



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



DECEMBER 2018

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By Jimmy Smith
TSNA Chaplain

Greetings Fellow Members of TSNA: As your Chaplain it was my privilege, and honor, on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2018 to participate in a service honoring all Veterans' service to our country at the TSNA Memorial Bench on the USAF Museum grounds on Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. In addition to honoring the service of all Veterans, including those who served in Vietnam, a memorial service was conducted to honor the brave members of the security forces at Tan Son Nhut Air Force base who paid the ultimate sacrifice defending the base from a vicious attack during the 1968 TET Offensive. Their dedication and sacrifices saved many lives on that dreadful night.



L to R Back Row: Johnnie Jernigan; Harley Groves; John Hatagan; and Jamie Rowe.
Front Row: Gary Smith and Chaplain Jim Smith.

A wreath was placed at the bench and six members of the VFW 8312 Honor Squad, two of which are TSNA members, (Johnnie Jernigan and your Chaplain Jim Smith) participated in the remembrance service for our Heroes who gave so much to protect all members present on the base during the attack. Johnnie Jernigan opened the memorial service paying tribute to their sacrifice and allowed each member participating to speak if they wanted. Chaplain Smith emphasized the truth that "no greater love has mortal man than to give up his life for others". May their sacrifice never be forgotten. A final salute was rendered with the playing of Taps, and Chaplain Smith closed with a prayer.



I also want to take this opportunity to wish a Merry Christmas to all those celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ; Happy Hanukkah to our Jewish friends celebrating the rededication of the Holy Temple during the eight-day, wintertime "festival of lights"; and Happy Holidays to all others.

Until next month, this is your Chaplain signing off. Have a blessed month and God's speed to all.



CHRISTMAS EVE
Chapter 13
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From the book *Combat JAG* by Les Nunn

It has been almost 50 years since I was stationed at Tan Son Nhut, Vietnam as a USAF Combat JAG. My memory as to names is not very good, but the events will never leave my mind. I have made up the names here, so if you recognize yourself, please let me know your name so I can be totally accurate. Thank you.

Tan Son Nhut Air Base was difficult to protect. It was surrounded by a wide variety of terrain, structures and vegetation. Part of the base was built right up next to Cholon, a predominately Chinese district of Saigon. In fact, if it had not been for the fence and mine fields around the base, from a distance in some places you would not be able to tell where the city stopped and the base started. This particular area was dangerous because it was highly susceptible to sniper fire from the buildings of Cholon which abutted the fence.

Then there were the cemeteries. A number of cemeteries, it seemed, were built just on the other side of the base perimeter fence. These were in various locations around the base and likewise presented their own set of unique dangers. Each tombstone was made to be about the same size and color as the ones next to it. These were fairly substantial cemeteries, so that you would be looking over what seemed to be acres and acres of tombstones all exactly the same.

Imagine if you will, putting an eighteen-year-old kid out there in a bunker to guard the base when as he looks out ahead of him, all he can see are rows and rows and rows of tombstones, all the same. It does not take very many minutes or hours of being out there by yourself watching the cemetery (to make sure no sappers are trying to attack the base) before you soon "see" an imaginary Viet Cong behind each tombstone. This happened on more than one occasion where the youthful guard would open fire on the tombstones with his 50 caliber machine gun truly believing he had seen one or more enemy Viet Cong out there trying to "get in."

On the backside of the base, the terrain adjoining the base was primarily agricultural. This was in the form of small pasture lands and rice paddies, although not too many. Open space in some areas. Sometimes easy to see across, but many times filled with tall buffalo grass which in places could reach more than eight feet in height. The buffalo grass was something in which an enemy could easily hide as he was preparing his attack against the base.

Tan Son Nhut itself was ringed with barbed wire. The barbed wire was in coiled rolls which were then stretched between posts. This was called "Concertina Wire," named after the old European small hand-held accordions referred to as concertinas. There would be several layers of this, with each layer stacked on top of the other layer, so that the fence might be four or five feet high.

In front of the barbed wire, there were open areas of fifty to one hundred feet wide as a band around the base, outside the barbed wire. This band was truly a "no man's land." It had been mined with land mines by the French, the Japanese, the Vietnamese, the Communists, and the Americans, so that no one knew where the mines were located. If you stepped on one, it would blow up and kill or very seriously injure the individual.

