



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



JUNE 2015

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



LOOKING AHEAD

This issue of Revetments was started in early April, along with the May issue.

This issue will finish the great story from Mike Sirrinc, and also contains a complete three page story from Dave Karmes, on his arrival at TSN.

I will be preparing a special issue of Revetments as soon as possible after the 2015 reunion in Pigeon Forge, which of course, was completed just as this issue is due to be "posted".

So I hope you enjoy this issue, and if ANYTHING in this or any other Revetments enables you to remember things from TSN, then please write them down and email them to me for future Revetments.

Otherwise, I might be wishing the special edition was the July edition!

NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

First lived in hutch area near main gate, moved up to barracks next to Base Chapel and Armory—Orderly Room, took cover in Air America area during April 13 mortar attack, was performing entry control duties. Promoted to SSgt. And assigned SAT Charlie 2. Dispatched to Alpha Sector Dec 4th, '66 respond after both Alpha-1 and Alpha-2 disabled by enemy action.

Peter W. Coxon
377th AP/SP Mar 66-Mar 67

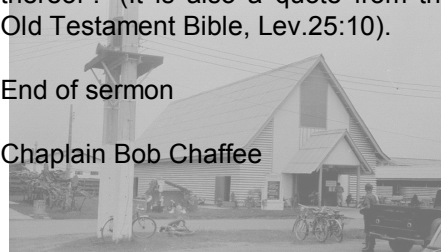
We have just closed another gathering of members of the Tan Son Nhut Association. This "Corner" was written before the closing benediction but I hope it carries a message to all who attended and those who could not be with us in Tennessee.

Yes, we have done it again! The TSNA has dedicated another Vietnam Memorial in a community or national park. This is number 5 of these Memorials ranging from a plaque at Charlotte, North Carolina and a marble service bench at the Air force Museum and Park, Dayton, Ohio. At each one of these events the prayer by the United States' first President, George Washington was offered at the dedication. Part of the prayer goes like this: "Almighty God we make our earnest prayer that you will keep the United States in your holy protection that you will incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States."

President Washington goes on to pray for justice, love of mercy and the demeaning of ourselves with charity, humility and good temper of mind and spirit. Washington made this prayer in 1783 and was heard again at Pigeon Forge, Tennessee in 2015.

Maybe this is the spot to use the words we can lift from the cast of the Liberty Bell: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof". (It is also a quote from the Old Testament Bible, Lev.25:10).

End of sermon
Chaplain Bob Chaffee



REMEMBRANCE

Mrs. Lena Wilson passed away on April 28, 2015.

She was the wife of TSNA Life Member Ezra Wilson, and the mother of three children, including TSNA Life Member Sharon Jernigan; 7 grandchildren; and 8 great-grandchildren.

The family requests and appreciates your prayers.

NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

I was at Tan Son Nhut Mar 67 - Mar 68. USAF, I worked in Air Freight Section on Rebel Ramp-C-130's and all cargo aircraft from the states. I drove a 40K loader. I worked the night shift the whole year I was there and I was on duty the night of TET, I remember it well.

Kenneth L. Davis
7th Air Force
Mar 67 - Mar 68

Not a lot to tell. Ordnance school at Aberdeen, Maryland/Jump School Fort Campbell/Attached to the 101st Airborne as STRAC ONE unit. MG W. Westmoreland was CG 101st. To my knowledge we were the first Ordnance unit designated "STRAC ONE". Spent most of the time in Okinawa, 6-8 trips in and out of Tan Son Nhut.

Tony A. Robichaud
21st Ordnance Co 426th Brigade Support Battalion, 101st Airborne



An Invitation from the 460th Space Wing Historian

Greetings. My name is Chris McCune, as the new historian for the 460th Space Wing at Buckley AFB, Colorado, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and extend an invitation to those who served with the 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing. I am a former active duty enlisted Airman who grew up in the Denver area and transitioned to the Air Force History Program after my enlistment ended in 2007. I have a Master's Degree in History from Arizona State University, and am now at Buckley AFB with the 460 SW after spending the first 6.5 years of my Historian career with the 58th Special Operations Wing at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico.

As you might imagine, the heritage of the units for whom I work is extremely important to me. As members of the 460 TRW, you have contributed to the legacy upon which I and those Airmen who currently serve are expected to live up to and emulate. As such, the 460 SW Commander, Col John W. Wagner and I would like to provide those at Buckley AFB with a chance to hear your stories. Please consider this to be an invitation to come to the base whenever you have the opportunity, to share your experiences with us. We can work with Colonel Wagner as well as our Protocol and Public Affairs offices on base to coordinate a multitude of engagements, whether it's something as simple as a quick five-minute introduction during a wing stand-up, to something more involved like a reunion at the base.

