.

This flag will be part of the Silent Auction to be held at the 2011 TSNA Reunion which begins October 6 at the Blake Hotel in Charlotte, NC.

We thank TJ and his wife for this wonderful addition to our Reunion activities.

THE HEADPHONES

By: Harold Boone
460th TRW Hq. Section
Sep 67-Aug 68



The other day, I put on some old-fashioned ear phones. You will remember those with the heavily padded ear cups and the over-the-head band to hold everything in place. I then remembered wearing such head phones at Tan Son Nhut.

The guy that bunked on top was married and both he and his wife would communicate with each other via magnetic tapes made on a small tape recorder purchased at the BX. It goes to reason some of those tapes would be very personal and very private. This was, as you will recall, long before e-mail, cell phones, and other electronic communications. I worked at night. My bunk mate did not have the heart to ask me to leave the barracks on those nights when I had a night off. He simply bought another small tape recorder with those heavy headsets and asked me to wear them while he made the tape to send to his wife. He would put some music into my headset loud enough to blot out anything he said. I would usually fall asleep while listening and never hear anything he said. Warm thoughts like this one makes my memories of Tan Son Nhut so special and to say nothing about the smile on my face.

FINDING A FRIEND

By: Steve Jenkins
US State Department/MAAG
Mar 61—Apr 62

Larry, will you circulate this guy around and see if anyone remembers him. I can tell you that he was a sergeant in the Air Force and this picture was taken in the month of January, 1962 in the village of Nha Trang. This picture was taken across the road from a chalet called Nautiq.

My Navy group worked with a team of AF guys with a rank of Sgt or above for several months and he is the only one that I have a picture of other than officers.

This guy could speak French better than most Frenchmen and he certainly helped us a lot with the language barrier. As you know, most Vietnamese could speak several languages with their second language as French. The Air Force group were all really good guys and helped us secure vehicles, etc. Also, these guys were supposed to be from an AF base in South Carolina.

Thanks and I still have a lot of stuff I need to share with the Assn.

Thanks,
Steve



IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE B. PITTELKAU, JR.

We have received word that TSNA member George B. Pittelkau, Jr. passed away in his sleep on September 5, 2011.

George was a 21 year veteran of service in the U. S. Air Force. After retiring from the Air Force in 1972, he worked for Columbia Helicopters and the FAA, retiring in 2002.

George served in Vietnam from July 1968 to July 1969 with the 460th TRW Detachment 1 Scatback.

He was Life Member of TSNA, which he joined in 1998. He was a Reciprocating Flight Chief. A note in his TSNA info says "Often flew General Westmoreland".

Many of us enjoyed meeting George for the first time at the 2008 TSNA Reunion in St. Louis.

Our condolences go out to his wife Geni and his 3 daughters.

NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS



I lived at the end of "Charlie Row" behind the base morgue. I was there during 3 Tet's and remember crawling between two mattresses I had under my bunk when the rockets would fly! Also did a tour with the 8th AP at Bien Hoa AB as a buck sergeant in 1968.

Jerry Brown
8th Aerial Port Squadron
Mar 66—Mar 67, and 68 also

FAT ALBERT—FIRST TIME IN COUNTRY

By: Benny Goodman
8th Aerial Port Squadron
Aug 71—Aug 72

Arriving in Vietnam in early August 1971, I was assigned as NCOIC, Load Planning, 8th Aerial Port Squadron, Tan Son Nhut AB. It was my responsibility to insure the correct and timely flow of cargo to in-country, inter theater, and U.S. destinations utilizing 50 to 55 C130, 15 to 20 C123 aircraft, 10 to 12 C7 aircraft, and 4 to 6 C41 aircraft on a daily basis. The average amount of cargo moved in any one day was approximately 790 tons. This became a routine work load in a very short period of time.

In late September 1971, I got a real clear hint that things would drastically change with the projected arrival and departure of the first C5A aircraft, commonly referred to as "Fat Albert." Fat Albert was capable of carrying a minimum of 85 tons of cargo on any routine mission. Headquarters, 22nd Air Force at Travis AFB sent a field training detachment team to Tan Son Nhut to immediately qualify as many load planners as possible in C5A Load Planning procedures. As the team was getting aboard an aircraft bound for Danang AB, the team chief told me that we could expect the arrival of the first C5A mission to Vietnam in the near future. He didn't say just how soon the near future would be.

One week later I received a call instructing me to report to the Military Airlift Command Post as soon as possible for a classified briefing. Five minutes later I learned that the first C5A mission to operate into Vietnam was on the way and would arrive in four hours. Additionally, we were told that for security of the C5A aircraft and crews, all C5A missions were classified as "secret."