Additionally, there were numerous wires stretched across the ground. These wires were attached to canisters pointed straight up. Inside each canister was a miniature rocket or mortar-type device which, when the wire was tripped, would fire straight up into the air. It did not contain any war head. On the contrary, it contained a flare and parachute. These were very effective at nighttime and referred to as "trip flares."

The flare would ignite and then burn illuminating the ground in the darkness below it. The parachute opened and slowed the descent of the flare so that the light would be available for a longer period of time to see what was going on. Ideally, if any enemy would be out in "no man's land," and touched one of the trip wires, the flare would immediately shoot up in the air, light and then begin drifting slowly down with the parachute. This would not only put the security guards on notice that the enemy was present, but would even identify the area where the enemy was. At night, then, flares were indeed a warning signal that something was going on at that particular location.

There were times when the trip flares gave a false alarm. The Vietnamese base commander had a water buffalo that wondered about at night. A number of times troops were scrambled to a tripped flare only to find it was the water buffalo that had accidentally stepped on a trip wire.

At strategic locations along the perimeter, bunkers had been built. These bunkers were of various sizes and forms of construction, but all involved some manner of containing sand with port holes or small windows built into the sides. The sand was supposed to stop any incoming rifle, rocket, mortar, or other enemy fire and protect the guards inside the bunker.

The port holes, slits, or windows were there to provide a field of vision for the guards inside the bunker to look out and see what was going on and still have the protection of the sand bags themselves, also providing an opening through which the guards could shoot.

The guys who were posted as guards would indeed have a lonely life. First of all, they were security policemen with the 377th Combat Security Police Squadron. Their training Stateside had included directing traffic, investigating accidents and crimes, as well as guarding certain classified areas of a base and other duties. In Vietnam, their role expanded significantly. They were the guards of the base. It was their job to control who came onto and who went off the base, as well as fight when necessary to keep the enemy outside.

The guards at Tan Son Nhut were particularly ef-

fective and brave. In fact, our Combat Support Group was honored while I was there with the Presidential Unit Citation Award and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Citation Award for conduct and actions in combat while protecting the base. A number of individual guards were honored with medals for combat.

Our security forces were respected by the Air Force, the troops, and watched carefully by the Army. You see, it was an unusual circumstance as to who controlled where. The Air Force controlled all that happened on an American Air Force base, such as Tan Son Nhut Air Base. This meant that the Air Force Security Guards were the ones who enforced uniform infractions, traffic laws, etc. among all military personnel and civilians on Tan Son Nhut Air Base, regardless of branch of service. It made no difference if they were Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps, the Air Force military personnel enforced the law on base. Off base was something else.

Anything off the base was controlled by the Army Military Police. The Army MPs were the ones who enforced security checks, traffic violations, investigated crimes, uniform infractions, etc. off base. They enforced the rules off base whether the person committing the violation was Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps.

While this arrangement might seem to be a good utilization of personnel, it did present its own unique set of problems. For instance, the Air Force regulations said you could wear your pants leg on the outside of your boots and the pants leg could hang down over your boot tops. Not so with the Army. The Army required their people to "blouse" their pants. This meant when you dressed in the morning, you put your trousers first, of course, and then your boots. But as you laced up your boots, you would stop at about ankle height and then neatly tuck your pants leg inside your boot tops. Then you would continue lacing your boots up and tie them at the very top. It was indeed a more impressive uniform to see GI's with their pants legs bloused in their boot tops. But the Air Force did not see the necessity of it.

While the uniforms were the same, you could very easily distinguish Army from Air Force personnel by simply watching people walking. If the pants legs were stuffed inside their boot tops, they were Army. If the pants legs were not tucked into their boot tops, they were Air Force.

There was always some rivalry between the military services, and rightly so from a morale standpoint. But the blousing of pants legs added to that rivalry. Any Air Force troops going off base were subject to the military discipline control of the Army MP's. Therefore, when an Army MP would see an Air Force guy with his pants leg on the outside of his boots, the MP would frequently go over to the Air Force troop and order him to blouse his pants inside his boot tops.

