



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



MARCH 2016

## Quilts of Valor

This past year, I was honored to be selected to receive a quilt that was hand made by volunteer quilters who wanted to say "Thank you for your service". This ceremony took place at the Veterans Café in Myrtle Beach. Along with several other veterans, I was honored that one of our brothers, Harold Boone and his wife Brenda were there to give their support.

For those that don't know what this organization is all about, let me give you some background. Blue Star mom, Catherine Roberts, began the Quilts Of Valor Foundation from her sewing room in Seaford, DE in 2003.

She hit upon the idea that linking quilt-toppers with machine quilters in a national effort could achieve her goal to cover all returning service men and women touched by war. These wartime quilts, called Quilts of Valor (QOV's), would be a tangible reminder of an American's appreciation and gratitude. Since 2003, QOVF has become a national grassroots community service effort, connecting the home-front with our warriors and veterans.

QOV's are stitched with love, prayers and healing thoughts. Our troops who have been touched by war are awarded this tangible token of appreciation that unequivocally says, "Thank you for your service, sacrifice and valor."

A Quilt of Valor is a generous lap-sized quilt (minimum of 55 X 65) made by a quilt-topper (the piercer) of quality fabrics and beautifully quilted by a longarmer. After it has been bound, washed, labeled and wrapped in a presentation case, it is ready to be awarded. Quilts are awarded at many different levels: they may go to military hospitals where Chaplains award them to service members; there may be awards of QOV's to entire service units returning from deployments; they may be awarded at VA's or awarded individually. But no matter how a Quilt of Valor is given, the impact it delivers is unequivocal. As one recipient said "My quilt isn't another military medal to be placed in a box and sit on my shelf. I was moved to tears."

Since 2003, over 132,000 quilts have been awarded to our veterans.

George A. Bontya  
TSN 1970-1971



## NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

**W**alter R. Thoma, Sgt. USAF 1967—1971. I lived across from the Heliport during my year of duty with Chinooks constantly flying over our roof tops. Three major campaigns during my year at Tan Son Nhut AB. I met Vice Premier Ky during my tour.

Walter R. Thoma  
1876th Comm Sq.  
May 69 0 May 70

### Chaplain's Corner March 2016

For a Chaplain of an organization as large and as diversified as the TSNA is somewhat of a problem as it comes to open a meditation of a special month. Our calendar tells us that the final Sunday is the Christian faith Easter. How do I speak to all? Well, a search of the scriptures solved the problem! It's in the Old Testament the book of Nehemiah and finds 8:9-10. It has words about a special day they were called to the people to recognize the day. "This day is holy to the Lord neither being ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength".

If you all had a calendar for March that lists all "Special Days" as I found in one that starts on March 2 with "Texas Independence" Day and also "Read America", lists such as "International Women's Day", Daylight Saving Day's beginning, St Patrick's Day, and the Christian days of Palm Sunday and Easter. Some calendars even list on March 22 "World Water Day".

So what do we say about this month of March? The German teacher Wolfgang von Goethe puts it this way as he interprets all of us with "callings". "Every person above the ordinary has a certain mission that they are called to fulfill". The apostle Paul spelled it out in his letter to the Ephesians. It sets down a solution for how to live and find "Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-4).

You will be surprised and how this text defines your life!

I have quoted Chesterton before but to close this special monthly Corner "Let your religion be less of a theory and more a love affair".

Yes, this is the end of a hard "Corner's" Sermon.

Chaplain Bob Chaffee

### ENTERING VIETNAM

By: Andy Csordas, Special Comsec Support Detachment, Tan Son Nhut, 1970

My entry and exit from Vietnam were both interesting, and I am sure others have even more interesting stories. Today I will talk about my entry into Vietnam.

Before my tour I was stationed in Cleveland, OH at the Headquarters Battery of the Detroit Cleveland Air Defense Command. It looked like I would stay there for the rest of my enlistment, but that was not to happen. We were attached to the Air Defense Command which had Nike Hercules Missile silo's all around both cities, but were part of STRATCOM. Our responsibilities included running the communications for the unit, both switchboard and Comm Center 24/7. My MOS was 31S30, Field General COMSEC Repairman, otherwise known as Rice Paddy Crypto during training, but most of the time operated the Comm Center.