If travel is not your cup of tea, we would still like to hear your story—as the wing historian, I'm charged with recording not just the history of the 460 SW, but in preserving information on our lineal ancestors whenever such material becomes available. If you have orders, diaries or journals, photographs, or any sort of memorabilia from your time with the 460 TRW, these also help to tell your story and we'd love to add them to our archives. Please note that although I don't mind receiving originals of these materials at all, I do understand and respect the fact that you may want them to remain with your families. Fortunately, modern technology, such as digital scanning and photographs, has made copying these sorts of items an increasingly easier task, and as a result we would be more than happy to preserve copies if you wish to keep the originals.

Please feel free to contact me anytime via phone at (720) 847-5539, via email at christopher.mccune.4@us.af.mil or 460sw.ho@us.af.mil, or via regular mail at 460 SW/HO, 510 S. Aspen Street, Buckley AFB, CO, 80011-9551. Thank you, and we hope to hear from you and see you soon!

A note from Bill Coup.

There are a lot of veterans out there who just are not "joiners" and so don't belong to the Tan Son Nhut Associa-

tion. If you are in contact with any other veterans you served with that were members of the 460th and live in Colorado, please pass this on to them. Who knows, perhaps they will become a "joiner" with us through this project. This especially applies to those who may live in the Denver area and could visit the base.



The TSNA Scholarship Program

By: Dale Bryan, TSNA Secretary

At our just concluded reunion at Pigeon Forge, our brand new scholarship program was unveiled. It will provide one scholarship per year to a descendant of a Vietnam veteran. Maximum amount of any single grant will be \$5,000.00. The Scholarship Committee that will be tasked with implementing and administering it was also established and the Tan Son Nhut Association Board of Directors is now working to staff it.

The complete scholarship guidelines as passed by the board are reproduced on page 3. The committee will have some latitude in working within those guidelines, such as how to evaluate candidates that are home schooled. The committee might even request that the board amend the guidelines in the future. That will be their prerogative.

One of the first actions of the committee will be identifying methods to advertise our scholarship.

Members are encouraged to help identify potential recipients of the scholarship. You are encouraged to post messages at local VFW and American Legion Halls or other locations. It is very likely that flyers about the program will be available in the future. One never knows when we might encounter a Vietnam Veteran or one of their descendants.

This scholarship is one of the major milestones in the history of our great organization. More will be published by the committee chair or me in future editions of Revetments.

See Page 3 for more information about this program.

REVETMENTS

Tan Son Nhut Association Scholarship

ARTICLE I – Authority to Establish Scholarship

Section 1 – Action of Board of Directors. The Tan Son Nhut Association (TSNA) Board of Directors by authority of Article XI, Section 2 of the Association Bylaws established this scholarship on March 6, 2015.

ARTICLE II – Base Requirements

Section 1 – Persons Eligible. The TSNA Scholarship is reserved for the direct descendants by blood or by legal adoption of those who served in the Republic of Vietnam for any period from January 1, 1959 to April 30, 1975. Service must have a connection to Tan Son Nhut AB and must meet any of the following criteria:

1. Service with the armed forces of the United States of America or the Republic of Vietnam.
2. Service as a civilian on Tan Son Nhut AB as either an American or Vietnamese citizen.

Section 2 – College Attendance. The scholarship recipient must be pursuing a four year degree as a resident student at a United States accredited college or university that grants bachelor or higher degrees. During the time of the recipient's tenure at the institution, a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0, based on a 4 point scale, for each academic year shall be maintained. The scholarship recipient may begin their college career at a two year institution whose credits earned are transferrable to an educational institution granting bachelor or higher degrees. If institution attended is not in the United States, it will be the responsibility of the selection committee to determine if the institution meets the same criteria as a United States accredited school.

Section 3 – College Majors. The college major must be one that leads to at least a bachelor degree in a specific subject.

Section 4 – ROTC Participation. Planning to participate in Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) is not a requirement for being offered a scholarship, but it will weigh in favor of an applicant.

ARTICLE III – Selection Criteria

Section 1 – Minimum Selection Requirement. The following are Criteria Minimum Requirements:

1. An overall high school GPA of 3.0 on 4 point scale for at least six semesters. Applicant must prove by submitting copies of transcripts or by letter from the high school administration;
2. Faculty/Administrator letter of recommendation.

Section 2 – Other (Optional) Selection Criteria. The following may be invoked to further refine a selection session:

1. Standardized Test Scores. Different types of tests will be subjected to algorithms to allow objective comparison;
2. Community Activities;
3. Written Essay;
4. Participation in JROTC or other patriotic activities;
5. Plans to pursue ROTC in college.

Selection criteria shall be as objective as possible.

Section 3 – Nondiscrimination. Selections shall be made without regard to race, national origin, religion, or gender.

ARTICLE IV – Distribution of Benefits

Section 1 – Maximum Benefit. Maximum benefit to any recipient will be \$5,000.00.

