



## A Veteran Remembers Memorial Day 2014

By Ira Cooperman

"The Department of Defense regrets to inform you," the letter began, "that your son, USAF 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Vincent A. Chiarello, FV3136108, is officially listed as 'Missing in Action.' U.S. forces have had no contact with him or any of his crew for several days and it is believed that his aircraft was shot down over North Vietnam on or about 29 July 1966. . ."

The letter, which was delivered in person, could have given the Chiarello family a fuller explanation. But it didn't.

The Air Force wouldn't have had to reveal any classified or "sensitive" information by adding that the aircraft on which Vince, an intelligence officer "observer," was an EC-47 (similar to a two-engine commercial DC-3), and became unaccounted for within two hours of when it left its base at Udorn, Thailand, the afternoon of July 29<sup>th</sup>.

The Air Force could have emphasized in the letter that it was exhausting all possible means to search for the plane. However, since its flight path took it over mountainous terrain with very thick vegetation, American aircraft were having a difficult time searching for the missing plane.

The Air Force could have added that the enemy action which the unarmed EC-47 likely encountered was a North Vietnamese MiG fighter jet, and therefore there was little likelihood for the survival of any of the eight men on board. (It was confirmed years later that all eight died even before the plane crashed.)

Finally, it also would have been more considerate if the Air Force official in charge of this notification to the next-of-kin had indicated that he shared the family's concern, very much regretted the situation, and promised to keep the family informed about the status of their son. But he didn't.

Twenty-two years later, in June 1988, Vince Chiarello came home. At least part of him came home.

After years of searching, his

remains and some parts of several other men who were on that ill-fated plane were found, flown to the military forensic lab in Hawaii for identification, and returned to next-of-kin.

In Vince's case, he came "home" to a small cemetery in Bucks County, Pennsylvania -- in a closed casket. And I was there, having read of his "homecoming" in a Philadelphia newspaper. Why was I there? That's another story.

Vincent Chiarello died on a Friday. It was a hot and steamy July day, like any other Friday in each of the countries of Southeast Asia.

That Friday, July 29, 1966, an EC-47 designated with the codename "Dogpatch" was assigned the mission of contacting a CIA Road Watch Team by flying over their position in Northern Laos. My boss, Col. John Bridge, approached my Air Force partner (Vince) and me to see if one of us wanted to go on this particular mission.

It was an unusual offer.

Normally, our duties were fairly straight forward. Vince and I briefed pilots before take-off, debriefed them after they returned from their missions over North Vietnam, but hardly ever had the opportunity to go on a mission.

Of course each of us had flown on lots of aircraft, sometimes serving as "couriers," ferrying classified material back and forth between Saigon and bases throughout Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. But rarely did we see any real "action."

Being unconcerned about our own mortality, like most 26-year-olds, both Vince and I expressed enthusiastic interest in joining Dogpatch's crew. But, Col. Bridge explained, there was room on the plane for only one more; it already had a crew of seven.

So who was it to be? Vince or me? We both were first lieutenants, equally qualified intelligence officers. And we both volunteered.

The best way to determine which one would go seemed to be a coin toss. I don't recall which one of us had the coin, a Thai *baht*. In any case, the colonel flipped it -- and Vince won! A little while later, I ac-

companied him to the flight line where the EC-47 was getting ready to take-off, wished him well and requested a personal debriefing when he returned. And then he was off.

"The family of the late Lt. Col. Vincent A. Chiarello," the memorial card read that I received in July 1988, "appreciates your expression of sympathy, caring and concern at the time of his homecoming."

Tucked inside was a smaller card with two prayers on it and the dates of Vince's birth and death (August 30, 1939 -- July 29, 1966). There also was a hand-written note from his brother.

". . . Our phone conversations, your presence at the funeral, and visits to my home, have all helped our family to better cope with Vin's homecoming. We know that you, above all, have lived and felt the frustration and pain that my family has lived with for the past 22 years. We feel much more peaceful now, knowing that Vin is safely home with the Lord. . ."