One night while manning the Comm Center in the middle of the night I was reading an incoming message that happened to have my name on it, which was titled something like "investigation for special assignment", which obviously caught my attention. I asked the CO about it and he could not find out any more details. Months went by and the message was forgotten. Then I received orders for Vietnam with less than one year left on my enlistment. I again asked the CO about this and "volunteered" to stay in Cleveland for the rest of my enlistment. He said he would like me to stay as well and checked on the orders. A few days later he came back and said he could not change anything or find out any details. He suggested this must be the special assignment I had been investigated for and told me not to worry as I would likely be living in a

hotel in Saigon and wearing civilian clothes.

So I did my POR training, and flew to Vietnam at the appointed time through Hawaii, Wake Island, Clark AFB and then into Bien Hoa on a DC-8. During the incoming processing I waited while they asked for important civilian skills including NCR 500 Series Computer Systems repairs (something I learned after I got out) and Senior Life Saving Certificates to become a life guard at one of the pools. He never did ask who was coming for a Special Assignment, so I asked after the formation was dismissed. I can still remember that E-7's belly laugh; he just said I was just like everyone else, one of the regular folks like him.

I was sent to Long Binh, home of the 160 Signal Groups COMSEC Support Logistics Command which literally had small units from the Delta to the DMZ including one man repair operations at base camps. I processed in with a number of others with my MOS who were right out of school and they did not seem to know you could actually ask questions so I tried to get my choice of assignment. I asked the clerk for a unit roster and found a friend from my time in school at Special COMSEC Support Detachment on Tan Son Nhut. I said I would like to be sent there but he said they were over strength and I could not go there.

So I waited a couple of days hanging out in the barracks and someone came in calling my name. He said I was going to Tan Son Nhut. Great I thought and asked him how I get there. This barracks was near a gate along the main highway alongside the base. He pointed to the gate and said do you see that gate? I replied yes and he told me to walk through that gate, cross the road, and do this; holding his hand in the typical way you would hitch hike along the road.

So between my "Special Assignment" and hitchhiking to Tan Son Nhut, it was an interesting process. We lived at MACV Annex for awhile but then moved into our shop building inside H-3 in front of Camp Alpha. So much for living in a hotel and civilian clothes.



### Award Nominations

Again, we are looking forward to an eventful reunion in September in Huntsville, AL. One of the highlights of the reunion is the bestowing of awards on deserving members and selected others at the banquet.

The officers and board members of your Association do not unilaterally choose award recipients. One of two awards committees, each composed of Association officers, board members, and a chaplain, evaluates persons nominated to receive awards. The proceedings of the committees are confidential, and voting tabulations are not published or made public.

Any member in good standing may nominate a person for consideration. The TSNA Awards and criteria for each may be viewed on our website at [tsna.org](http://tsna.org).

If you nominate someone, be specific and document the attributes and achievements making your nominee unique and deserving. What has this person done to further the goals and ideals of our Association or, in some cases, their community or the nation? Nomination does not mean selection for an award. Of course, persons may not nominate themselves.

Please send your nomination to the chairman of one of the awards committees. Award Committee 1 chairman is President Randall Brown at [browncigar1965@yahoo.com](mailto:browncigar1965@yahoo.com). Award Committee 2 chairman is Vice President Richard Carvell at [rcarvell@astate.edu](mailto:rcarvell@astate.edu). You may also send your nomination to me, the TSNA Secretary, at [dale.bryan@gmail.com](mailto:dale.bryan@gmail.com). It should go without saying that one does not submit their nomination to the person you are nominating. Most nominees will likely be considered by Award Committee 1, but if the nominee is on that committee, that nominee will then be considered by Award Committee 2. If you must send your nomination by surface mail, send it to Tan Son Nhut Association at P. O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236. In the address block, add Attn: Randall Brown or Rich Carvell or Dale Bryan. The unopened letter will then be sent to that person.