You can imagine the anger and frustration that was in the heart and mind of any hapless Air Force guy who was confronted by an Army MP demanding that he dress differently than the Air Force regulations required. The in-

sistence by MP's that Air Force men blouse their boots off base led to many heated arguments, confrontations and even fist fights. When they reached the fist fight stage, the Army would place the Air Force guy under arrest and haul him off to the Army jail.

But the Air Force had its revenge as well. The Army required that every Army troop must have his written orders on his person at all times. These would be the papers signed by the soldier's Adjutant or some other commander which named the soldier and told what unit and post or base he was assigned to. If the soldier did not have his "orders" with him, there was an assumption that he was absent without leave (AWOL). This gave the Air Force their hay day as well.

As Army troops would come onto base, the Air Force security guards could ask the Army GI for his orders. If, for whatever reason, he did not have his orders with him, the Air Force guard could arrest him for being AWOL and haul him off to the Air Force jail. The Air Force confinement facility was located only a few blocks from the main gate of Tan Son Nhut.

Periodically during the day or night, the jail would get filled with Army grunts, at which time the Air Force jailer would call the Army MP's off base and tell them to come get their guys. The Army would then roll on base with their MP "Black Mariah," back up to the confinement facility and proceed to escort (or at times drag) the Army prisoners out of the jail and into the Black Mariah. Most frequently, the MP's would then drive off base and, just outside the main gate, stop the truck, open the back door and free all the Army troops.

The rivalry between Air Force and Army became almost unbearable at times. The ones who suffered most from this were the innocent troops, Army and Air Force, who were just trying to get some break from their own jobs by going either on or off base for something different.

Shortly before Thanksgiving, I met an Air Force chaplain who was from a small town in Southern Illinois not too far from my home town of Evansville, Indiana. As we were both familiar with the same things back home, we became friends. This chaplain was assigned as the Squadron Chaplain for the 377th Combat Security Squadron, the security forces who guarded the base. He would spend several evenings a week just going out to visit with the guards on post before he went to bed at night. Noticing that they were quite lonely and frightened while on guard post, the chaplain thought it would be nice if they were to have some cookies given to them on Christmas Eve.

The chaplain then wrote to his wife back in Illinois and asked her if she would bake some cookies for the security guys. Indeed, she said she would bake lots of cookies, and lots of cookies she did bake!

Not only did the chaplain's wife bake cookies, but she enrolled the other wives in their church who likewise baked cookies. Soon, the word was out to other churches in the community and other churches in other communities with all these wonderful ladies baking cookies by the box-

fuls. The cookies were then sent to my friend the chaplain at Tan Son Nhut.

I was not aware of these “cookie brigades” until I went to see him at his office one day shortly before Christmas. He was sitting in a chair by a small portable table in the hallway outside his office doing some paperwork. As we talked, I soon asked him why he was not in his office.

“I’ll show you,” he said, as he got up and opened the door to his office.

It was filled, and I do mean filled, with boxes of cookies. From the floor almost to the ceiling, it seemed like every inch of available space in that room was occupied by cookies. When he opened the door, I was hit with this tremendously wonderful sweet aroma – sugar, chocolate, lemon, etc.

Eagerly smiling, he looked at me and said “I think we have more peanut butter cookies than anything else.” I looked at him in surprise.

“You can tell what they are?” I asked.

“Yep,” he laughed. “Or at least I think I can.”

I studied the boxes and shook my head in amazement.

“A lot of chocolate chips too, I think, but they are not holding up very well in all of this heat,” he continued.

“What are you going to do with them?” I asked.

“Take them out to the guys on Christmas Eve,” he answered. “You want to come along?”

Who would miss a chance to be with hundreds of pounds of cookies, right? “Sure,” I said. “Why not?”

By the time Christmas Eve rolled around, he had received so many boxes of cookies that I am sure everyone on base could have had several cookies. I went over to his office that Christmas Eve evening and met him as he was backing up his jeep to the office door. We carried out what must have been fifty or more boxes of cookies and loaded them in the jeep. Then we took off for the base perimeter.

I had never been to those areas of the base perimeter before. I was not an “authorized personnel” by myself. But, with the chaplain, I was considered to be authorized and we moved right on in.

We stopped by the first bunker and got out. I tried to manage my M-16 as I was carrying an armful of cookies over to where the two guards were standing.