About two hours before the arrival of the aircraft, all load planning functions had been completed and the entire load had been marshaled for immediate loading. As soon as the C5A had arrived, I went aboard to coordinate the loading with the aircraft loadmaster.

Within fifteen minutes of arrival, all coordination had been satisfactorily completed and as I disembarked the aircraft I noticed a large number of officers walking around and under the aircraft just being a rather large group of sightseers. It appeared that every officer above the rank of O-3 assigned to Tan Son Nhut AB was milling about the aircraft, hindering the unloading and loading by the members of the 8th Aerial Port aircraft loading team.

I approached the Aerial Port Duty officer, a First Lieutenant and told him that "If we don't get rid of all these sightseers and Sunday picnickers then some one may be run over by a K-Loader or truck." He replied that he would take care of the problem and immediately approached the 7th Air Force Commander, a three star general and had a short conversation with the general. The general's car immediately moved approximately one hundred feet further away from the C5A. Then the General, using a bull horn issued a few familiar words. "O.K., all you **sight seers and Sunday picnickers** assemble over here behind my car, NOW!"

There was an immediate mass movement and within a very short period of time the ramp was cleared of all 200 plus non essential personnel and the loading team was able to proceed and maintenance personnel were able to ready the C5A for departure in minimum time. Thanks to a few words of wisdom from the Commander, 7th Air Force, the first C5A mission was successfully completed. Isn't it amazing what a few words of wisdom from the Commander can accomplish in such a short time?



INSIGHTS INTO OUR VIETNAM LEGACY

By: Donald Reiter
Air Force Finance
Jun 66—Jun 67

My wife and I are members of a volunteer, sponsorship program at the Defense Language Institute English Language Center at Lackland AFB. Military people from all over the world come here for language studies. In 2005, we had the privilege of having two young soldiers from Hanoi as guests in our home. They were the first students from Vietnam ever to attend the school. There has been a steady stream of Vietnamese students ever since.

I always make it a point to tell the students that I was in their country during the war. I think it's fair, and I want to get their reaction. They have told me that they are a new generation, looking to the future and not to the past. I have only encountered one person old enough to remember the war. He is a high ranking Naval officer (O7) who started his career in the Army in 1974. He has spoken of being there during the US withdrawal. He has always been respectful and a pleasure to talk to. The only political comment I have heard from him is that our countries have good relations now.

One young officer, when I told him I had been there in the war, kept reminding me how fortunate I was. I never asked him what he meant by that. Another student once confided in me that he wants to write a book on the life of Ho Chi Minh. But he wants to tell the **whole** story. He doesn't think he can publish a book like that in his country.

Many of the students keep a low profile, spending most of their time in their rooms, studying. Some are more sociable and like having fun. We took some students to one of the oldest country dance halls in south Texas. They loved it. At my wife's prodding, one young man asked some of the young ladies to teach him to dance. They were more than happy to help. You couldn't get him off the floor after that. I have attached pictures of our Vietnamese Cowboys.

The Vietnamese military has an English language school in Hanoi. They send some of their instructors here to become more effective teachers. When I asked why the emphasis on English language skills, the answer was that they wanted to be part of the modern world.

There was a woman who was older than most of the students, a civilian taking the instructors course. She was an extremely nice person and we became very fond of her. She was a frequent guest at our home and taught my wife some Vietnamese cooking. But she was apprehensive about being in this country and seemed to need occasional reassurance that she was not our enemy. She also showed, in my opinion, evidence of indoctrination: We

were discussing politics one day and she made a statement that I cannot forget. She said, "My country has one party, the Communist party. And it's a good party."

There was another student, a Captain in the Army, who seemed to be more highly educated than most. He is extremely intelligent and an accomplished musician and oriental artist. He would always carry his bamboo flute; and his traditional music could often be heard around the grounds at Lackland. At one point, he was a featured guest in a theatrical production at the Bob Hope Theater on base. The school has also produced a CD of his work. One day, he spotted the TSNA sticker on my car and got very excited. He cried out, "Tan Son Nyet, Tan Son Nyet!" (their pronunciation). I asked what he thought about the dragon. He thought it was great, and went on to explain that in China and Vietnam the dragon signifies good luck.

Getting back to the first two students in 2005, one of my proudest moments was when we were at a rodeo where the colors were being presented on horseback. These two young soldiers from Hanoi were standing at my side, saluting the American flag. Who would have thought?



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NEW MEMBERS

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Mrs. Trinie Reiter TX mamatreiter@yahoo.com. N/A Wife of Donald T. Reiter

Mr. James B. Bass TX jbass@ktc.com. Sept 69 - Sept 70 377th Combat Support Group

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