The funeral the previous month was especially difficult for me. After all, when I looked at Vince's casket, the reflection I saw was *me*. For had it not been for the flip of a coin in 1966, it might well have been me -- rather than Vince -- that friends and relatives were bidding farewell.

What have we learned from Vince Chiarello's sacrifice and the deaths of over 58,000 Americans? What will be the legacy of those of us who were sent to fight almost a half-century ago?

The way in which Americans answer these questions, the manner in which we meet the challenges of veterans coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan, will say a great deal about who we are and what our nation stands for on Memorial Day.

(Ira Cooperman served as an USAF intelligence officer at 7AF HQ at Tan Son Nhut and at Udorn, Thailand in 1965-66. He is a TSNA member and is a VVA Life Member. His e-mail address is: [iracooperman@gmail.com](mailto:iracooperman@gmail.com).)

By: Dennis A. Haggerty  
1876 Communications Squadron  
Jan 67 - Jan 68

(Previously written for another newsletter)

I was not going to re-post this as I have each Memorial Day and Veteran's Day since 2009 because I figured you have all seen it and are sick of reading it. I have recently (within the past several days) reconnected with a former Air Traffic Controller with whom I worked at Kennedy airport and with whom I was fired for striking. Tom is also a USAF Viet Nam vet who worked at the same facility I worked at albeit some years later. So, I've decided to re-post this once more for Tom DiGuglielmo and all my other brothers or sisters who may have worked at Fort Rapcon, or Saigon Air Route Traffic Control Center. To all my other friends who have seen this, please just pass it by.

It seems that I have survived to see the approach of another Memorial Day. Each time it happens I wonder 'why'? And each time I ask the question I am stumped for an answer.

I have asked that question for each of 46 Memorial Days and 45 Veteran's Days, and countless times in the intervening months; each time I watch a flag raised, or lowered; each time I see another wreath thrown on the water or watch a flyby at a sporting event. I don't have the answer and likely never will.

I re-dedicate 'Memorial Day Musings' to the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who came home in the aluminum coffins aboard my 'Freedom Bird' with me. Their ghosts are my constant companions, as is the guilt for not having died with them. For those who have served, no explanation is necessary. For those who have not, none is possible.

During some research throughout the years, I came across an 'After Action Report' filed by the Commanding Officer of the 377 Security Police Wing detailing the battle that occurred on Jan. 31, 1968. This was the action referred to in Sergeant Vinogradoff's letter and the one which killed everyone in the top bay of barracks 886. The report is clinical and devoid of emotion and does not mention the damage done to 886. I include the URL for those of you who may be interested:

<http://www.tsna.org/afteraction/jan311968.html>

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your interest, and for trying to understand. The events of 1967 and '68 are in large measure, responsible for creating the man I've since become.

I was sitting on the front porch of my cabin today. The temperature was in the high eighties and the air was a little sticky. The American flag fluttered in a light breeze. It's mounted on one of the upright logs that supports the cantilevered second floor.

It's a cheap flag, nothing fancy, just silkscreened stripes and canton. The whole thing cost less than ten dollars including the holder. In fact the pole that it's displayed on is so warped that it looks like there's a fish on the other end of an imaginary line. Who, I thought; would be willing to die for that? It's just a cheap piece of cloth on a warped wooden stick and a couple cents worth of ink. The warmth, humidity and an unidentifiable smell (not sure if it was fragrance or odor) transported me forty years into the past. I thought of my first and last days in Viet Nam.

After arriving at Tan Son Nhut AB RVN on an air conditioned DC-8 and standing on line waiting to deplane, I got hit with what can only be described as a sledgehammer of heat and humidity when I got to the door. I stepped out onto the airstairs and looked down at the tarmac to see two jeeps; one on either side of the stairs, each with a .30 caliber Browning machine gun mounted between and just behind the front seats. I realized at that moment that this was the real deal. I could die.

After mustering through the orderly room, I was escorted to the other side of the base where barracks 886 was located. Here is where I would spend either the next year, or whatever was left of my life; whichever occurred first.