“Merry Christmas!” the chaplain called as we approached the bunker.

“Merry Christmas” came the reply.

The chaplain then introduced me to the airmen and I handed my cookies to the fellow on the right.

It was well after dark and the only light was from the moon above. The guard stood motionless and did not say a word. Then, slowly, he raised his head and looked me right in the eye. If I live to be 10,000 years old, I shall never forget his expression.

His eyes were wet with tears. As the tears began running down his cheeks, they glistened from the moonlight. The corners of his mouth quivered as he tried to say

“thank you.” Unable to speak, he turned slowly and walked inside the bunker.

He was gone but a moment and when he returned, he had four cookies in his hand. He gave the first one to me, the second to the chaplain, the third to his buddy and kept the fourth for himself.

Without taking his eyes off me, he slowly raised his cookie to his mouth and took the tiniest of bites. Looking me straight in the eye again, he said softly, so that it was barely audible, “thank you.” He smiled a bit and then finished his sentence with “thank you sir, thank you very much.”

“Merry Christmas” I said softly. I wondered if the moonlight was reflecting off my own tears as they rolled slowly down my cheeks?

After we finished our cookies, the young airman reached out his right hand for me to shake it. As I took his hand in mine, he reached over and put his other hand on top of my right hand. He held my hand there in both of his and squeezed hard. Then came a fountain of questions in rapid fire.

“Where are you from, sir? In the States, I mean? Are you married? Do you have any kids? What is your wife’s name? Do have a picture of her? I bet she’s pretty. How long have you been in Nam? When is your DEROS?” The flood of questions went on and on and on.

He would not release my hand from his grip. After I had answered his questions, he then led me around his bunker. With a flashlight, he showed me his 50 caliber machine gun and how he carefully and neatly stored the ammunition. He showed me the switches for the Claymore mines which were along the barbed wire fence outside the bunker, pointing out that they were the last line of resistance, because when they blew, they took out everything in front of them.

Then, looking deeply again into my eyes, as if searching my soul, he spoke of fear and death. The chaplain and the airman’s buddy were outside the bunker as he broke down crying under the emotional strain of standing guard duty night after night after night. He told me of ground probes in which the enemy had tried to gain access to the base through that part of the perimeter which he was to guard. Of having to shoot and then wondering if God would forgive him for having taken human life.

I was not a chaplain. I did not have a religious answer to his questions.

He came to me like he was my little boy and I was his daddy. He spoke to me as if he were asking forgiveness for what he had done. I put my right arm around his shoulder and held him tightly.

He sobbed softly against my chest. I heard his muffled voice, without raising his head; he said “I did not want to shoot. I did not want to shoot. But they just kept coming. They would not stop. I had to shoot. I did not want to shoot, but they just kept coming.”

I put my left arm also around him and told him that I was sure that God understood. This was not the first war

that Heavenly Father had seen his children go through, and it probably would not be the last.

"Come on, Les. It's time to go." The chaplain was calling me. Carefully and slowly the young man pulled away from me and stood up straight and tall.

Looking at me again, he smiled and stuck out his hand again for me to shake. "Thank you, sir," he said. "Thank you very much."

I shook his hand and then turned and began walking out of the bunker. I stopped and lowered my head as I got to the doorway and walked out. No sooner had I gotten outside the bunker when he came outside again with another cookie in his hand. Holding it out for me, he smiled once again and said, very softly, "Merry Christmas."

I wished him Merry Christmas too, waved goodbye, and walked back to the jeep with the chaplain. As we drove off, I was still overcome with emotion and could not speak.

The next bunker was a repeat of the experience at the first bunker. So was the third bunker, the fourth, and so on, until we had seen them all and were out of cookies.

Oh, I do not mean that each guard cried the same way the first troop did, or anything like that. There were, indeed, many tears shed that night by us all. Tears for peace. Tears for safety. Tears for our fallen comrades. But I think, most of all, tears for our families and homes.

When we finished, the chaplain drove me back to Dog Town, the cantonment where my barracks was located. I started to get out and go to my room. I turned to the chaplain and shook his hand.

"Thanks. Thanks a lot," I said. I realized it was one of the few words I had spoken to him after that first bunker.

He looked at me and said "It was nice for you to do this, Les. It meant a lot to them."

