



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



OCTOBER 2014

Hello Larry,

I just finished reading the latest "Revetments" issue. You really do a great job....every month! Guys like me appreciate your work very, very much!! Of course, I first read the story I submitted and I want you to know that if you made any changes, I sure didn't notice (sorry, not even improvements or corrections, LOL).

I did however, notice one **HUGE, GLARING, OMISSION**, made by yours truly. I failed to mention the "rest of the story" about why I volunteered for Nam. As I stated *"The story we got that caused us to volunteer was that doing so guaranteed we could go to Australia for R&R."* Yeah, sure it did! Here's the rest:

Along about Christmas or so of 1971, before I even became eligible for R&R (which woulda been Feb. 1972), on-high came down with just about THE worst news possible!!

**"No more R&Rs to Australia"!!!!!!!**

I sure wasn't the only heartbroken GI around, but that news made me absolutely miserable. I've wanted nothing more than to visit Australia, ever since I was about 8 years old. That "volunteer for Nam- get Australia R&R" hype was just what I needed to make my dream come true. It's also what I explained to my Mom about volunteering and she had sort of accepted my rationale (or at least accepted I had some reason). Denying me R&R to Aussie-land was probably why I so quickly welcomed the opportunity to try out for Mobility. Fortunately, becoming one of the 8th Aerial Port Squadron's Chosen Few was and remains the absolute best military experience. Never again have I experienced the camaraderie, the blind trust, the ability to work with such unspoken,

undirected, unpracticed precision mutual efforts to accomplish the mission-- -----AND so darned fast !

Another omission, actually more important, was my failure to mention my friend, Chuck "Mac" McClellan. Chuck arrived at TSN for his 2nd tour (1st was Danang, 69-70) just a few days prior to me. He was a seasoned 605 and over the next 6 months Chuck taught me absolutely EVERYTHING a really good 605 needs to know. His experience from the prior tour may have even kept me alive. We became close friends but lost touch when I went to Mobility and Chuck got sent home a little early. Some 30+ years later, Chuck found me via the 8th APS Mobility website and FINALLY we reunited at the 8th APS Mobility reunion 2013 in Branson, MO. Only took 41 years to see each other again!!! To date, Chuck is the **only** person I've been able to locate that I actually served WITH. The reverse is true for Chuck!

Larry, I'm not asking for more publication space, but on the other hand, if you'd like to run this followup info, that'd be great too .

Thank you so much for publishing "my story".

WELCOME HOME brother!

Cary Louderback  
Aug 71 - Aug 72  
8th Aerial Port Squadron

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

The date on the front of this "Revetment" announces the change of the seasons. A philosopher named Browne said "There is no season such delight can bring / as summer, autumn, winter and the spring." I like the words of the Old Testament book

wording of Ecclesiastes 5:1-2; "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted" (I doubt that the author of this text had a huge oak tree in his yard as we do. We don't pluck leaves, a rake is called for.) But as autumn begins take note of these words "Good seasons start with good beginnings".

The autumn begins as a season and a series of days tied into family: Yom Kippur, Halloween then come Thanksgiving and the Advent season. All this when it is hard for us to watch the TV news or read the front pages of the local newspapers. Our current concerns for nation and family are placed right before our eyes

This is the real beginning of our needs to tighten our family relationships and renew our faith in God and country.

Some find it hard to accept the beliefs of Truitt Cathy who died this past week but his life belief (these words from his obituary) "It is important to treat others as you would like to be treated". But more to our theme of seasons: "we live in a changing world, but we need to be reminded that the important things have not changed, he said, and the important things will not change if we keep our priorities in proper order".

Again this plea: answering the concerns for family and nation. This as we prepare for the fall and winter seasons.

End of Sermon

Chaplain Bob Chaffee





**AC-119 Ceremony of Appreciation  
For  
SEA Gunship Exhibit  
National Museum of the United States Air Force  
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio**

By: Dr. Larry Elton Fletcher

AC-119 Shadow and Stinger Gunship Brothers and family members gathered at the National Museum of the United States Air Force on Friday, 25 July 2014 to honor Museum Director General Jack Hudson and Museum Curator Jeff Duford for their leadership in the planning and development of the SEA Gunship Exhibit.