Section 2 – Amount of Benefit Each Year. The Selection Committee, in consultation with the TSNA Treasurer, will determine the amount of benefit for a given year.

Section 3 – Benefit Distribution Schedule. Each academic year, one-fourth of benefits will be disbursed as direct payment by TSNA Treasurer to the educational institution as long as the recipient meets minimum requirements to maintain the scholarship.

ARTICLE V – Maintaining Benefits

Section 1 – Minimum Requirement to maintain benefit. At the end of each academic year, the recipient shall submit copies of college transcript or a letter from the registrar or other official to document that the following have been maintained:

1. Overall GPA of 3.0 on a 4 four point scale;
2. Completion of a minimum of 30.0 semester units during an academic year. If the institution uses a different scale to determine a full academic year, that metric will determine compliance.

ARTICLE VI – Selection Committee

Section 1 – Appointment. The TSNA President, in accordance with Article IX, Section 1 of the Association Bylaws and with advice and consent of the Board of Directors, will appoint five (5) TSNA members in good standing to the committee that will select the scholarship recipient(s).

1. One member of the committee will be designated chair;
2. Any committee member or any TSNA member under consideration for appointment to the committee shall, upon learning a relative is a scholarship candidate, immediately recuse their self from the committee.

Section 2 – Term. Committee members shall be appointed to a term of two years. On the first round of appointments, three members will be appointed to terms of two years. The others will be appointed to terms of one year.

Section 3 – Final Approval. The committee chair shall submit the name(s) of the proposed scholarship recipient(s) to the TSNA Secretary who will initiate an action of the Board of Directors to approve the recommended selection(s).

Section 4 – Other Committee Responsibilities:

1. Determine and establish methods to advertise and recruit candidates to apply for scholarships;
2. Keep TSNA Secretary apprised of activities and progress via reports that shall be submitted at least quarterly;
3. Notify TSNA Treasurer when scholarship distributions are required.

“THINGS GO TO H _ _ _”
By Mike Serrine
(Final installment)

There was still too much action out Plantation Road to take the short way to the air base. so we had to drive all the way back downtown and then turn back northwest to get to Tan Son Nhut. We roared down the center of one of the main roads to downtown Saigon at high speed, ignoring what traffic lights were working. There was no traffic.

The city for the most part was unharmed, just strangely empty, with most of its population hiding in fear. It was eerie to drive fifty miles an hour down a main street of a city of over a million people and not see anyone. Smoke drifted in the long, empty streets, blown here and there along with the remains of the aborted Tet holiday, shredded firecrackers casings, dead flowers and the inevitable paper. Here and there you could see evidence of battles, an overturned and burned army truck, a smoking lot full of rubble that used to be a building, and walls scorched and pockmarked from rifle fire.

It was the same all the way out to Tan Son Nhut. The closer we got to the base, the more destruction was visible from the road. Our convoy had been in radio contact with the base, so they were expecting us. As we came into sight of the front gate, we were momentarily surprised to see the ugly snout of a tank pointing down the street at us. There had never been one there before. It looked like there must be at least a company of ARVN troops dug in around the gate.

We threaded our way through the maze of obstacles in front of the gate. It was a relief to be inside a major military compound and know that your personal security was not dependent upon a company of MP's and the enemy's lack of heavy weapons. We separated from the mortuary vehicles and went our own way. The MP vehicles turned around and headed back out.

We drove straight to our office. The place looked a little bit different. With the help of some Air Force types and a fork lift the night crew had stacked full engine containers to the roofline in front of both exposed ends of the office. The other two sides of the office were against open warehouses; the inventory of each had been stacked against our walls. It was pretty well protected from anything but a direct rocket or mortar through the roof.

Everybody rushed out to meet us; they were as glad to see us as we were to be there. Specialist Fifth Class Henry was the only one of the night crew I knew very well. I drew him off to one side to get the story.

"Hey, Henry, what's happen'?" was my standard greeting. "Tell me what went down out here."

"Oh, you shoulda seen it! It was like the Fourth of July at the zoo. Grab a cuppa coffee and I'll tell you all about it. How 'bout you? Where'd you spend the last two days?"

"At the Capital," I said as I got some coffee, "but I wanna hear your story first." We settled into a couple of office chairs in the back.

"Well, it was pretty quiet until a little after 0300, when we started taking some rockets and mortars, and small arms fire on the eastern and northern perimeter, and they hit the main gate on the south side, JGS HQ's, and BOQ # 3. We went out back to see what we could see. About 0330 a big old Freedom Bird, a Seaboard World DC-8 I think, took off and when it went over the western end of the perimeter the sky lit up with green tracer fire. Man, it looked like there must've been a thousand enemy shooting at it, but they couldn't hit nothin'," Henry said.

"I'll bet the guys on that plane were scared stiff," I said.

"No kidding. Can you imagine the magnitude of your bad luck to make it through a year in the Nam and then get a problem on the Freedom Bird?"