***Deadline for nominations is May 31, 2016.***

## Call for Candidates

Your Association continues as an active and vibrant veteran organization that serves its membership. Again, we are looking forward to an eventful reunion in September in Huntsville, AL. For such reunions and other events to occur, qualified people have to manage your Association as officers and board members. It is they who keep us alive, viable, and in compliance with national, state, and local laws and regulations.

The term of one of your officers ends this year. The position is that of Vice President, and the incumbent, Rich Carvell, is eligible to run for reelection and has declared to do so. That stated, we seek any active volunteers to also stand for election to this very important position. I emphasize the word active, because serving as an officer of TSNA is not just adding a title to your name on the Association roster. Work and dedication are very much involved.

The duties of Vice President are enumerated in Article VI, Section 1d(2) of the TSNA Bylaws that may be referenced on the TSNA Website at [tsna.org](http://tsna.org).

There are no specific requirements to run for Vice President other than being a paid up member in good standing of the Association. Possessing previous experience as a leader and manager in the military and/or civilian sector is a valuable asset.

A person may nominate themselves for an office, or any member may nominate another. If you nominate another, be certain that that person is willing to run and serve.

Please send all nominations by name and position to me, the TSNA Secretary, at [dale.bryan@gmail.com](mailto:dale.bryan@gmail.com). If you must send your nomination by surface mail, send it to Tan Son Nhut Association at P. O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236.

**Deadline for nominations is April 30, 2016.** A self-nominee or one accepting a nomination by another member must submit a statement of approximately three to five paragraphs of their vision for the future of TSNA and how they would help achieve that vision by serving as Vice President. That statement is also sent to me. If the nominee is running for reelection, a summary of their achievements during their term of office is also requested. The announcement of the upcoming election and a listing of all nominees, with their vision statement, will appear in the August 2016 issue of *Revetments*.

### Veterans News & Events: No. 6

By: Joe Kricho  
TSNA Director of Veterans Services  
[67VietVet68@gmail.com](mailto:67VietVet68@gmail.com)

### A Publication of Interest to Our Membership

The Veterans of Foreign Wars publishes a weekly newsletter titled; "*The Action Corps Weekly*" and is published by the advocacy arm of the VFW apprising them of legislative and other issues appearing before Congress. This week's issue covers topics such as: The review of the **VA's Choice Billing** program for those seeking care at VA Hospitals; a House Hearing on the **VA Housing** programs; the President's **Budget Request**; a reevaluation of the **Blue Water Navy Definition**; an Institutes of Medicine report on **Gulf War Illness**; and **Proposed Tricare Changes**. Many of these are vital issues to Vietnam Veterans and to other War Veterans who may be in our membership, or whom you may know personally, or through a Veterans Organization of which you are a member.

I am attaching an Adobe PDF link to the February 12, 2016 issue. This is not the format that is delivered to your email inbox should you desire to join the Action Corps as a VFW member. Due to copyright restriction, I, as a member of the VFW Action Corps, cannot provide the actual 'hard copy' that the members receive. This link will take you to the 'plain text' copy from the VFW.

In my opinion I believe this to be a very useful and informative publication for Veterans of any war.

As I stated earlier, this publication is available to members of the VFW. Should it become available on a weekly basis in Plain Text using an Internet Search Engine such as Google, I will certainly let our members know in next months "*Revetments*."

[http://www.vfw.org/uploadedFiles/VFW.org/VFW\\_in\\_DC/ActionCorpsWeekly\(1\).pdf](http://www.vfw.org/uploadedFiles/VFW.org/VFW_in_DC/ActionCorpsWeekly(1).pdf).

**NATIONAL MUSEUM  
OF THE U. S. AIR FORCE**

By: Garry Arndt  
Aug 69 - Aug 70  
4th SOS (AC-47 Gunship) DaNang; 14thAPS (CRB)



January 1, 2016:

Larry, I just took this picture of the National Museum of the US Air Force.

The fourth building is complete (Far left by the Missile Silo) and they are moving aircraft into it.