On the way however, my escort and I passed the base mortuary. There was a flatbed trailer outside loaded with aluminum caskets piled one atop the other. There must have been about forty of them, each with a drain plug dangling from the end by an attached chain. My guide informed me that when the caskets were empty, they were placed on the trailer one atop the other with the drain plugs removed, but when they were occupied, they were placed one beside the other with the plugs secured so that no bodily fluids leaked out. The real deal indeed.

I spent an uneventful year in barracks 886 assigned to the 1876 Comm Squadron, 7th U.S. Air Force. I had arrived a month and a half after a mortar attack on Tan Son Nhut and now it was time to leave.

In order to process out, I had to walk back to the same orderly room that processed me in the year before. As I passed the mortuary, the same flatbed trailer was there. This time, it was attached to the truck that would pull it to the flightline. It was loaded with caskets lying side by side, drain plugs secured.

I began to think. I had turned twenty one just a month after I had arrived in-country and was an old man. The kids in those caskets probably had wives, children, and sweet-hearts. I had none of those. I had two parents who could help each other cope if they lost me. It would have been so much easier all around to have spared these kids and taken me. But that isn't what happened.

I was suddenly overwhelmed with remorse and an emotion I'd never felt before that day; but one which I've lived with ever since: guilt. It just wasn't right that I was going home and they weren't.

I didn't know it at the time, but they were going home too, with me. I was going home as a passenger. They were going home as cargo.

Two weeks after I got back to the USA, I got a letter from my friend, SGT Eugene Vinogradoff, informing me that a Viet Cong 122MM rocket made a direct hit on barracks 886 during an attack in the opening days of what later became known as the 1968 Tet offensive; killing everyone on the second floor.

It's just a cheap piece of cloth that hangs on a warped wooden stick, painted with a few cents worth of ink. My grandfather fought for it in the Spanish American War. His brother, fought for it in WWI. My uncle and cousin fought for it and my Dad served it in the Merchant Marine in WWII, another cousin fought for it in Korea. I served it in Viet Nam and several cousins serve it proudly today.

So, should there come a time when someone tells me I can't display our flag because it may offend someone, then somebody is going to have to put a bullet in me to keep me from flying this cheap ten dollar piece of cloth on its warped wooden stick.

So to answer my question, "who would be willing to die for that?" Me.

Dennis A. Haggerty Sgt., 1876 Comm. Sq., 7th U.S. Air Force, Tan Son Nhut AB, Saigon R.V.N., '67-'68



**TSNA 2015 REUNION REMINDER!!**  
**MAY 28-31**  
**MAINSTAY SUITES, PIGEON FORGE, TN**

The deadline for hotel reservations is May 26!!

Mailing deadline for TSNA Registration is May 20!!

Please join us in "PF".

There are no strangers in TSNA - only new friends waiting to be made!!

## KNOXVILLE AIRPORT SHUTTLE

Fellow Members: TSNA Director Kerry Nivens has volunteered to run a shuttle service from the Knoxville (McGhee Tyson) Airport to/from the Mainstay Suites during our May reunion.

His tentative schedule is to pick up passengers at the airport from 2PM to 6PM daily and take them back to the airport on Sunday from 8AM to noon. This schedule will be changed based on the arrival and departure times of our members.

Please call Kerry on his cell phone at 256-714-5335 to give him your flight and arrival/departure information. If he does not answer, please leave a message.

If your flight times do not fit these parameters, following is a list of commercial vendors who provide service to/from the airport. Most of them offer substantial discounts if you book in advance.

Rocky Top 877-315-8687  
Chariots of Hire 865-522-8108  
Discount Taxi 865-755-5143  
Lightning Taxi 865-719-4330

**HAPPY TRAVELS! George Plunkett, TSNA President**



### REUNION HONORED GUESTS

( A little more about Vernon Brantley)

Vernon Brantley is a member of America's greatest generation. and a survivor of the Battle of The Bulge. He is a native of northern Kentucky who now lives in central SC. Vernon arrived in Europe in 1944, just in time to participate in The Battle of The Bulge, where he was wounded. He returned to combat and saw further combat in Holland. Crossing the Rhine River later on a pontoon bridge, his unit met our Russian allies at the Elbe River. His awards include the Bronze Star, Purple Heart and European Theatre of Operations Ribbon with 3 Battle Stars.