"You'd have to have some bad karma going there, for sure," I said.

"Any way, and this is only what we can pick up second hand, but it seems like Charley hit the base on all four sides, but heaviest on the west, north and east. The main attack was on the west side. It's hard to believe, but the story is the sappers drove up in a taxi and blew the heck outta the Gate 51 with Bangalore's, then took out the Bunker 51 with RPG's, and somehow managed to get two battalions across a mine field and onto the base! There was a running gun battle with the Air Police and ARVN security forces, and they kept 'em from advancing, even though most of the ARVN security forces di di'd," he said.

"There it is. Thank God for the Air Police and the Huey gun ships we had at the heliport, or who knows what would have happened 'cause there was hundreds of heavily armed enemy all over the place. The ARVN brought up three light tanks around 0500 and two were immediately destroyed, and the other turned tail and ran. It was touch and go for a while, but they finally found two companies of ARVN paratroopers who were willing to fight, and not a moment too soon," he said.

"How's that?" I asked.

"Well, about 0600 the VC, man these were regular North Vietnam Army troops, mounted a second big attack, one of them human wave attacks I guess, maybe a thousand of 'em..."

"No way? How did a handful of air police and two companies of ARVN troops stop a thousand troops? What's that, maybe two or three battalions?" I asked.

"Cavalry to the rescue, man. About that time the 25th Infantry finally got here from Cu Chi and hit 'em from the rear. Air support was chewing 'em up pretty good, too. Troop B from the 4th Cav showed up an hour or two later and hit 'em from the north on the outer perimeter road. Well, that changed their minds in a hurry. Most of 'em retreated back off base and holed up in the Vinatexco cotton mill. They were contained there and destroyed. Bombed the heck out of them. Henry leaned back with a smug look on his face as if taking personal pride in the accomplishments just described. He took a sip of coffee.

"Man, I wish I could've seen that. I got to do some shooting when I was holed up in the Capital, but I never saw the enemy, just muzzle flashes," I said.

"You may get your chance yet," said Henry. "You know they didn't retake Bunker 51 until nearly 1300 hours, and there are still snipers and sappers running around loose on base."

"I'll keep my eye out. At least now I will have my own rifle. Well, what were you guys doin' while all this was going on?" I asked.

"First thing we did was shore up the office like you see. Too many snipers, mortars and rockets flying around. Most of the rest of the time we just enjoyed the show. We could see the air end of it from the flight line.

"Well, the worst of it must be over now. Things'll settle down," I said.

"I don't know," Henry shook his head, "things are still pretty hot. They're still fighting around Saigon and Cholon, and out around Long Binh and Bien Hoa. Reports from up country and down in the delta say Charley hit just about everywhere that was big enough to hit, over a hundred different places! He's still working on it. There are still sappers and snipers running around the base here!"

"How do they tell the good guys from the bad guys?" I asked. "Sarge says there's 15,000 some Vietnamese live on base."

"I don't know. All I know, it ain't over yet. But now what happened over at the Capital? You say you got to do some shooting?" asked Henry.

The ball was back in my court and I had to tell him about my experience the last two days. By the time we were caught up, everyone else seemed to have done the same. The two NCOIC's from each shift conferred, then consulted with the officers and got us lined out for the duration.

"Men," said Sergeant Wheat, "here's the poop. We're stuck here until the grunts can get Charley cleared out enough so we can travel safely. Don't know how long that might be. In the meantime, there ain't a lot of work for us to do. Right now they're flying combat and emergency resupply only, nearly a hundred flights since it started. There'll be no routine shipping until things settle down. So we've all got a little R & R coming, but we are stuck here. Until the Air Force tells us normal operations are resuming and we can start booking cargo again, we will have just three men on duty. One man will be CQ and answer phones, and two men will be on guard duty, one front, one rear. We will post a schedule shortly. Those off duty will stay here or close by. Security advises to keep a sharp eye out; there are still snipers loose on base. Any questions?"

"Found any place for us to sleep yet, Sarge?" asked Sergeant Osbad from the night shift. He did look a little weary and ragged around the edges.

"No, we're gonna camp out here. I'm sure you guys can scrounge up some mattresses or something. And we're still stuck with C-rats until we can get an Air Force mess opened. We're just gonna have to make do until things calm down. That's all. Enjoy yourselves," said Sergeant Wheat with a funny smile.

That first afternoon there was one whale of a firefight just outside the perimeter across the flight line and runway from our office. I was sitting at a typewriter working on a letter to mother when the sound of mortars and small arms fire started to pick up. Within minutes the scream of jets coming in a low altitude was impossible to ignore. After the first pass a concussion came rolling through our building, and a yell from the rear guard.

"Hey, guys! Come take a look at this! They're blowin' the heck outa Charley," cried Redden.