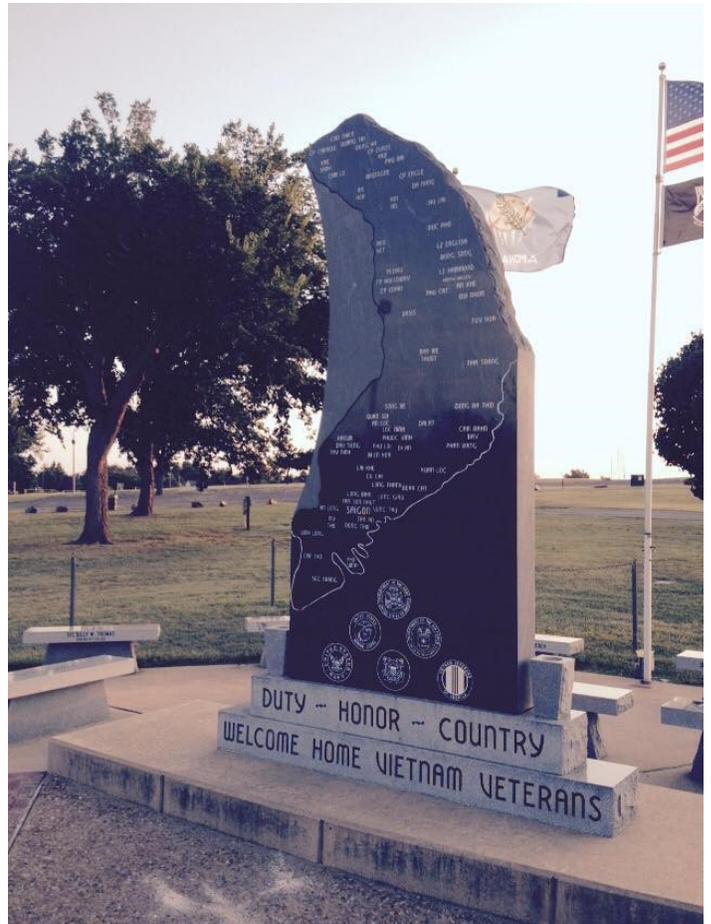
Plans are to have it open in June of this year 2016 . The New Building will house Experimental Aircraft, the 'Space Shuttle Crew Trainer' and other aircraft.

The "Wright Flyer" (above) is located next to a gate going into another portion of the Base.



National Museum of the U.S. Air Force fourth building to open June 8.

9 November, 2001  
Dedicated to the town of Lawton, OK, by  
Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter #751



**FAVORITE SAYINGS**



If God intended for us to eat peanut butter, the roof of the human mouth would be Teflon coated



You know you are getting old when you see your childhood toys in antique stores with huge prices on them.



**EDITOR'S NOTE!**

The following is dated for the 2007 TSNA Reunion in Dayton, Ohio.

I have no idea why I wrote it, whether I actually said it, or what.

But I "submit" it here because it still applies, and probably always will no matter when it is spoken or read.

***“WHY ARE WE HERE”***

“Why are we here” applies to a lot of different things and situations in all of our lives.

***It applies to our time at Tan Son Nhut.***

WE were “here” (there) because the United States government wanted us there. (On a personal note): Most of us knew we were headed to Viet Nam while on our way there. Some, including myself didn’t. The TDY group I was with from Japan didn’t know anything about Vietnam until we got to Clark AFB. It was only two weeks since McNamara had said to add personnel.

Some were “here” (there) because they volunteered to be, because of the extra pay and less taxes, etc (so I hear and read).

***It applies to our vocation after military service.***

How many here had/have a career “post military service” that is DIRECTLY related to what you learned and did in the military?

“Why are we here” (in a civilian job directly related to the military job we had) applies here in an interesting way. If you had not learned what you did in the military and carried on with it, what might you be doing today.

***It applies to this reunion.***

We are here to: Honor others who are here, by our presence and desire to renew old friendships, make new ones, and to honor and remember those who cannot be here for whatever reason.

We are here because we DO want to remember our time at Tan Son Nhut, both good and bad.

For some of you spouses, mine included, you are here because your spouse brought you here. And we sincerely hope you enjoy it as much as I am presuming your spouse does.