"What other officers come out here just to wish them the best?" I asked.

"None. You are the first." He answered. "That's why they appreciated your coming so much. You showed them that you cared what happened to them."

"I do care" I said.

"Why don't you adopt them as your squadron?" he asked.

"I don't know. I never thought about it."

"Think about it," the chaplain responded. "They could use you out there riding around with them, standing guard duty with them, going on patrols with them. Maybe on weekends, you know?" he asked.

"I don't know. I just never thought about it before. I didn't know what all was going on out there." I replied.

"Think about it then," he said again.

I nodded my head yes, said goodbye and turned to walk to my barracks. I looked up at the sky and saw the sun was coming up. As I got to the guard post for our barracks area, I saw the security guard who watched our cantonment.

As the guard came to a sharp attention and saluted

me, he said "Merry Christmas, Captain."

"It is indeed," I said. "Merry Christmas to you too." It was Christmas Day!

I walked into my hooch, took off my uniform, and laid down to go to sleep. Much as I tried, sleep did not come. I laid there thinking of my wife, my son, my parents and sister. Her husband and my grandparents and other family members. And, I thought of the guys back there guarding the base to make sure this Christmas was one of peace and safety for me.

I resolved that I would indeed go out with the security troops each weekend. That I would be out standing guard post with them for Saturday nights. And I did. Just about every Saturday night thereafter from about six or seven o'clock in the evening until eight, nine or even ten on Sunday morning, I stood guard with the troops, joining in the fire fights with them.

Those were experiences which I remember sometimes the most vividly from my time in Vietnam. Seeing the ground probes and attempted sapper attacks on the base, watching the trip flares as someone tried to sneak on base. Laughing nervously as we found so many times the wires had been tripped by that water buffalo.

Watching the horizon for incoming rockets to see their lighted trail as the fuel burned for only a few seconds as it sent the rocket to try to kill us. I watched many nights as Cu Chi in the distance came under repeated enemy attacks. I heard the radio communications between the guards on the ground and the Spooky or Shadow gunship airplanes that would be circling our base all night long, ready to support us with needed big flares, Gatling guns, or just some encouraging talk. I watched how the Viet Cong would come up one or two at a time and taunt us, knowing that we could not shoot at them unless we had permission to do so – and that seldom came.

And there were the funny times too.

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versity Ave. and I-630)**

CHRISTMAS IN VIETNAM

By: Doug Ayers
460th TRW
Feb 66 - Jan 69

So many "war stories" always start with the popular phrase, "There I was," after which is told a story of heroism and narrow escape. It is only proper that this story would start in the same way. The time: December 25, 1968. The place: Vietnam.

"There I was," on the loneliest day of the year for a person away from family and relatives, home, his girl, wife, children, or whoever.

We had all gathered around in one lousy hootch. I guess we should be glad we have a lousy hootch to live in, but for some reason it seems rather drab. Think of Christmas trees, decorated with the touches that only the family can give; of the snow outside blanketing mother earth with a white purity she doesn't deserve; of all the children in Santa's lap, believing in him, and telling him how good they've been, with childlike faith, asking for toys for Christmas; the bumps, grinds, pushes and shoves; the hustle and bustle of traffic in a hurry to get to no particular place; the Caroler's singing Tidings of Joy to a miserable world; of all the "deck the halls with boughs of holly" being sung across the United States; and then contrast it all to a small green shack; a group of buddies in olive drab jungle fatigues; hot, humid days followed by damp, rainy nights; a 175 Howitzer sings "Noel" and M-60 and small arms join in on the chorus. Think of a few lousy paper decorations made from material you begged, borrowed or stole; of a few bottles of cheap champagne; or a group of lonely guys with silent thoughts 10,000 miles away and although the eyes are dry, you can feel the steady flow of tears which stem from their hearts.

There's about nine of us, here, as far away from each other as France from Vietnam, and night from day, but yet we're drawn together in the bonds that only a GI understands . . . The Bonds of War. We're here for a purpose and truly "Together we Stand and Divided we Fall," we must stay together and work toward an end if we are to survive this war and spend next Christmas at home.