We all rushed out back to see a monstrous cloud of rolling, oily black smoke boiling up from just outside the perimeter. Another jet bored in and dropped a long silver cylinder that tumbled slowly to the ground. It disappeared in a small ball of fire that suddenly, magically blossomed and grew enormous, spreading over a long distance. The fire glowed like the surface of the sun, all shades of red and orange, and just when it seemed like it would consume the world, it subsided into an ugly, almost solid, living cloud of oily black smoke.

"Wow!," muttered Zipper to himself. "That napalm is bad stuff."

"No kidding," I replied, not laughing.

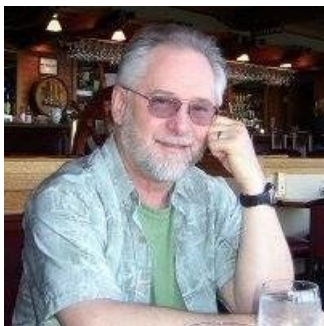
This little battle went on for about a half hour. The bombs rocked the ground under my feet, and I could almost feel the heat from the napalm. The jets strafing the area seemed superfluous after the bombing. When they left, there was no more activity from the area.

I struggled to understand my own reactions and feelings to these events, and what to tell mother. I wasn't really sure of my own feelings yet, and didn't know if I could, or should try to relate it all to mother. I concluded there was no good reason to make her worry any more than necessary.

We were stuck there for the next five days. The worst part was not having a shower. After five days we were a sorry looking bunch, and I am sure we smelled worse. The Air Force came up missing enough mattresses to bed us all down, and after the third day the Air Force messes opened up so the C-rations became desert and snacks.

It was a great treat to get a hot meal again after about five days of C-rations. Lunch had been great, and we were eager for dinner. I had just sat down with Swiss steak and gravy when glass and splinters started flying. The now familiar stutter of an automatic weapon sounded amid cries and shouts of distress. I found myself on the floor with hands clasped over the back of my neck. It was suddenly quiet, and I found myself again helpless, without a weapon or visible enemy. Before I could think about getting up there was another burst of fire that stitched its way through the mess hall, just below table height. That burst was echoed with return fire, and silenced. In about five minutes we were given the all clear. They were going to re-serve the meal, but I had lost my appetite. I went back to the office and resolved to never leave the office again without my rifle.

The last couple days before we were able to go back to our hotels were the worst, because we had to work hard. Someone had decided that we should have a bunker, so we dragged up a Conex container beside our back door, and proceeded to sandbag it. Unfortunately we had to fill our own sandbags. Trip after trip had to be made out near the perimeter in our deuce and a half. We all took turns standing guard while the rest dug the sandy red soil, filled the green sandbags, tied them off and tossed them onto the truck. This task proved extra difficult to do while constantly looking over ones shoulder across the perimeter, waiting for Charley to drop a few mortars our way. The Conex was surrounded with sandbags, three deep on all sides, and two deep on top. It wasn't quite done when we got the clearance to go home. It was finished later, but no one used it. If there was a rocket or mortar attack, it was much more fun to sit on top of it and watch the fireworks.



THANK YOU, MIKE SIRRINE FOR A GREAT STORY!!

Editor's Note: The following pictures go with the next article by Dave Karmes. They are positioned here because this is where I had the space available for them.

RB-57E Canberra Patricia Lynn Recon bomber 55-4243 the civilian Air Vietnam hangers are in the background. This aircraft was lost in August of 1965 from small arms fire, the pilots ejected safely.



By: Dave Karmes
405th Fighter Wing, Det. 1,
33rd CAMRON
Jun 64 - May 65

I arrived at Tan Son Nhut airfield on June 13 1964 as a jet fighter mechanic to work on two special aircraft. I was assigned to the 405th Fighter Wing at Clark AFB then to Detachment 1, 33rd Tactical Group Tan Son Nhut Airbase Saigon, South Vietnam. I have just published a book on my year in Vietnam called THE PATRICIA LYNN PROJECT Vietnam War, The Early Years of Air Intelligence by David Karmes.

My wife Sheila saved all the letters I wrote to her during the year I was in Vietnam in 3 shoe boxes. In those letters I wrote about what was happening to me and around me. For the last 4 years I have been using those letters to write a book covering my year at Tan Son Nhut Airfield from June 13 1964 to May 28 1965.

Here is a part of the book on my trip over. I will start at my arrival at Clark Air Force Base although up till then was quite eventful also. After an 11 hour flight from Hickam Field in Honolulu to Clark AFB in the Philippines aboard a USAF C135 cargo aircraft converted to a troop transport. The seats faced the back of the Acft and there were no windows except for two little portholes in the escape doors over the wings.

We landed at Clark AFB and I checked into the transient barracks and went to bed and slept for ten hours. The next morning I attended an orientation class and had more shots UGH! After lunch those of us that were going to Vietnam had to re-qualify on the firing range. I had qualified in boot camp when I joined the U.S. Air Force. We used a World War II M-1 automatic rifle. We sure were surprised when they brought out the brand-new AR-15 automatic weapon, later to become the M-16. Wow what a weapon, we were amazed when they demonstrated what it would do.