***It applies to what we have learned from being a part of this Association.***

What have I learned from being a member? For one thing, I learned that there were one heck of a lot of folks there in later years. You must remember I was there December 1961 to March 1962.

And I have learned a lot about what all of those people did while there, thanks to their stories, pictures, emails, etc.

I have learned that just like it took dedicated people to make Tan Son Nhut what it was, so it REALLY takes dedicated people, like those who preceded me on this Board, to keep this Association going! Thank you to all of them, especially to the late Bob Need, and to Mr. TSNA, Wayne Salisbury!

I have learned that there are a lot of people out there who still want to remember Tan Son Nhut, whether good or bad, and we are helping them do that. Thanks in particular to Wayne’s work on just about everything, and Charles Penley’s wonderful work in keeping the web site going and making our wonderful historical CD’s. We thank them for the education all of that work provides to all of us, and in particular to those like me who were not there when things were a lot “hotter”!

I believe the biggest thing I have learned about people and their work at Tan Son Nhut is about what I still know as “Air Policemen”. Yes, I know, they are now Security Policemen. But not in my Air Force timing of 1958 to 1962. The “AP’s” manned the entry gates when I was at Dover AFB; they did routine patrols and took care of the occasional drunk and disorderly, etc. But until reading and hearing of the accounts of the events surrounding the Tet offensives, little did I realize what they HAD TO DO at Tan Son Nhut, and other places, I am sure. They were the SECURITY for the rest of the troops on their base, and for that they have my most sincere respect, gratitude, and thanks.

**August 1969 - 1970**  
**377th USAF Dispensary**  
**Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN**  
**LAZARAVICH, Joseph John Jr.**  
**Sergeant E - 4**

### **IMMUNIZATION CLINIC**

The initial assignment was to be the sole medic running the Immunization Clinic for Tan Son Nhut Air Base. The morning schedule for this clinic was to administer immunizations for the Vietnamese civilian employees; the afternoons were dedicated to assisting our doctors in conducting the Venereal Disease Clinic for all branches of the service. This part of the assignment proved to be enlightening on a number of levels. A mandatory briefing for all troops during their first month in country was the lecture on venereal disease given by one of the doctors of our facility. These lectures were held in the Base Theater and for reasons I still don't understand, two medics were assigned to assist the doctor and were stationed in chairs about fifteen feet from the doctor who was standing at a podium with a microphone. After a short film and the doctor's lecture the floor was open to a Q & A. Sometimes the new arrivals had questions that were cause for wonder.

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES**

After considerable lobbying I was transferred to where the action was. When my duties had me in the dispensary dealing with suture jobs and casting broken bones there was a sense of relative safety. It was when your assignment took you off-base into the villages and orphanages that I sometimes worried. These missions, like so many other things in the military, had an acronym. The acronym for our visit to an outlying village from Saigon was MEDCAP which stood for Medical Civic Action Program. We would set up a mobile clinic and conduct a sick call. One constant among the children we saw was ear infections which called upon skills I developed in the VD Clinic and that would be penicillin injections. The orphanages were very de-

pressing for this medic. As you would imagine, a medic sees his share of blood and gore that he has to deal with and I guess you develop a certain objectivity when those situations arise which helps performing more professionally, quickly and effectively. In those situations if you get wrapped up in it emotionally it will be the patient who suffers. That piece of the Medic Skills Check List I had down pretty well but the orphanages were like nothing I had ever seen before or since. I experienced a strange chemical reaction there. Often there would be an aching in the center of my chest that would be accompanied by droplets of water falling from my eyes. The orphanages were run by an order of nuns who were dressed entirely in white just as you'd imagine an angel would be. Their work was NEVER-ENDING; day after day, year after year of caring for unwanted children whose only crime was being fathered by a round eye. Imagine a room the size of a half-court basketball game. Then arrange cribs two feet apart until that half-court size room is full. Now imagine a baby in every crib, some brown babies, some white babies. And spaced out in no particular pattern throughout the room you spot eight or ten fountains sprouting from the cribs. And it doesn't end with that room; there are many older children who share a similar fate all because society finds these bi-racial babies undesirable.