A GI gets a "Dear John" from his girl and a few of his buddies give him comfort; another has family problems and his buddies console him; two married guys sit around and joke about "the old lady" but both know they would give anything to be home with that wife on this day. Two others sit and joke about their "hammers (girls) and say "she's two-timing me and ain't even thinking about me today." Deep inside both are saying a prayer that she'll wait for them and is thinking of them.

One sits off by himself and you see a faint moisture in his eyes. No one says anything, it's better that way. We all know and feel what he does. He is wishing he was home to see mom and dad, to box his younger brother, and tease his sister. He wishes he could be there, and fill the empty chair at the table, and enjoy the turkey with all the other good food. He is thinking "Nobody cooks like mom does." He sees dad at the head of the table, asking God's blessing on the food and asking blessing for those who don't have this kind of feast on this day. "Yea, that's me, Dad" you hear him say. We all feel the same way.

Another sits alone also, his face hard, as is his heart. Even in war there are scrooges at Xmas time. He came from the big city, is a loner, to a degree. He'll pull with the best of us, but when the pulling is over, he goes back in his shell, into his own world, where people who are happy are crazy, and where togetherness has no place. He looks back at the city, where he spent last Xmas, walking the streets, and nobody cared, but even that was better than this one.

Two are going home soon. They joke all the rest. "When are you going home? There ain't that much time in the world. Say give me your hammer's address, and I'll kiss her hello for you. Tell you what GI, I'll have a drink for you when I hit the world. I'll think about you when I am home in my girls arms and listening to her sweet voice in my ear." Nobody likes a liar. We know they be thinking of us, and were it reversed, we'd be the same way.

Two left. One the ordinary type of guy. He's an OK joe. He's solid, sticks up for his buddies, and is typical GI. Doesn't worry about home, his girl, etc. He has a terrific optimistic outlook on life. The other, the big brother type. Older than all of us, yet like an Eagle watching over her young. He sits around smokes cigarettes, strums the guitar, and is known to have a beer or two. You guessed it - - this is the Sarge. Quiet, understanding, and familiar with this situation. Stays with his men, and keeps them out of trouble. He watches. Now he's relaxed, but if the enemy hits, he's all steel, giving orders

calmly, taking care of "his" boys. Yet, in his eyes, although he's wiser than most of us, familiar with combat, I swear, there's a longing and need. The sarge, the guy who needs nothing and can do it all. The sarge, lonely just like the rest of us.

A cork is popped, a cheer of hoorays and everybody passes around the champagne. It's a cheap brand and yet its price-less. The sarge strikes up chords and says "Alright you guys, let's sing 'Jingle Bells'". We do, and feel a little better. We pass another bottle around. A short timer carves up a turkey we stole and everyone drools over it. We eat, drink, and talk about what the family's doing. We begin to laugh a little. We have faith in each other, and at that moment, we see each other as a group, a family. A family having a lousy Christmas, but is it? Again we sing.

"I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know."

After that, we just hummed it, because we've forgotten the words. This is followed by "Silent Night" and everyone silently thanks God for that Silent Night long ago, and for one tonight. We also pray that Charlie will lay off, for tonight anyway.

The Sarge surprised us all. That harsh voice that commands so easily, sings "What Child is This?" and we're amazed at the softness in his tone, the caress of the words on our hearts. He can sing. He believes in God. He believes in Man.

After this, we all sing, "We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." All of a sudden there is just gladness, no sadness. We're alive and in the Xmas Spirit. 10,000 miles from home we had one of the best, blessed, happiest and most memorable Christmases ever.

"Hey Jack, Merry Christmas!" "Same-same to you, Kris!" "Merry Christmas Lee!" "Merry Christmas Frank!" Then everybody joins in, Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas." And it is.

In all our faults and bad habits we're closer to God and each other than most, because we understand what it is to give, we've given a part of ourselves to and for just such occasions as this.

Would we do it again? Not on your life! On the other hand, we wouldn't trade it for the world.

Did we get drunk? Let's just say we had a party. What the heck, you ever spend a Christmas in a War ????

Doug Ayers 1968
RVN

Christmas 67

By: Bernard Bucholz
1876th Communications Squadron, Feb 67 - Feb 68

I spent Christmas 1967 at work in the 7th Air Force Command Post Comm. Center. Christmas greetings were going back and forth between the comm. centers on all the teletype circuits in addition to the normal traffic. Many people brought cookies, candy, and other edibles received from home to share. We also had received from the Red Cross or USO a couple of large mail bags full of Christmas cards from citizens from all over the USA and we enjoyed looking through them.