They stacked up some cement blocks two deep and about 5 feet tall. One of the instructors had a backpack holding the ammunition and a belt of ammunition running into where the 30 round ammunition magazine would normally go. His backpack held 200 rounds and he opened up on that stack of bricks and in 2 min. that concrete was reduced to rubble. It was a great firing weapon and I qualified very well with it. You could also launch grenades from it and the first one they tried was a dud and only went 20 yards. It's a good thing we had a sand bag revetment foxhole to jump into. It didn't explode, thank God, but they had to call the bomb disposal guys to come and get it.

The next day at Clark Air Force Base all I had to do was find a ride to Saigon, which I did, but it didn't leave until 4 PM. I had to hang around base operations till then and it was only 10 AM. I knew I was going to Saigon to work on a secret project with B-57 reconnaissance aircraft as a mechanic. There must have been 50 B-57 fighter bombers on the ramp at Clark Air Force Base. I had a lot of time to kill, so I wandered out on the flight line to see what I could learn about the B-57 aircraft. I hooked up with a couple of mechanics assigned to them. When I told them where I was headed and what I would be doing, they knew about the two airplanes in Saigon because they would work on them when they came back to Clark Air Force Base for their 100 hour inspection, then send them back to Saigon. I stayed with them all day they took me to lunch with them and filled me in on what they were doing at Clark Air Force Base. There were 50 B-57 aircraft, two squadrons of 25 and maintaining combat ready status. The defense Department moved the wing from Tokyo to Manila about six weeks ago and they returned all their dependents to the US. They are training at Clark Air Force Base on the bombing range but have not been given a specific target. They believe they are training in the Philippines to bomb targets in communist North Vietnam. I

would later meet up with some of their airplanes in Saigon; I will explain what happened later. On the Clark Air Force Base flight line also was a Squadron of F-100 jet fighters plus F-102 interceptors as well as the B-57s all of them are maintaining combat ready status.

At 4 PM I boarded a C-54 cargo plane that was going to Saigon, then on to Bangkok. There were no seats only a few jump seats along the sides of the airplane. The plane was full of cargo and I was the only passenger besides the crew; the pilot, copilot, engineer, the aircraft crew chief and a loadmaster. This was Saturday, June 13, 1964. When I was not in the cockpit with the crew I took a nap on a pile of tents in the back. The C-54 cargo plane is a four engine piston driven plane. It was just turning dark when we landed at Tan Son Nhut Airfield Saigon South Vietnam. We taxied up in front of base operations where they would unload part of the cargo. I got off of the aircraft and went into the operations building and the first thing I see is a rat the size of a small dog runs across the room. The guy at the desk said not to worry they weren't all that big, this one was their pet so he is well fed. Then they loaded me up in a Jeep and took me to the five star hotels they have at the base, a huge "tent city".

I checked in at the officer of the day tent and was assigned a tent with three other guys. We all lived together, Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force I was really glad to have two Army roommates as they had guns. Another Air Force guy that worked in the Air Force squadron orderly room as a clerk was also one of my roommates. His name was Joe I don't remember his last name. We were good friends until he left I think it was March of 1965 when he went home. The tents were set up on wooden platforms and there were wooden walkways between the tents. It was like streets and had a latrine with showers on each block. There were probably 300 tents, big four man tents, and it was a regu-

lar city. I didn't have to report to work on the flight line until Monday morning and it was Saturday night when I arrived so I had some time to kill. That night I could hear the 105 howitzers in the distance and it was the same almost every night I was in Vietnam. I don't think I got any sleep that night listening to those explosions all night.

TAN SON NHUT AIRBASE

Sunday, June 14, 1964 I spent the whole day just looking around Tan Son Nhut Airfield, this is a new base and they are just getting it built. We have a new Chow Hall, Movie Theater and an Airman's club that is real nice and they are building new buildings all over the base. Most of the enlisted men live in tents and the officers live downtown Saigon in real nice hotels. This worked out very well for some of us because our pilots were also our friends and they would let us sleep on their couch or the floor when we were in town if we couldn't make it back to the base before curfew. The base was quite safe also. There are 5000 Vietnam government troops guarding the base and a 24-hour helicopter patrol going around the base perimeter. There were at least 100 HU-1 (Huey) Helicopters, about 60 C-123 twin engine cargo aircraft that had multiple uses. There were 12 RF-101 reconnaissance Jets and two RB-57 E infrared equipped reconnaissance bombers parked in a special jet parking area also a bunch of old World War II A1-H and A1-E fighter bombers that were assigned to the South Vietnamese Air Force. I would be working on the two RB-57's. Plus there were about every other type of aircraft that was ever made coming and going. There was only one runway although there was a parallel runway under construction. This made Tan Son Nhut Airfield, Saigon the busiest airport in the world. I thought it was miserable hot in Georgia in the summer time but it was worse in Vietnam. It is the rainy season from May through October and the daytime temp can reach 100 degrees in the shade and it is extremely humid. At night it does get nice and cool so it isn't so bad; alt-

though you have to sleep in mosquito nets over your bunk, some of those mosquitoes are real big.