Colonel Al Heuss and Dr. Larry Fletcher presented AC-119 Gunship Association commemorative coins and challenge coins along with letters to General Hudson and Curator Duford in appreciation of their leadership and dedication to the creation of an exhibit that recognizes the fixed-wing gunships of the Vietnam War. Though not yet finished, the exhibit is nearing completion and will be opened to the public in the near future.

The event was organized by Colonel Heuss in conjunction with the 45<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the 71<sup>st</sup> Special Operations Squadron. Thirty-eight people attended the ceremony. Representatives from the 71<sup>st</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadrons were among the group. A big salute goes to Stinger Pilot Lt. Col. George Hardy for flying in from Florida for the event.

The 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Reunion was held in Columbus, Indiana on Friday and Saturday. Activities included touring the new addition to the Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum in which 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Shadow history and memorabilia is displayed. Over forty people attended the Banquet Dinner at Columbus Municipal Airport Hanger 5 Restaurant. Dale Burgan, assisted by Jack Bastin, was reunion coordinator.



**Col. Al Heuss**

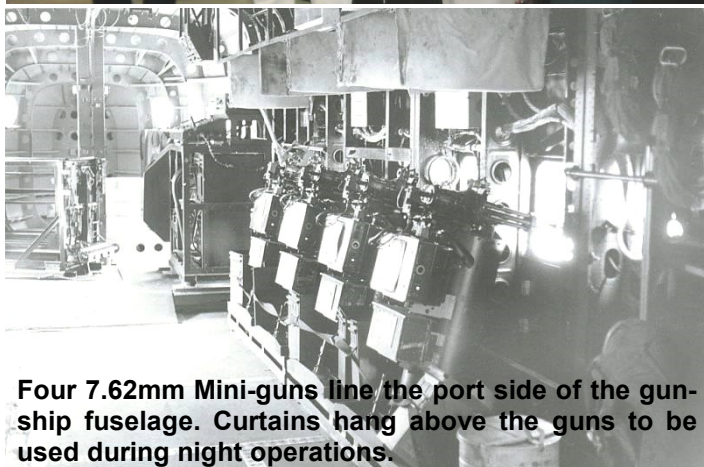
**Dr. Larry Fletcher**

**Gen. Jack Hudson**

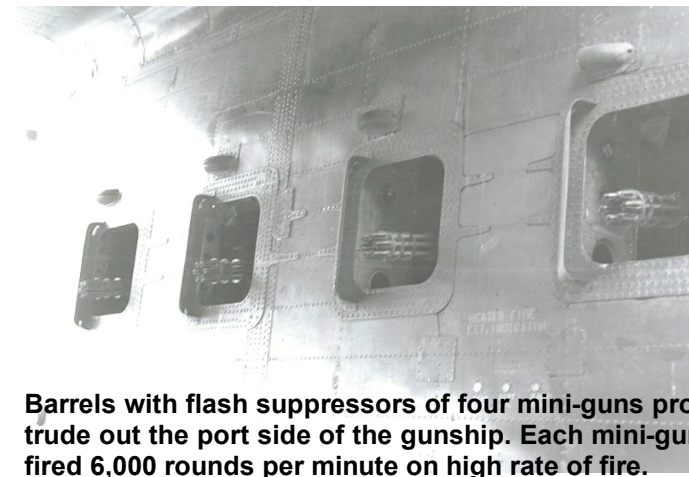
**Jeff Duford**



**AC-119 "Shadow" Gunship being checked-over by Maintenance Crew Chief.**



**Four 7.62mm Mini-guns line the port side of the gunship fuselage. Curtains hang above the guns to be used during night operations.**



**Barrels with flash suppressors of four mini-guns protrude out the port side of the gunship. Each mini-gun fired 6,000 rounds per minute on high rate of fire.**

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

The previous story all started when new TSNA member Garry Arndt mentioned about his visit to the new C-119 Display at the NMUSAF.

I asked him to get something for me, and he did—the article and picture from Dr. Larry Fletcher.

Since I knew that John Bessette, husband of TSNA Treasurer Carol Bessette, was a Spooky navigator, I kept him in the email loop.

