



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



JULY 2020

IMPORTANT JULY DATES

JULY 4 INDEPENDENCE DAY
JULY 16, 1945 TRINITY TEST OF FIRST ATOMIC BOMB
JULY 21, 1969 FIRST MOON WALK BY NEIL ARMSTRONG AND BUZZ ALDRIN
JULY 26, 1990 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT SIGNED
JULY 27, 1953 KOREAN WAR ENDS

NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

I supported Crypto Communications for the 834th Air Division airlift ops throughout Vietnam. No battle experience. Volunteered for a number of MEDCAP OPS in and around the Saigon Area.

Toni M. Martino
1876th Comm. Sq.
Feb71—Jan 72

From the Editor:

In the May issue of Revetments, I made mention of a document that has some interesting info on it, but that it was on pink paper, and if you wanted it, contact me.

Harold Hunt, who sent that item to me, has asked me to be sure to insert the following in a future Revetments:

“the telegram was declassified on 10/21/75 (as noted in the upper right-hand corner and at the bottom of page 1) so that there’s no question of me releasing classified material without authorization?”

THAT WASHING MACHINE

By Richard Carvell
TSNA VP

Tan Son Nhut AB, 23 July 1970

What does it take to fix a washing machine? A Tech Sergeant named Williams and a little time.

On the initial orientation tour of the Sanctuary de Phu My for the new RITS Civic Action Officer, Captain Richard Carvell, another RITS member in the visiting

party, SSgt Lee R. Phillips, discovered that one of the three Phu My washing machines was out of order. How long the "out of order" sign had hung on the machine was an unanswered question. Mission: Fix the machine.

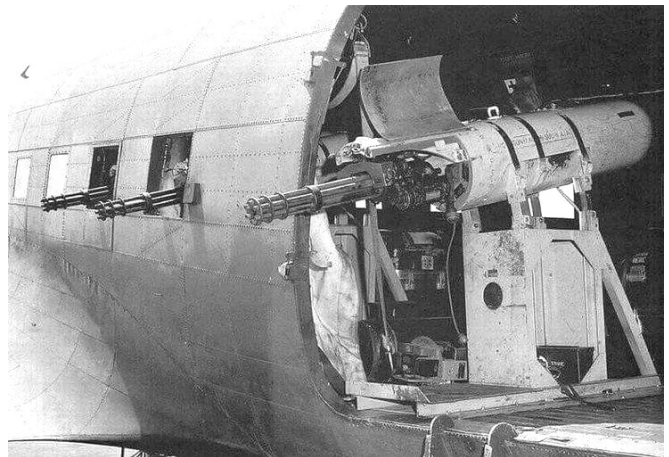
TSgt Joseph P. Williams was betting on a faulty timer switch after preliminary observations at the scene. But because he had more testing equipment and better repair facilities at the RITS, the maintenance NCOIC suggested bringing the machine here for a thorough check-out. And before the afternoon was over, the bugs were out of the washer. Literally!

Neatly tucked between two relays in the timer switch, TSgt Williams found a grasshopper. After the insect was evicted, the machine went through its cycles like a dream.

"They've got themselves a washer in good-as-new shape," commented the RITS Maintenance Chief. SSgt Phillips returned the washer to Phu My today.

Fixing it was a real international "incident": An American GI working on a Japanese model washing machine in a Vietnamese Sanctuary operated by French Roman Catholic Nuns.

(The above Carvell article from the January, 2008 Revetments).



IT IS BETTER TO GIVE THAN RECEIVE!!

Chaplain's Corner-The Honor Guard
By: Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

This occurred during the early stages of our Corona Virus scare and all of the resulting restrictions on our normal activities. Locally we have a group of Veterans calling ourselves The Eagles that typically meet on Tuesday evenings at the group founder's home and then decide where we will go eat. After discussion of where we should go is settled we would head out to the selected restaurant, eat, enjoy each other's company, tell stories (are you shocked that we would tell stories) and generally solve world problems. As I said this would typically occur every Tuesday.