He is accompanied by his son-in-law, SSgt Jeff Day. Jeff is a retired U.S. Army reservist who was called to active duty during Operation Desert Storm.



# Tan Son Nhut Association 2015 Reunion Registration

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

**YES, SIGN ME UP FOR THE REUNION!**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ BRANCH OF SERVICE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF YOUR GUEST(S): \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE LIST ANY SPECIAL NEEDS: \_\_\_\_\_

## REGISTRATION FEES

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING \_\_\_\_\_ X \$50. = \_\_\_\_\_

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES (NO EXTRA COST)

- Access to the TSNA Hospitality suite in Caney Creek Room Side, (drinks, snacks, and war stories!) - \$10. *daily if purchased separately.*
- TSNA Friday Banquet buffet dinner. \$25 if *purchased separately.*
- Deluxe continental breakfast.
- The Mainstay Suites is on the schedule of the Pigeon Forge trolley.
- Friday morning scenic tour of area historic sites and artist's colony in Gatlinburg, TN
- Please indicate how many people will be taking the tour \_\_\_\_\_.
- Saturday morning plaque dedication ceremony. Details to follow later.
- Saturday afternoon book signing by Joe Galloway, author of "We Were Soldiers Once and Young"
- Please circle which activities that you are paying for *separately, if you are not paying the full fee.*
- Free parking.
- Free WIFI.

Our Honored guest speaker is Navy CMDR Paul Galanti, a POW in N Vietnam for nearly 7 years.

Room rate has been group discounted to \$88.68 for weekdays and \$105.52 for weekends per night, plus tax. This rate will be honored up to three days prior to and two days following the reunion. The reservations phone number at the Mainstay Suites is 1-888-428-8350. Hotel reservations must be made no later than **May 26, 2015 to receive this special rate.**

PAYMENT MUST BE MAILED NO LATER THAN MAY 20, 2015.

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

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

Reunion begins Thursday, 5-28-2015  
Reunion ends Sunday, 5-31-2015

(rev 2-15-15)

**“THINGS GO TO H \_\_\_” - Part 5**  
By: Mike Serrine

This went on for a short while with no visible effect. Then the sergeant got a call on the radio. He listened to the hand set and only said "Yes, Sir" at the beginning and end of the communication. Then he turned to me.

"They're gonna try rushing the building and get inside with a squad. Give covering fire when I open up again!" He peered over the side.

He quickly pulled back a few moments later and started firing. As I started firing my attention was drawn to the street as a bunch of men swarmed out of the front of our hotel toward the building across the street. They were met by withering fire, and three fell. The rest retreated, and one of the fallen managed to crawl back to safety. Two were left lying in the street.

"They didn't make it!" I yelled to the sergeant. I changed magazines again.

"Well, they'll have to try something else. We're too close for mortars or artillery or air support, and I don't think we're gonna get any help. I just hope Charley don't got any rockets." The sergeant raised up and let loose a string without looking.

I sat hunched over behind the parapet, sweating, my mind racing. ***I just saw men die, men proud to fight and die for their country. I could die, right here and now. Would I be proud to die for my country? No, just dead. I would be more proud to make the enemy die for my country.***

Death had been an abstract thing before, but now it was real and watching me from across the street, reaching for me with fingers of steel. Black windows were empty eye sockets in a grim death's head. I said a silent prayer, asking for god's protection, then I smiled. ***What was that old saying? There are no atheists in foxholes. I don't believe in god, and here I am asking his help. Dad was right about one thing - if it's my time, it's my time and there ain't nothing I can do about that.*** I turned around and began shooting again.

We continued in this manner for a short while longer, then I heard a new noise, a loud, coughing noise. I looked down the parapet from me to see a soldier with what looked like a single barreled shotgun. He was just stuffing a fat shell into the barrel from a box at his feet. He closed the action and fired it again at the building across the street.