You will see his contribution to this next.

*Thanks, Larry, for including me on this. As you know, I was a navigator on AC-47 Spooky gunships 1968-68 at Bien Hoa. The gunship display at the NMUSAF includes Spooky as well as the AC-119 and AC-130 variants flown in SEA. I have contributed to the Museum material (35mm slides, logbook extracts, navigational charts, etc). And I (on the phone) "talked them through" a typical AC-47 mission and provided audio tapes of missions I had retained "from the day." They tell me that this is incorporated in the display.*

*Also, I have a personal connection to the 71st SOS as mentioned in Dr Fletcher's emails. You might consider putting in the article that two of us from Bien Hoa, Major Jim Rentschler and I, went TDY from Bien Hoa to TSN in January 1969, to fly with the 71st on their initial AC-119 Shadow gunship missions in the Saigon area. We familiarized them with the intricacies of the missions they were to fly, and basically checked them out for combat. We both were very impressed with the professionalism of the 71st people we worked with, and knew they would do their new "job" in an outstanding manner. And they did.*

*If any TSNER visits the NMUSAF & checks the gunship display out, could they let me know how it looks and feels (especially the Spooky part)? Thanks.*

*John Bessette*



## NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

I was Army not Air Force. I lived at Hq & Hq Co, USARV. We processed troops in and out of Vietnam, pulled perimeter guard duty on a rotation schedule, and transported troops to and from Tan Son Nhut as they arrived and left country.

Marvin D. DeBolt  
USARV  
Sep 66 - Aug 67

SAC SARPF - Photo Interpreter,  
lived in downtown Saigon. 460th  
RITS - Photo Interpreter - lived in  
1200 area.

Wesley B. Sullivan  
SAC SARPF Jul - Dec 67  
460 RITS - Aug 68 - Feb 69

Stationed at Quang Tri, retrieved body of Jimmy Stewart's son who was killed on DMZ, June 1969. Shot on DMZ while engaged in battle with Vietnamese.

James R. Hayes, Jr.  
3rd Wing Div. Infantry 0311  
Oct 68 - Dec 69

Ph D. Engineering 1975; MS Statistics, 1965; M. A. Math 1962; AB Math, 1958.

Fortunately I was assigned to TSN in 1969 (after Tet) and my duties were in the 7th AF HQ Building in targeting/computer area in basement area.

My job was to determine (1) high likelihood times/locations for interdiction strikes and (2) determine statistical likelihood of VC/NVA infiltration in specific hamlets (based on day-time

photography) for night-time napalm and gunship ops. I was assigned out of CINCPAC (Adm. John McCain) for entire time.

I retired out of Ramstein AFB in Germany as Chief Scientist in January 1990.

My wife and I have 12 children (including 3 adopted - 2 Korean and 1 Vietnamese) and one son just finished a 4 year assignment at White House as Technology Director.

Joseph T. Ryan  
Department of Navy Civilian  
Oct 69 - Dec 70



## A LONG WAY FROM OUR DAY, eh?

By: Jack Wimer  
Hq. 7th Air Force Comm. Center  
Oct 67—Oct 68

Larry, the squid (my nephew from TSNA 2008 Reunion) is still in Omaha, extended til 24 years, involved in super secret stuff.

Visit to Vietnam, February, 2014. We sailed from Hong Kong on the Holland America "Volendam". First stop Halong Bay, Vietnam, not far South of the Chinese border. About 2000 karst peaks sticking up in the bay. Toured one of the caves...beautiful. The cave was lighted with various colored floodlights to accentuate the huge caverns and high ceilings. These caves were used as hospitals by North Vietnam. We then took a bus tour to Haiphong.