Monday morning June 15, 1964 I caught a ride over to the flight line and reported to work. The jet parking ramp is located at the far end of the parking ramp at the East end of the runway next to the Air Vietnam civilian hangars. There was an old stone and brick house that our pilots used as an operations office. There was also a 10' x 40' air conditioned house trailer that was our maintenance office. There were also several tents that the camera people and armament people used and one tent where the film readers looked at the pictures we took with our aircraft.

I reported to our detachment commander, Major Musgrove, who is also our chief pilot. I was also introduced to the other flight crews. We have three crews, Major Musgrove and Capt. Cobb his navigator, Major McGinnis and Capt. Young his navigator and Major Stanfield and Lt. Platt his navigator. The first thing I noticed was the difference between being at a base in the states and a base in a war zone. Major Musgrove informed me that we were quite informal and if we run into each other when we were in Saigon, we were to use first or last names only. They didn't want the locals to know they were officers. Major Musgrove informed me of how important our mission was and said that we had top priority on the base, in other words we got anything we asked for. The two RB-57E aircraft I would be working on were the most important aircraft in all of Vietnam and remained that way throughout the Vietnam War. They are serial numbers 55 - 4243 and 55 - 4245. Then I met Master Sgt. Cogdill, the maintenance boss. We didn't get along very well at first. We had one Master Sgt., one Tech Sgt., three Staff Sergeants and one Airman Second Class, ME!. I don't know what they did before I arrived; I got all of the crap details. I did all the work and the rest of the guys sat around in the air-conditioned maintenance office and

looked over my shoulder. The maintenance office had two bedrooms that Master Sgt. Cogdill and Tech Sgt. Gibson lived in because it was air-conditioned. It was great during the day when the airplanes were flying but when they landed, the guys would yell, Karmes! So I would go out and park it, refuel it and inspect it while they sat around in the air-conditioned trailer. I was also the water boy because we had no water hooked up in the trailer. When the water jug was empty they would yell Karmes! And I would go fill it; this happened at least five times a day. I had to get in the truck and drive all the way up to base operations to fill it and then back. The boss was Master Sgt. Cogdill and he rode me like a rented donkey. Later he and I became good friends he is best boss I ever worked for to this very day. Tech Sgt. Gibson, Staff Sgt. Gilmore, Staff Sgt. Ware and Staff Sgt. Davis were also part of the crew. Later after about five weeks, Major Musgrove called me into his office along with Sgt. Cogdill and explained to me why they had been having me do most of the work. The rest of the guys were training me. The guys were all leaving the 1st of August and there would only be Sgt. Cogdill, Sgt. Ware, and me. They didn't know when or if we would be getting help and when we did get help I would have to help train them. They would probably be higher in rank than me but they would be working for me. After that meeting things changed drastically, I was accepted as the crew chief on aircraft 55 - 4245. I no longer had to do all the work, actually I didn't do all the work before, but it seemed like it. We were a very close knitted bunch, the pilots the aircraft maintenance crew and the camera and armament guys.

My first weeks on the base I spent getting things set up; I moved into the new barracks, had more shots and located everything on the base that I needed. Then I decided to check out Saigon, I got on an Air Force bus that made scheduled trips to downtown Saigon and Cholon. I rode the bus all the way downtown and back, I never

got off I just went on sort of a tour. It took us about an hour and a half to go downtown, make all the stops and come back to Tan Son Nhut. Town starts right at the edge of the base. There are a lot of beautiful old and new buildings and you can see the French influence and of course they have their share of slums also. You would never know these people are in the middle of a war. They smile at you and say hi; that's about the only English most of them know, although some of them can speak English quite well. They all go out of their way to help you and everybody on the base goes out of their way to help them. They are real friendly to Americans.

I sure wouldn't like to ride a bike or drive a car down there; they all drive like they are crazy. It's a wonder our bus didn't run someone down; they don't even look where they are going they just go. The biggest vehicle has the right of way, even if it is pulling out of an alley onto a major street. Everyone and their brother have a bike or a motorbike and they ride right down the middle of the street and they won't move no matter what's coming. Here is a piece on Saigon traffic that one of the guys in the barracks had put up on the bulletin board. The author is unknown. I copied it and added some of my own words and sent it home to my wife in a letter it sums it all up and is pretty funny.

A big city traffic cop, after saving for years and with the help of the friendly bookie on his beat, goes on a world tour, and returns. He is sitting around the station house, gassing with the boys, regaling them with tales of his travels.