"That will fix 'em," said the sergeant, watching the results across the street.

"What is that?" I asked, nodding in the direction of the soldier with the strange gun.

"M-79 grenade launcher. Elephant gun. Shoots a 40 mike mike grenade with either high explosive, incendiary or anti-personnel rounds. They're shootin' incendiary. Gonna burn the bastards out! Take a look," said the sergeant, still looking over the edge.

Men were shooting the grenade launchers from ground level and from several different floors at the opposing building. The rounds would blast a hole through the wall about a foot in diameter. Soon smoke and flame could be seen through the windows on several floors. I kept expecting to see the VC swarming into the streets like rats from a burning warehouse, but there was no activity. The return fire stopped shortly after the fires started. They either got out through the back or burned up with the building. The building itself became a pillar of fire. Even from my position across the street the heat was almost unbearable. The fire raged for a couple of hours and then subsided, leaving the empty shell still standing, smoking.

I was relieved later that morning. "Troop," said the sergeant, "you did a good job. Probably earned your CIB today. Take your gear back to the duty officer in the lobby."

Returning my gear I discovered that I was scheduled for duty again during the same time period tomorrow morning, if we didn't get out by then. No one seemed to know, however, what the prospects were. Information was sketchy. All we knew was that there was still fighting going on all over the country.

I had no assigned duties the rest of the day. Like hundreds of others trapped there without arms and without a job to do, I spent the day trying to kill time, and wondering what was going to happen. I knew from talk and observation that the hotel's defenses were meager, and that if a well equipped VC company, even a small squad of men properly armed with rockets or mortars, wanted to destroy us, they could do so without too much difficulty. We watched the war outside on TV, sweated and waited.

Again I spent much of the day on the roof. We weren't taking any fire now, so it wasn't much of a problem. However, fighting was still going on all around us. The jets and choppers still came and went, leaving greater and greater areas of Cholon burning. The sounds of fighting continued to fill the air. Everything smelled of smoke. The TV was reporting the defeat of the enemy in and around Saigon, and that their remaining forces were retreating to the Cholon area and appeared to be making a last stand.

For lunch we ate cold C-rations and played cards around a wooden wire spool that someone had appropriated for a table. Covered with a moldy green army blanket it made a suitable table. The talk was mostly question and rumor about what was happening. Everyone was quite surprised that Charley could mount such an attack.

"Sergeant Wheat, what gives here? All the talk before Tet was that Charley didn't have enough manpower to attack a city like Saigon, or overrun Tan Son Nhut. Sure seems like he don't know that! Anybody got any Tabasco sauce? Whata ya think, Sarge?" I queried.

"Well, it looks a lot worse that it is. Charley hasn't attacked Saigon. He's hit a bunch of targets in and around Saigon, and apparently all over the country. But it's mostly for nuisance value, or political propaganda. Charley can't take anything, and if he did, he couldn't keep it. Getting on to Tan Son Nhut Airbase doesn't mean he overran it, just broke through in a few places, but we drove him off. Sounds like the only place he is still hanging on is up at Hue. Maybe this is Charley's last gasp. All we gotta do is hold on." Sarge studied his cards and discarded two.

"Well, that's all fine and dandy," said Brown, "but we're still stuck in here and it sounds like a lot of people are dying. What if you're one of the unlucky ones and get scragged in Charley's last gasp?"

"You go home in a box. If you're dead, you're dead and you don't have to sweat it no more," said Sergeant Wheat.

I just hope we can get outa here and out to Tan Son Nhut where we got a little back up. This sittin' here with nothin' between us and Charley but a company of MP's is the pits I said, throwing in my cards.

I sat back, my mind drawn to the dead MP's lying in the street. ***I know people die every day. I know that hundreds, maybe thousands have died here in just the last couple of days, but I have now seen men die. Now I know I am going to die. Maybe not now, or tomorrow or in 50 years, but someday. Thinking about it will just make me crazy. I have to be a fatalist like my Dad. If a bullet's got my name on it, there's nothing I can do, so why sweat it? If you die, you die, and that's all there is.***

"Well, they can kill you but they can't eat you," I mused aloud, thinking of a saying I heard from a grunt on guard duty at my hotel.