Port was busy with shipping as it was during our time there. Couldn't help but recall the time in 1968 when one of our F-105s got mad and strafed a Russian ship loaded with missiles. We at 7th A.F. got our fingers slapped from all levels all the way to the top. On the way we passed a large power plant which I felt sure our navy had wiped out flying from Yankee Station and had since been rebuilt. As we passed it, I asked our young Vietnamese guide if American bombs fell here...he answered a curt "yes" and changed the subject. J

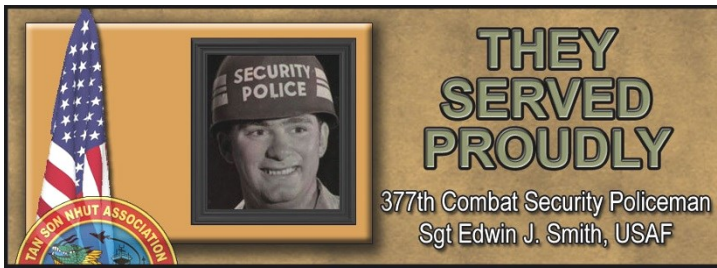


TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION  
2015 REUNION

May 28-31, 2015

PIGEON FORGE, TENNESSEE

(MARK YOUR CALENDARS **NOW**)



## JACK SMITH'S TSN STORY

**By: Jack Smith**  
**377th SPS**

My tour at Tan Son Nhut with the 377th Security Police Squadron, started with my arrival Dec 03, 1968 and ended Dec 04, 1969.

I worked Law Enforcement, most of the time I was in-country with some of those nights pulling Quick Reaction Team duties.

After 3 months working different posts I was assigned to the Main Gate full time, 2nd shift.

The Main gate was a very tiresome job some days and others it moved so fast you did not know if you were coming or going.

The traffic would go from none, to the entrance lane, that backed up out the QC check point.

I hardly ever carried an M-16 on the gate. I preferred the 12ga shotgun.

I have a photo of me standing by the small steel barrier in front the main gate with the shotgun before the new bunker was installed.

One of the most interesting events that happened to me on the Main gate was an arrest I made of an Army private from Phuoc Vin.

He did not have orders authorizing him to be in Saigon and he had two paper bags full of marijuana, in his fatigue pants pockets.

He was turned over to the 716th Military Police Bn., after I completed the paper work on him.

Seven days later a helicopter, I called it a bumble-bee, the ones that only seated four, showed up at the Army compound, known as Camp Alpha. The compound was located on Tan Son Nhut.

Less than an hour later, I was onboard the chopper and off to Phuoco Vin, for the private's court-martial.

After I testified in the trial ,I found out that there were no choppers back to Saigon, till the next afternoon.

The MP Commander was worried about my safety because the private had a lot of buddies that as I was told were upset that their supply of marijuana had been stopped.

It turned out alright. I was billeted with the MP's in their hooch.

I must say I did not sleep well that night. The next day I had a breakfast of C-rats and caught a huey back to Saigon that afternoon.

There were many other events that took place on the Main gate, to many to recall.

I feel that my tour in Vietnam took me from a boy to a man.

It made me a better person more proud of my country than ever before.

[www.poetrypoem.com/theoldcowboy](http://www.poetrypoem.com/theoldcowboy).



## “Get His Bags!”

By: Harold Boone  
460<sup>th</sup> Tactical Reconnaissance Wing  
1967-1968

Ordinarily we read articles in “Revetments” focusing on events and people at Tan Son Nhut. My story is somewhat different in that it occurred while I was travelling to Vietnam. It has always been a fond memory of mine and one I would like to share with you.

In September 1967, I took leave as I departed Forbes AFB, Kansas and prior to reporting to Travis AFB for the trip to Tan Son Nhut. I spent some time with family and friends in South Carolina but also wanted to spend a few days in California seeing all the sights and hearing all the sounds. So I went to Los Angeles for a few days of sightseeing. It was everything I had ever thought it to be. I took the customary tour of Hollywood expedited by using a taxicab. I also went to a football game at the University of Southern California where I saw the now famous O. J. Simpson play his first game for that team. As I had expected, the highlight of my stay in Los Angeles was a trip to Disneyland in nearby Anaheim. As I was soon to discover, Fantasyland did not end for me when I exited the park.

While in Los Angeles, I stayed at the Holiday Inn, 1020 South Figueroa Street. Being the packrat I am, I kept my hotel receipt and it shows my room cost to be \$12.00 per night plus tax of \$.60. Today the Luxe City Center Hotel sits on the property at the same address and its current base room rate is \$269.00 per night plus tax. Interestingly enough, the hotel’s telephone number is still the same today as it was 47 years ago.