The group's founder, Don, a Vietnam Vet, was in the 1st Cav at a base camp. This was relatively early during the war, slept in tents, worried about sappers every night, etc. Most men of the Eagles group are Vietnam vets including Army, Marines and Air Force. Others are Vietnam Era vets, one guarded B-52's with nukes in the tropical winters of North Dakota, another retired Air Force officer tasked the B-52 bombing runs from Guam, another was a chopper pilot for the Navy Seals, etc. We even have a few non vets as members that are friends and were involved in defense work during Vietnam. Recently we even let a bit younger guy who lived on subs join the group, but I digress.

Don recently passed away, about a month after he got sick. They could never figure out exactly what was wrong with him, no virus, but he passed relatively quickly. He was considered disabled due to Agent Orange complications. Of course with all of the restrictions on visiting, etc., he pretty much was alone in his hospital room and that was quite depressing. His wife of 53 years had some medical issues at the time and even she could not visit. It was a terrible time for an outgoing, loving and great guy.

Don was a cartoonist, he spent many of his days in the hospital, when feeling well enough, drawing personalized cartoons and giving them to the nurses and staff. It affected all of us, and of course his family, very deeply when Don passed. Attendance at funerals was prohibited, even strict limitations at the cemetery. He was buried at Camp Nelson National Cemetery in Kentucky, the home of thousands of civil war graves, including many unknown men, plus graves of other veterans up until the present time.

Our group of Eagles, and other men from Church, did the only thing we could. We stood in the rain at the gate of the cemetery, obeying social distancing, and saluted as Don and his family passed. If we would have gone to the grave site the funeral home would have had their license in jeopardy according to the governor. It was extremely emotional for all of us and the family with all of the restrictions in place. Don's wife said she was doing pretty well until she saw us at the gate and then she lost it. A picture showing some of the 23 men honoring Don is below.

So what can we learn from this story? First when circumstances are not normal figure out a way to help and honor our friends and their families, they are worth our time and effort. Second, and more important, get right with God! **Don knew what awaited him. His pain is gone and he is celebrating in Heaven at this moment.**

A couple of Don's cartoons are below; look closely, they are typical of his work. He would usually have a personal cartoon drawn for our server on the back of a placement before we were brought our food on Tuesday evenings. Additionally there is a picture of Don and a portion of the Honor Guard. He will be missed, but we will see him again.



Weather Support at Tan Son Nhut
By Dale Bryan
TSNA Secretary

All of us are concerned with, inquire about, and wonder about the weather. Will it be warm tomorrow? Will a snow storm keep me home from work tomorrow? Why did the temperature drop so suddenly this afternoon?

When you initially saw the title of this article, I can imagine your thoughts and silent response. Who needed a weather forecast in Vietnam? We all knew it was going to be (or stay) hot. We all knew that during the wet season it rained everyday. How did weather forecasters and observers contribute to the mission in Vietnam?

Remember history; weather impacts military operations. The Invincible Armada was defeated as much by weather as by the English. Weather conditions favorable to General Washington made his crossing of the Delaware a success and he was victorious at Trenton. D-Day was executed only after General Eisenhower had a favorable forecast. Yeah, but that kind of weather never occurred in Vietnam! No strong winds outside of a typhoon. No rivers to cross in winter. No waves and tides to consider. The last time tides were considered was likely at Inchon in Korea.

Ask anyone who has been there; Tan Son Nhut Air Base was always buzzing with activity. Lots of flight operations; it was the busiest airport in the World when most of us were associated with the place. An aircraft operates in the atmosphere where the weather impacts its operation at all levels. Even what the weather does at ground level is important. Anyone who worked with the RF-4 knows that it had a propensity to hydroplane on a wet runway. Operations at 460th TRW had to know in advance when a heavy rain shower was going to occur. That's where base weather came on the scene. We had weather radar and could "see" the thunderstorms moving toward the base. Reconnaissance Operations Center (ROC) was notified, and an aircraft might recover at Bien Hoa instead of Tan Son Nhut. When I say weather radar, it was not like that seen on television today. We had a monochrome (one color) display of echoes in yellow on a black background. No "movies" to depict storm motion. We used a grease pencil to mark cells on the glass overlay of the screen and had to estimate motion.