"What? You never heard of cannibals, Sirrine?" Sergeant Wheat got his cards and worked them into his hand. I didn't respond. He raised a can of fruit cocktail. "Soon as things clear up and we get the clearance, we'll di di out of here. Till then we're stuck. We just gotta relax and lay chilli here. Redden, it's your bet."

The rest of the day was relatively uneventful. The sounds of fighting seemed to decline, although large areas of the city were still burning. I slept poorly that night, my mind continuing to race with excitement. Late at night our generator went out and we lost our power, stilling the fan that provided some relief from the heat, and plunging the building into darkness. I got up with others and watched at the window, wondering if this meant Charley was about to do us in. But Charley never appeared, and when the duty NCOIC came around to make sure I was up for guard duty on the morning of the 2nd, I was ready.

I borrowed a flashlight and made my way downstairs through pitch black tunnels of darkness. A different officer signed me in and gave me the same gear. Another NCO showed me to my guard post.

It was on the ground floor on one side of the building. He opened a door and we stepped out into inky blackness. He flashed a light and I jumped to suddenly see the guard I was relieving standing right beside me.

"You're relieved," the NCO whispered to the soldier. He nodded and vanished through the door behind me.

"This is the only ground level entrance to this side of the building," the NCO now whispered to me. "I don't know why they didn't just barricade the door in the first place, since you can't get in or out here anyway."

He flicked his light left and right briefly to show me a narrow corridor running the length of the building made by a concrete wall about six feet from the outside wall of the building that stood about eight feet high. The wall topped by a barbed wire entanglement and closed on both ends. Outside of that wall was a narrow alley and the next building. I could make out its pale form looming up in the darkness. There were no outside entrances, but it was open straight up.

"Just sit tight here by the door. If anyone tries to come over the top, let'em have it. If they get over the wall, give'em a grenade and duck inside." If you hear anything thrown into here from outside, get inside; it's probably a grenade or satchel charge. Got it?" he asked.

I nodded my head numbly. This was worse than being on the roof. Pinned into a concrete coffin! If anything comes over that wall, I am dead. Fear broke out in a cold sweat. The sergeant left and I was alone in the dark with all the nasty things that the mind can create in such places. I stood absolutely still, holding my breath with my mouth open so I could hear better, straining to hear the little sounds that might mean creeping death in the darkness. It was difficult to hold my breath because the air was so smoky that a good lung full wanted to make me cough. I sweated and waited.

After awhile it got light, and that made it a little better. Now there was no darkness to hide the bogeyman and magnify all the sounds of the night. Now my fear was more rational. I could see the concrete tomb I was in. Should any grenade or explosive device go off before I could get inside, the smooth walls of the narrow rectangle would insure that I would get shredded, coming and going.

Nothing happened. I was replaced and went back upstairs with great relief. All of our group except Sergeant Wheat was sitting around waiting. He came in a little later, smiling.

"Well, boys," he laughed, "I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that I've got us a ride outta here. The bad news is that it's with a mortuary crew. They're getting an armed escort out to Tan Son Nhut within the hour, so get your stuff together. We'll load up our truck and tag along."

"A mortuary outfit, huh? Well, a ride's a ride, I guess. Sure beats sittin' here," I said, starting to get dressed.