"Saigon aah, Saigon" he reminisces, "that was the wildest. In that town you couldn't get by with 100 pads of tickets a day; he tells them you would need a mule to drag enough along. Listen, they got these little bicycles with three wheels, anna guy up top peddling. Supposed to hold one passenger on a seat in front; I seen five passengers, 10 chickens, anna pig in

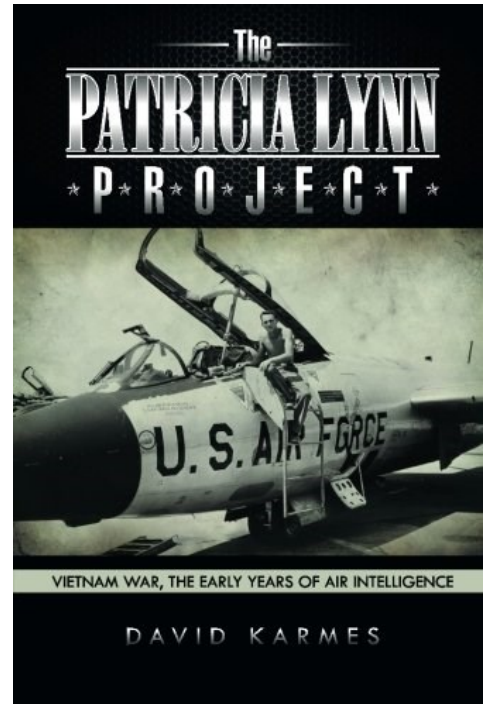
one. With one little guy peddling, mind ya. No horn, no lights, and darn little brakes. Wants to turn he flops his arm in the breeze and turns just like that. 40,000 cars coming down the street and he does a U-turn because one of his passengers drops a penny, see? You know what? They got these carts with cows pullin em, ya, cows, and right in the middle of it all. And more carts with little ponies dragging them; it's like Walt Disney invented a whole bunch of new rides. Honest. Taxis? Have they got taxis I'll tellya they got ,em. Bout a million I'd say. Little French bugs painted blue and white, but not painted quite as slick as the president's jet. Looks to me like the only thing that has to work on 'em is the meter and the horn; maybe the motor sometimes too. The taxis an' alla the other traffic go around these circles inna middle of the streets, see, bout hundred miles an hour. Looks like a midget inna- apolis race. Ever'body just tooting their horns like crazy and waving their arms.

Sure they got more. They got all these bikes. Looks like every kind of bike ever made in the world is onna streets. They got all these bikes looks like every kind from the ones you have to pump plus those big Harleys, some of them even have a little motor on the front wheel. Always somebody on the back, usually a young chick. They got these long skirts see, split all the way up; silk slacks under anna skirts blow in the breeze which blinds the guy on the bike behind them. Listen you non-traveled boobs. Ever see six people on motor scooter without a sidecar? Yeah, well they do it all the time. One drivin, 2, lap on lap on the back, and three standing between the handle-bars on the little floor there in the front of the driver. The biggest vehicle has the right of way so if your got and one of those big six by trucks, you can pull out of an ally and you don't even have to look. Just pull out and go.

The pedestrians are something else to. When they wanna cross a street, they cross the thing, and it don't matter none what else happens to be in

the Street. Like if it was a tank coming down the road full blower, the tank'd have to stop else run them over. One thing about them Jays, however they always signal the driver to stop and get out of the way. And when one goes, then 1 million follow and all the traffic has to stop."

If you are reading this and spent some time in Saigon in the 60s you will relate, and I would say it was even worse.



(From a sticker on the back of an envelope with a members renewal check:)

**Please God . . .
Grant them courage
when times are bleak.
Grant them strength,
when they feel weak.
Grant them comfort,
when they feel all alone.
And most of all, God,
Please bring them
all home.**

Tan Son Nhut Association
P. O. Box 236
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This beautiful TSNA themed quilt will be "raffled off" (pardon my English?) at the 2015 TSNA Reunion, May 28-31. Thank you Sue Ellen Parker for your wonderful work to benefit TSNA.

NEW MEMBERS



Mr. Daniel T. Ortner	Crossville	TN	dan.ortner@yahoo.com	Sep 68 - Aug 69	1876 Comm.Sqn.
SSgt. Patrick J. Santell	Kearny	NJ	patrickjoseph.santell@mygait.com	Dec 65 - Sep 66	Hq 7th AF&600th CFS
Mr. John C. D'Auria	Mays Landing	NJ	ltcoljohnnyd@gmail.com	Jan 66 - Dec 66	366th FMS

IN MEMORIAM

Mr. Edward L. Ottney	Decorah IA	Sept 65-Sept 66	98th Trans. Det, 120th Aviation Co. MACV
Mr. James Cervantes	Sandwich MA	67	360th TEWS

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