A significant operation at Tan Son Nhut was aircraft fueling, and it had to be suspended when lightning was within three miles of the airport. How did those who fueled aircraft determine how far away the lightning they observed was from them? They called base weather. We had the radar and attempted to pinpoint the "cells" or thunderstorm centers. The correlation of cell echo intensity maximum on radar and the location of lightning is not a perfect correlation, but it was all we had. How much easier our job would have been had we had lightning detectors like those I worked with 20 years later in the late 80's.

Every aircraft that filed an instrument flight plan (IFR was the term used) had to have a weather briefing and a form signed by a forecaster, and it was filed with the other paperwork. Every Military Airlift Command (MAC) aircraft that came through Tan Son Nhut had to have a formal weather briefing before departing. The Scatback's needed weather briefings. A T-39 courier flight with multiple stops required a weather form with many air base terminal forecast entries. A challenging weather briefing was for C-118 flights to Katmandu, Nepal. There were no terminal forecasts issued for Katmandu, so we had to make the forecast ourselves. That is not an easy task considering we had never been there. Forecasts for Calcutta, India were available, so we gave that as an alternate. Why the flights to Katmandu? Ambassador Bunker's wife was the ambassador to Nepal, and he was flown for a visit approximately every six weeks.

We in the Air Weather Service (AWS) were tenants at Tan Son Nhut. In fact, we were tenants everywhere we worked. AWS, a subcommand of MAC, was divided into wings with each supporting a major air command. 1st Weather Wing supported PACAF and was headquartered at Hickam AFB, HI. Wings were divided into squadrons that supported a numbered air force. 30th Weather Squadron of 1st Weather Wing supported 7th Air Force and was at Tan Son Nhut. Under squadrons were detachments at the local base level. I was in Detachment 2, 30th Weather Squadron, base weather at Tan Son Nhut. There is a bit more to this run-down of AWS bureaucracy. AWS supported the U.S. Army, a throwback to the days when the Air Force was part of the Army. There was also the 5th Weather Squadron at Tan Son Nhut, and it supported all Army operations in Vietnam. A third squadron supported USAF operations at the bases in Thailand, and all three of the squadrons were part of 1st Weather Group at Tan Son Nhut. Best thing about being at Tan Son Nhut with 1st Weather Group: We had great monthly commander's call with good barbecue and cold beer. Now a "war story".

My initial orders for Vietnam had me slated to be commander of an operating location of 5th Weather Squadron at Cu Chi to support the 25th Infantry Division. My initial response: I went to college to keep from

being drafted to end up in the infantry! While in college, I signed up for ROTC, and to make sure I would not end up an infantry officer, I chose Air Force ROTC. Of course, I ended up at Tan Son Nhut, not Cu Chi. Why? My assignment before Vietnam was at a weather detachment that supported a Minuteman Missile wing, and as the wing weather officer to the missile wing, I held a high level security clearance and was not allowed in the field to support an infantry unit immediately after supporting SAC. That's how I ended up at Tan Son Nhut. No complaints.

Upon arriving at Tan Son Nhut, the commander of Detachment 2 met me at the terminal. He said, "You will not necessarily stay here. You will be sent to a detachment that needs forecasters." Truth be known, all detachments were short of forecasters. We then proceeded to 30th Weather Squadron to allow me to be introduced to the squadron commander. Upon arrival in the colonel's office, the detachment commander said, "I found this lieutenant at the terminal; can I keep him?" The colonel looked at a board on the wall, studied it for a couple of minutes, and then said, "You can keep him." I felt wanted and needed.

During most of my tenure at TSN, I worked at 460th TRW in the intelligence area. I needed the security clearance that kept me away from Cu Chi to work there. Weather must be considered when selecting "targets" or areas for taking aerial photos. Radar can "see" through clouds, but visible or infrared cameras are useless when there is a solid cloud cover below the aircraft. Also briefed and debriefed the flight crews about weather conditions. Many of the "targets" were in North Vietnam where we had no routine weather observations or forecasts. We could not just call up "Hanoi Weather Center" and ask for weather conditions north of the DMZ. We had to make our own forecasts. Pilot debriefs and a few passes each day from the weather satellites that existed then were the only weather data available over the north. No satellite "movies" as seen on TV today.