The morning of the 2nd we all assembled in the lobby and waited for them to get organized. Finally they had a blocking force at each end of the hotel street. We went out and inspected our truck, which had been sitting in front of the building that was burned to route the VC out of it. The truck was covered with debris and scorched in places from the fire, but it fired up. Sergeant Wheat drove it off the sidewalk and got it turned around and in place in the convoy. The convoy consisted of us, a machine gun jeep front and rear, a deuce and a half full of MP's, and two trucks and a jeep with the mortuary people. **(FINAL CHAPTER COMING IN THE JUNE ISSUE!!)**

### **MEDAL OF HONOR STAMPS TO BE DEDICATED ON MEMORIAL DAY**

John Bessette, the husband of TSNA Treasurer Carol Bessette and himself a Vietnam vet, has let us know the following info from a US Postal Service "News Link" on its website:

"The US Postal Service will issue three stamps on Memorial Day that pay tribute to Medal of Honor recipients from the Vietnam War. The stamps will depict the three versions of the medal – one each for the Army, Navy, and Air Force...

"The Medal of Honor was awarded to 258 Americans who served during the war. They will be dedicated May 25th at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC."

There have been two earlier issues of Medal of Honor stamps: one honoring World War II recipients and one for Korean War recipients. It was after the Korean War when a Medal of Honor specifically for Air Force recipients was designed, and this stamp issue will include that medal along with those for the Army and the Navy.

On the stamp sheet holding the stamps there also will be images of almost 50 living Vietnam-era recipients. Since TSNA has hosted at least two such recipients, Michael Thornton in 2009 and Thomas Norris in 2010, we might want to see if "our" recipients are among those depicted.

So after Memorial Day check your post office and buy at least a sheet of these stamps.

The U.S. Postal Service will dedicate the Limited Edition Vietnam War Medal of Honor Prestige Folio Forever stamps during a ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Memorial Day, May 25. The folio is modeled after the World War II and Korean War Medal of Honor Prestige Folio stamp sheets issued in 2013 and 2014

**Editor's Note:** I would love to show a picture here of the new stamps. But all examples available on the internet show the stamps with a diagonal line through the word "Forever", I suppose because the stamp has not yet been released. So as I said above—check your local Post Office on May 26th—I hope they have some!

### **REUNION HONORED GUESTS** ( A little more about Stephen D. Parella)

Stephen D. Parella is retired from the United States Army with 26 years of service. He served four tours in Afghanistan and other stateside and foreign locations. He was a Captain in the Army Field Artillery and Commanded Two Field Artillery Firing Batteries, with his first command as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. He was a Senior Instructor in the 102d Instructor Training Division and taught soldiers holding the Army Engineering Military Occupational Specialties. He taught Combat Engineering courses as well as the Basic and Advanced Army Instructor Training Courses, teaching Army Instructors how to be Instructors. Additionally he taught Primary, Basic and Advanced Non Commissioned Officer Leadership Training Courses.

Mr. Parella returned to school at the age of 40 and received two Masters of Science Degrees from the University of Tennessee. He was recognized as the Top Graduate Student in the Community Counseling Master's Program as well as a



Graduate of the University of Tennessee College Of Social Work. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Licensed Master Clinical Social Worker. He has worked with the Knox County Sheriff's Department in the Detention Facility and County Jail as a counselor and therapist. He was a Substance Abuse Counselor for the Blount County Drug Court working with individuals on probation having drug and alcohol issues. He is currently working with the Veterans Administration at the Knoxville Vet Center as a Readjustment Counseling Outreach Coordinator. His specialties include Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.



## **PRESERVING OUR HISTORY**

By: Dale Bryan  
TSNA Secretary

Valley Forge, Fort McHenry, Fort Sumter, Pearl Harbor, Tan Son Nhut AB. What do all of those places have in common? Answer: all are military installations that played a key role in one of America's wars. Fort Sumter and Pearl Harbor are well remembered in history for their rallying of the public at a war's beginning. Valley Forge and Fort McHenry are remembered because they represent the struggles of war. Most who are reading this remember the significance of Tan Son Nhut in their or a loved one's life, but history of the base continues to dim in the minds of most Americans. We, the members of TSNA, want the base and its place in history to be remembered.

Our association continues to strive to keep the memory of Tan Son Nhut AB alive by placing memorials that are in public gathering places. Those are places where a school child might see the memorial and be inspired to seek information on Tan Son Nhut's rightful place in American History. We will keep what has become an Association tradition alive at the reunion in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee at the end of this month.