So, as I was checking out on Saturday morning, I asked the hotel desk clerk if I could get a ride to the airport for a flight to San Francisco. They did not have a hotel car for a free ride but he said there was a limousine out front and I could use it for the same price as a taxicab. I assumed the “limousine” would be a van, or station wagon, etc. My assumption could not have been more wrong. To my surprise, it was a long, sleek, black Cadillac limousine and the first one I had ever seen, save the movies and TV. The driver was dressed in a black suit and more importantly, he wore a black “chauffer’s” hat. My bags went into the spacious trunk and I went into the back seat where I found a fresh morning newspaper. I kicked up the foot rest, propped my feet up and opened the newspaper. It just seemed to be the thing to do while riding in a limousine headed to the airport.

My chauffer asked me where I was going and after I told him San Francisco, he suggested using Pacific Southwest Airlines which was a commuter line. As we pulled up to the departure area, my limousine was met by a skycap

ready to handle some important person’s luggage. My chauffer opened my door for me then the trunk and simply said to the skycap, “Get his bags!” So here I am an E-4 dressed with my tan colored 1505 uniform headed to the ticket counter being escorted by a uniformed chauffer with a skycap in tow with my bags. And yes, the big blue duffle bag was included. Countless travelers had to wonder who that military man was with such an entourage. For all I know, those travelers may have thought I was wealthy, perhaps the son of someone famous, or even a Hollywood star. I will never be learned enough to put into words how I felt walking through that airport terminal knowing I was just a regular guy on my way to Vietnam having never seen a limousine or a formally dressed chauffer in my life.

To complete my moment in the sun and before it dimmed back into reality, my chauffer walked me to the ticket counter. He stood beside me and spoke for me telling the agent which flight I would need. After paying for my ticket and my bags were checked, I paid him for his services and shook hands. Along with the cost of the ride, I tipped him generously for his services which I consider the best money ever spent.

Many a Vietnam Veteran will long remember the hollow homecoming they received, and justly so. I will equally remember those thirty or so minutes when the sun shone on me so brightly and I was made to feel important and so special even though it was nothing more than a ride to the airport.



## From Tan Son Nhut to Port au Prince

*A lesson well learned, and passed on*  
by  
Joseph E. Thompson Jr.  
MAJ, CA, USAR

In October of 1971, I was transferred from Beale AFB in California to Tan Son Nhut Air Base in the Republic of Viet Nam. I was essentially a brand spanking new Air Force E4, and also a “newbie” to TSN. I was so new that I was still wearing the standard green stateside fatigues with the Blue and White name tapes.

One day that October, after all the in processing was over and I was finally working on the flight line, my Shop Chief sent me up to the main part of the base in the shop’s blue pickup truck. I do not really recall what I was sent for, but I can remember the events of the return trip very clearly.

When I reentered the flight line from the area near the Aerospace Ground Equipment (the light carts and generators we used to maintain and service the aircraft), I became disoriented, not really sure where I was or how to return to the Fuel System Repair Area located at the end of the flight line. All I knew was that I had to get over to where the “gooney birds” revetments were and make a left. I also knew how late I was and what would have been done to me at Beale for such an offense.

Unbeknownst to me as I sweated inside the hot pickup, I was also being followed by the Law Enforcement SPs in their ¼ ton truck. When I reentered the flight line they had the pleasure of seeing me drive a little too fast, in addition to not executing the proper passing procedures in the vicinity of a C-47 getting ready to “pull chocks.” The SP’s judiciously pulled me over and asked me for my Military drivers license, specifically the one with “Viet Nam” stamped on it. As my luck of the day would have it, this particular license was in my locker in the barracks. What else could go wrong?

I quickly envisioned myself now

having a “chat” with the squadron commander, CPT Matthews, regarding my unique driving skills and lack of flight line safety knowledge. I pleaded with the SPs that I needed to get back to my shop to return the truck. They agreed, and as soon as we pulled into my work area my shop chief, Technical Sergeant “Shorty” Yarborough, appeared from the “office,” nothing more than a plywood and tin-roofed affair. One of the SPs immediately gave him a full briefing on my inefficiencies as a driver. Shorty listened to the tale and then said to the SP, “This man just got here, and he will get into a lot of trouble. Please let me handle this.”