Whenever we went into a village, we always had with us an ARVN medic to translate. He spoke decent English and was a valuable addition to the team. Once, after returning to the base from a MEDCAP I asked him how to say "Oh X#8S" in Vietnamese and after giving me a strange look he told me. He wanted to know why I need that phrase and I said something happened while we were in that village today and I thought another Vietnamese phrase I knew wasn't quite strong enough. I told him that after we started treating the villagers I noticed we were getting low on certain supplies so I went back

out to my crackerbox ( field ambulance ) to restock. Anyone familiar with a crackerbox will know that there is considerable storage space under each bench seat. I climbed into the rear of my crackerbox, lifted the bench seat, grabbed an armful of supplies and put the seat back down and for some reason glanced out the front windshield and saw these gentlemen fashionably coordinated in black, each carrying a weapon and maintaining a gap of four or five feet as they quickly crossed the road about a hundred yards away. I stood motionless still bent over at the waist until the last fashionista had crossed the road. I never said a word to the other members of the team that day at the village. We finished treating every villager requesting help and returned to base safely which convinced me that I had made the correct decision that day. I imagined what might have happened if I ran back to our makeshift clinic and alerted the team of what I saw. Medics and doctors do not receive extensive combat training so I've always felt that my inaction that day was the safest course of action for the team and the villagers. Where I could have done a better job would have been to alert base security to the enemy activity I witnessed that day.

Wounded soldiers and death are a given for a medic in a war zone and my tour of duty was no exception. Dustoffs are war wounded transported to a medical facility by helicopter. One of my duties was to drive my crackerbox to our helipad which had the designation of HOTEL THREE, meet the incoming UH1 Huey helicopter, transfer the wounded from the chopper into my crackerbox and get them to the 21st Casualty Staging Flight where they would be stabilized before being flown out to a major medical facility in a non-combat part of the South Pacific. Any medic with Dustoffs as part of their daily duty has seen every possible type of wound and although you do in time develop a certain amount of callous there are some wounded that are more difficult for the young medic to deal with and for me it was the sol-

dier who was the unfortunate recipient of friendly fire when that friendly fire happened to be napalm. Their fate, more times than not, was a given. We would start an IV and through the magic of pharmacology ease their pain. We would coat them with a cream called Sulfamylon, build a frame similar to a man-size Quonset hut that would keep the sheet covering him off of his body and keep him as comfortable as possible as we waited for the day that the docs felt he was stable enough to be transported to Clark in the Philippines or Hickam AFB in Hawaii.

Another shocking reality of war is the base mortuary. Thankfully this duty fell to me infrequently. You could probably count on one hand how many times I visited that facility but that first visit is one of those images that is forever fused into a memory. It wasn't like a horror movie, it WAS a horror movie.

The other horror that stands out in my mind is the night we had a C-130 go down in a rice paddy a short distance from clearing the base perimeter on takeoff. It was the dry season when the fully fueled plane crashed. It naturally caught fire and as if being engulfed in flames wasn't bad enough the plane was loaded with ordnance so no one was going to get near the crash site until the fire burned itself out. Just before dawn Base Security gave the OK for us medics to move in. Of course there were no survivors but there were the remains of the crew who were still at or near their stations and had been in that inferno for several hours.

To be fair my tour wasn't all gloom and doom. In addition to the night life that the city of Saigon offered I was able to acquire an in-country pass which would be my plane ticket to anywhere in-country a military plane was going. There is a section on the pass where your commander would type the reason for the pass and my commander typed: "To coordinate

Medical activities" It's kind of ambiguous but it always got me on a plane. The only destination I ever went to was Cam Ranh Bay. My roommate back at Dover AFB was stationed at their hospital and I usually could get away every other month for a two-day visit. The beach at Cam Rahn Bay was great except for all the concertina wire. The water was so clear that in chest deep water you could look at your feet and tell if there was dirt under your toenails. My buddy knew his way around pretty well and even though a nearby village was off limits he found a way to get to that village where the night life was pretty darn good considering where they were.