This time, we are working through an organization in Pigeon Forge called Forever Parks Foundation. It is a partnership between the city and private businesses and individuals. Those who support the foundation may have their endowments recognized by the public through means of some memorial. A bench with an accompanying plaque is the type of memorial chosen by the TSNA committee that worked on this project. The committee chose a location near the convention center where the site overlooks the Pigeon Forge River. The members of that committee are Chaplain Bob Chaffee, Bill Coup, Gary Fields, Joe Kricho, Kerry Nivens, Charles Penley, and me as the chair. We should all be indebted to the efforts of these members, and it is one of them that suggested the inscription of the plaque that will accompany our bench. Since all the members are modest and dedicated men, I cannot get the author to step forward. Perhaps we might get him to reveal himself at the reunion. The plaque will carry the inscription below and our Association logo.

### **DEDICATED MAY 2015 TO ALL OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM**

Were it not for the tireless effort of Simon Bradbury of the Department of Parks and Recreation of the City of Pigeon Forge, this memorial would not be a reality. I found him a great human being and patriotic American. All will have a chance to meet Simon, because he plans to be at our banquet and at the plaque dedication ceremonies. Please welcome him as a fellow veteran.

**SO COME ON DOWN TO PF TOWN FOR OUR 2015 REUNION. YOU STILL HAVE TIME!!  
SEE PAGE 5**

**Revetments** is an official publication of the Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236  
The Association is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt Veterans' Organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

President: George Plunkett  
Vice President: Richard Carvell  
Secretary: Dale Bryan  
Treasurer: Carol Bessette  
Director of Communications/Webmaster: Charles Penley  
Director of Marketing: Johnnie Jernigan  
Director of Public Relations: Richard Carvell  
Director of Veteran Services: Joe Kricho  
Director of Membership: Larry E. Fry  
Director at Large: Gary Fields  
Co-Director of Membership Development: Bill Coup  
Co-Director of Membership Development: Kerry Nivens  
Revetments Editor: Larry E. Fry  
Chaplains: Rev. Dr. James M. Warrington,  
Rev. Dr. Billy T. Lowe; and Rev. Bob A. Chaffee  
Presidents Emeriti:  
Don Parker, (1947-2014), Co-Founder and President 1996-2002  
John Peele Co-Founder and President 2002-2004  
Wayne Salisbury, (1940-2014), President 2004-2007  
Robert Robinson Gales President 2007-2011

**Web Site: [www.tsna.org](http://www.tsna.org)**

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



And our thanks again to John Bowen, TSNA Member, for another great illustration.

## NEW MEMBERS



Mr. Dennis Brown	Montpelier	IN	67-68	82nd Airborne	
Mr. Harold E. Saden	Daphne	AL	hsaden56@yahoo.com	Mar 69 - Mar 70	1876 Comm. Sqdn
Mr. Brant A. Brown	Hartford City	IN	brantabrown@hotmail.com	Son of Randall Brown	N/A
Mrs. Jodi R. Brown-Hooks	N. Augusta	SC	jbrown@acpsd.net	Daughter of R. Brown	N/A
Mrs. Kristie A. JennerJahn	Hartford City	IN	kjennerjahn@gmail.com	Daughter of R. Brown	N/A
Mr. Joseph M. Torolski	Brownstown Twp.	MI	joetorolski@att.net	Jun 72 - Mar 73	377th SPS
Dr. Steven Edelman	Del Mar	CA	steve@tcoyd.org	VA DOCTOR	N/A
Mr. Jon Oswald	Hartford City	IN		Vietnam 68-69	U. S. Marines
Mr. Andy McCaffrey	Hartford City	IN		Vietnam 67-68	Army Artillery

TSNA and its officers, directors, employees and agents do not make any guarantees of any kind about the content, accuracy, or timeliness of information in the TSNA newsletter, *Revetments*. The use of information from this newsletter is strictly voluntary and at the user's sole risk. TSNA shall not be liable for any damages of any kind related to the information in this newsletter. The opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and do not constitute the opinion or policy of TSNA.