The SPs reluctantly agreed to let TSgt Yarborough handle my punishment, and released me to his custody. As they left he looked at me and said in his most stern voice, “Number One, what were you doing speeding on the flight line?!? What were you doing passing an aircraft?!?” When I could offer no immediate explanation, he proceeded to properly chew my butt. The experience was sufficiently unpleasant that I found myself considering that it would have been better had the SPs taken me away. Finally, Shorty looked at me and said, “You know what, Sergeant Thompson? Your new name is ‘Hot Rod!’ Come on, Hot Rod, let’s get a cup of coffee.”

For the remainder of my tour in Viet Nam, everyone in the Fuel Shop knew me by that name. I never forgot the incident, or Shorty sticking up for me, and I also didn’t do any more speeding on the flight line. I knew that if the same thing had happened at Beale AFB, my shop chief would have probably fed me to the nearest lions, even if that meant a long drive to the closest zoo.

Many years later, I am still in the military, having made the move to the Army, earned a commission, and eventually found myself in the Reserves. To my surprise and great pleasure I had the unique ability to pass on the wisdom taught me that hot morning in 1971, this time in another hot climate. In September of 1994 I was attached to the Civil Mili-

tary section of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division during *OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY*. One day I received a call at the Civil Military Operations Center from a very irate MP who was working the entry point to our compound. “Major Thompson! We just had one of your sergeants leave out of here speeding, and carrying Haitian nationals in the back of the HMMWV!” I asked him to let me handle it. When the offending staff sergeant returned from Port au Prince I properly chewed his butt in a fashion that I hoped would have made Shorty proud, and then christened him with my nickname of 23 years earlier: “Hot Rod.” I experienced déjà vu that evening as his buddies picked up the new moniker, but the label had the desired effect: his driving became more responsible and there were no more complaints from the MPs.

Thanks, Shorty, for bailing me out. I never forgot it!

*Editor’s Note: The above story is from the November-December 2005 Revetments.*

*I have heard Joe mention this story, and it is a good one.*

*It is also a good one to repeat, since once again, I am running low on stories to publish.*

*After looking at our membership roster, I find that 200 members might remember this from before. BUT, there are 308 of our “active” roster that have joined since December, 2005, and I am presuming not many of them have seen it.*



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**P. O. Box 236**  
**Penryn PA 17564**

**Revetments** is an official publication of the Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236  
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Caption for picture taken on the lunch cruise boat April 26, 2002 on the Potomac River Washington, D.C.

Left to Right: John Peele, James Fahn, Jr., Carol Besette, Denise Hill, Wayne Salisbury, Mark Fleisher, Keith Feuerhaken, Robin Temple, Jack Streubing, Joseph Gatto, Bill Coup, Johnnie Jernigan, Max Day, Billy Lowe, Thomas Campbell, Leo Curry, Rick Matern, Irma Robertson, Robbie Robertson, James Smith, Benjamin White, Patricia Relyea, Jenny Brown, Vic Brown, Thomas Tessier, James Warrington, William Carlson, Regina Shay, Dennis Shay, Robert Need, Jerry Norville.

In front: John Besette (on left), (starting behind wheel) Albert Keeler, Michelle Peele, Dean Gard, Betty Evans, Frank Bracken, Mary Carlson, Marilyn Moll, Ken Moll.

Our thanks to TSNA Board member Bill Coup for this picture from the 2002 Reunion

## NEW MEMBERS

Mr. James H. Newberg Nacogdoches TX [j.newberg@yahoo.com](mailto:j.newberg@yahoo.com) May 67 - May 68 377th SPS Canine  
Mr. Lee "Barry" Davis San Marcos TX [leebarrydav@yahoo.com](mailto:leebarrydav@yahoo.com) Apr 66 - May 75 USN Com 7th Fleet Detachment C  
Mr. Mack I. Gordy, Jr. Greensboro NC [mgordyjr@triad.rr.com](mailto:mgordyjr@triad.rr.com) Dec 64 - Dec 65 Tri-Service Air Transport Coordinating

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