There were several check points (I believe three) on this bridge that ran from the base to the village that I believe was called Su Lin. One check point was manned by Americans, one by Vietnamese and one by Koreans. So how in the world do you get through that? Well since the mission in Vietnam was multinational there were multinational wounded and the hospital at Cam Ranh Bay and the Korean doctor who worked there had his quarters in the village so at the end of the day he'd leave the base and go through those three check points to get back to his unit. Sometimes he would have to take a Korean patient from the hospital back to his unit and my buddy and I would bandage each other as if we had a head wound and donned some O.R. scrubs. Worked like a charm.

In April of 1970 in the wee hours of the morning we were actually having a relatively slow night when the phone rang and it was the main gate calling to say a civilian just told them that there was a lady lying in the street not far off base and it looked like she might be about to have a baby. The MP asked if we responded to something like that which gave me pause because there was a curfew in effect where no one may leave or enter the base between 2200 hours and 0600 hours so we wouldn't have

gotten into any trouble if I had said no. There was a village not far from the main gate called Cho Lon that supposedly had some VC activity so the expectant mommy could have been a ruse to lure the unsuspecting medic off the base. One of the medics on duty with me that night was Sgt. Sellers from Oklahoma. I said c'mon Sellers we're making a house call. Well, sure enough when we got there mommy was in the street, on her back with her pants off shouting to beat the band. My guess was that she was cursing whoever gave her this big belly but my Vietnamese was kinda rusty so I don't know for sure. Anyway I pulled a sterile O.R. pack from under the bench seat in my crackerbox (good ol' 68K2145) and spread a sterile sheet under mommy and donned a pair of gloves. Baby was crowning so I knew it wouldn't be long. Like a well-placed handoff from Joe Namath to Matt Snell mommy handed off to me and after a little post delivery clean up good ol' 68K2145 got us downtown to the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital. With the mission complete Sellers and I headed back to the base to finish out our shift then grab some breakfast before attempting to sleep. A few days later my squadron commander called me into his office and introduced me to a reporter from the Seventh Air Force News who had gotten wind of my OB/GYN adventure and thought it would be a good human interest story instead of all the not-so-good news regularly printed in their paper. So after being interviewed there the reporter asked my commander if I could be relieved for a few hours because he wanted to also interview mommy downtown at the hospital and get a few pictures of me with mother and baby. Surprise, surprise; in the very next issue on the top of the back page was that photograph of the three of us with the accompanying story.

Finally, and I do mean finally, was the day that my tour is over and I'm going back to the world. With orders in hand I was chauffeured to the terminal at Tan Son Nhut where I said my goodbyes and hauled my two duffel bags and one powerful hangover inside to find a small section of floor where I could stretch out and rest my aching head until it was time to board the freedom bird. This is the day we all dream of and there is nothing that could bum me out today. WRONG. Over the P.A. system I hear my name and all I could think of was it's something that'll screw up my day so I decided not to respond. Well after the third paging I realized that if they wanted me bad enough all they had to do was to check everyone boarding that flight until they found that Lithuanian guy with four syllables in his last name. If that happened whatever they wanted me for might have more dire consequences so I marched me and my hangover up to the counter and learned about hardship leave in the military. It turned out that someone's father was seriously ill and in order to get him back to his family as quickly as possible they had to bump someone from the flight to accommodate this soldier. You can't be mad at that so I asked when the next flight out was and was told late the next day. I pleaded isn't there some way outta here today? I was told there was a cargo plane headed to Guam but it's leaving in ten minutes and there ain't no taxi service so if I wanted to catch that flight I'd have to grab my luggage and hoof it over to the revetment where that plane is parked. Somewhere I found the strength to haul those two duffel bags and that darn hangover to the plane and my vacation in Southeast Asia was over.