My Christmas Story

By: Joe Ingram
Hdqtrs 2nd Air Division
Jan 64 - Jan 65

Date: December 25, 1964. Time: 1000 hrs. Place: TSN. Gary March and I had just completed chow after 12 hours from the typing pool at the Air Operations Center. Bob Hope was there. We tried to find a decent seat but they were filled hours before. I remember the heat. After much searching I got the big idea to go to the stage corner and try there. Worked like a charm. We watched the show no more than fifteen feet from the stage. Bob made a joke about the VC giving him a big welcome by blowing out the front side of a BOQ downtown with a truck bomb the day before. The program was great. There were too many stars to remember. Although British born Bob Hope was a GREAT American. I often wonder what ever happened to Gary March? Merry Christmas to all of my Brothers and Sisters of our great association.

Veterans Day, 2018 in Washington D.C.

Saturday Morning it was sunny and dry, but a cold 26 degrees, when we started from Rochester, NY. We made pretty good time on our drive to Washington, D.C. As we got into the southern tier of NY and higher elevations, it started snowing. Suddenly we were in a blizzard with whiteout conditions. The plows hadn't been out yet and driving slowed to 25 to 40 mph, which changed our arrival time to an hour later. The weather cleared before the Pennsylvania border. The weather cleared, but then high winds picked up for a while. After seven hours on the road we made it to the hotel, before dark.

Sunday, Veterans Day, was a clear, sunny day with the weather in the 40's. John Bessette met us at the kiosk by the Wall, where the wreaths are gathered before the ceremonies. Diana, John and I proceeded down the walkway to the center of the Wall, where the seating was. We found the ten seats reserved for TSNA. Though we were the only ones from our group, we proudly sat while the ceremonies began. It started with the posting of the American flag, and the playing of the nation anthem and bagpipes.

Various speakers talked. It was the 25th anniversary of the Women's Memorial, and the theme seemed to center around our sisters, our women veterans. The event closed with the playing of Taps with a single Bugler. As the names of the many units were called, John and I presented the TSNA Wreath.

The trip back home was uneventful. I thought on the way back how it would have been nice to see our reserved seats with more TSNA members. I hope you all had a good Veterans Day and attended local events.

I have some pictures of TSNA with John and me. In one I am Giving a salute to Our missing sister, Carol Bessette.

Gary Redlinski
May 68—Jul 70
U. S. Army Mortuary



MORE ON THE "QUILTS OF VALOR" PROGRAM

Dear Larry,

In reading this latest issue of Revetments, I see our own President, Randall Brown received his Quilt of Valor, a well deserving honor. I congratulate him and all veterans that have been given a Quilt of Valor over the years.

It has been my quest to make sure ALL veterans from All Wars/Conflicts receive a Quilt of Valor. I pass out information at both of my Vietnam Reunions, Tan Son Nhut and Tuy Hoa with the hope that the number of Quilts of Valor grows. Please pass this message along to our Family at Tan Son Nhut.

Request by a group or by an individual can be made by contacting: www.govf.org/request-gov/

You may also arrange to have a Quilt(s) presented at the reunion if enough time is given.

Thank you,
George A. Bontya
TSN 1970-1971

(And here is some more info from George that TSNA members might be interested in:)

Quilts of Valor

For those that don't know what this organization is all about, let me give you some background. The idea that linking quilt-toppers with machine quilters in a national effort could achieve the 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,

en, 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 200,757 quilts have been awarded to our veterans.

Contact QOV: www.govf.org/request-gov/



Glen Ahrens "I'm in deep thought ... why does **Susie-Man Ahrens** get a bigger bowl than me?"

Susie-Man Ahrens "Why do you think I ordered in Vietnamese?"



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Five Year Membership: \$80.00
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**MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION**

November 27, 2018

Larry,

I just mailed a \$500.00 check to Andy that I got from donations on Facebook.

I want to thank all the donors for their contributions to our Scholarship Fund.

The donation period is still going on till December 15th. You can check me out on Facebook and donate.

Randall W Brown
TSNA President



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