I told that story many times thinking mine was the absolute worst final day in country ever. That is until I learned about a guy from my unit that had a very similar story whose day to get on the freedom

bird was the year before mine. This medic's name was William McMahon. I've seen pictures of Bill and at first I thought he had such a baby face but then I realized we all weren't much more than babies. Bill's assignment was the 21st Casualty Staging Flight and from what I could gather he was pretty darn good at his job. So on his final day in country his buddies took him down to the terminal and after saying their goodbyes Bill went inside and took a seat to wait for his freedom bird. This is where our stories differ. While sitting there waiting a rocket hits the terminal and Bill is among the fatalities. I believe it was about the time that I heard Bill's story that I developed this philosophy of life, "No matter how bad you think you have it ,there's always someone who has it worse." To anyone visiting The Wall I ask you to please hunt out Bill's name and thank HIM for HIS service.

#### REUNION 2016 NEWS

Look for the Registration Form in the April issue of Revetments.

The fee for this year will be \$75. The room rate at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel will be \$115.00, INCLUDING Taxes!

#### Our Guest Speaker will be COL John Reitzell (Ret)

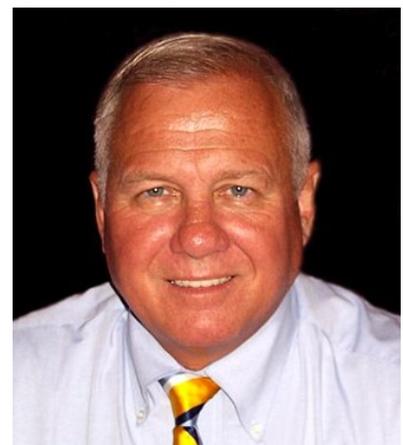
**Colonel Reitzell** graduated from Northeast Louisiana University as a Distinguished Military Graduate in 1969 and was commissioned a 2Lt in the infantry.

After a 28 year Army career, Colonel John Reitzell retired to Huntsville, Al. and is currently employed by Dynetics Inc, a Soldier centric Company that specializes in R&D and engineering for the guys at the pointy end of the spear. Col. Reitzell served in the 82d Airborne, the 4th Infantry, the 2d Infantry, the 2d Armored Divisions, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and commanded the famed 1st Battalion 509th Parachute Infantry and is in that unit's Hall of Fame.

His assignments began at platoon leader level and increased in responsibility through Brigade Command. He commanded 2 Infantry Battalions of over 700 Soldiers and a Brigade of over 2,500. In combat Col. Reitzell served as a commander in Light Infantry, Parachute Infantry, and Ranger Infantry. After a tour at the United States Air Force Academy as "the Army guy" where he was the Officer In Charge of the United States Air Force Parachute Team, The Wings Of Blue, Col. Reitzell spent a year in Korea as the operations officer of the "Frontline Brigade" on the DMZ. What followed were multiple years in "black" Special Ops at Ft. Bragg, where he deployed on 36 "real world" operations in support of the US Counter Terrorism mission. Operations such as the invasion of Grenada, the response to the hijacking of TWA 847 and the seizing of the cruise ship Achille Lauro by terrorists are examples of these missions.

Col. Reitzell retired in 1997 as the Chief of Staff of the United States Army Infantry School at Ft. Benning, and was inducted into the Madison County, Al. Hall of Heroes in 2003.

Col. Reitzell retired with 3 Legions of merit, 4 Bronze Stars with "V" device for valor, the Purple Heart, The Combat Infantryman's Badge, Master Parachutist Badge with over 500 jumps, the Ranger Tab, and numerous other decorations from multiple services and countries. John's wife Glenda is a Gubernatorial appointee to the U.S. Space and Rocket Commission and they have two grown children.



**Tan Son Nhut Association**  
**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. The Association is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt Veterans' Organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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**View of civilian Vietnamese barracks (hooch) maids passing through one of the many security checkpoints scattered around Tan Son Nhut.**

**Photo courtesy of John Burke, TSNA Life Member**



Graphic courtesy of:

Larry Fry  
Detachment 8, 2nd ADVON  
December 1961 - March 1962

Charles Penley  
377th Security Police Squadron  
Sentry Dog Section  
October 1967 - July 1969

The Tan Son Nhut Association train is a vehicle that we use on a regular basis at the reunions.



Mr. Walter Thoma Norwich CT 6360 [walter.thoma@snet.net](mailto:walter.thoma@snet.net) May 69 - May 70 1876 Comm Sq.7thAF Combat Command Post

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