This has been a short discourse of weather support at Tan Son Nhut. There were good times, and there were some very sad and trying times. The saddest occurred while supporting 460th. Approximately eight missions did not return during my time supporting them. Nothing compares to the gloom felt by all present when announcement of a mission not returning was made.

My time at Tan Son Nhut occurred during the beginning of a long, rewarding career in aviation weather and safety. Lessons learned there have been applied to trying situations in later years. I'm proud for many reasons to be privileged to identify myself as a Vietnam veteran.

THE ABOVE ARTICLE IS FROM THE JANUARY, 2008 ISSUE OF REVETMENTS. THANKS DALE!

From Jerry D. Jenkins, Jun 68 - Jun 69, 1st Civil Engineering Group (Red Horse)

Although I made many attempts to anticipate community care transition issues from the CHOICE Program to Mission Act, I had maddening bureaucratic runaround at SFVAMC for the past few months regarding continued community care. When I returned from TSNA Reunion LR, I received notice no more treatments would be authorized (Max 53) until re-evaluation by SFVAMC Pain Management Team (next available appointment Dec 4, 2019). I hung up and called the 855#. I received My Healthy Vet messenger that 12 Chiropractic visits are authorized, that was within 3 hours after making a call to the WH # 855.948.2311.

Hopefully future discussion will lead to more awareness of PL 106-475 Veterans Claims Assistance Act, and how VA docs can help vets document medical records, or provide Nexus letters from Specialty Clinic doctors (Surgery, GI, Orthopedic), to show an element of a 50% more than likely chance of the condition claimed being caused by the service injury at the level requested for disability. This should help VSO personnel create a fully developed claim with a better opportunity for first try success. It may cause the VHA to focus a bit more on the overruling condition/secondary condition creating symptoms for vets too. For example, Agent Orange, combat, JP4/8, or injury during surgery.

Veterans Experience Office (VEO)

<https://www.va.gov/ve/whvaHotline.asp>

White House VA Hotline

[1-855-948-2311](tel:1-855-948-2311).



HOW I STRUCK MY PERSONAL BLOW AGAINST COMMUNISM (INADVERTENTLY)

By Hal Hunt
Civilian Contractor w/MACV&RVN JT.GEN. STAFF

After the stand-down and departure of U.S. and friendly forces from Vietnam, what I think had been the USAF Officers' Mess on the military side of Tan-Son-Nhut was converted to a mess hall for the members of the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS). This was not the notorious VNAF "Officers Club" on the Base that was reputed to be a Nguyen-Cao-Ky "enterprise". That establishment was converted to a casino after the U.S. forces departed.

The original member countries of the ICCS were Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, and Poland. However, Canada withdrew after a Canadian officer was killed when an ICCS Air Services helicopter operated by Air America was shot down on April 7, 1973. Canada's replacement on the ICCS was Iran. The ICCS Headquarters was at Tan-Son-Nhut. Also, my recollection is that ICCS Air Services was based at Tan-Son-Nhut.

Since the membership of the ICCS comprised four different nationalities, that meant four chefs in the kitchen cooking for four different menus at the same time. One can only guess at the struggles that took place over who got what priorities for the freezers, refrigerators, stoves, ovens, and grills in the single kitchen. After preparation, the food was placed in a single buffet style self-service line but there were four dining areas segregated by nationality as well as an area with tables for guests and other outsiders.

The Vietnamese Armed Forces Joint General Staff (JGS) had taken over the computer center that previously housed the MACV Data Management Agency (DMA). I was assigned there as an Advisor to the Vietnamese Army Colonel in command. On days when workload permitted and I felt adventurous, I would go over to the ICCS Mess for an international lunch – maybe, for example, some Indonesian chicken and noodles with Polish sausage and a ladle of Hungarian goulash.

On the day I struck my blow there was one of my favorites, wonderfully sticky candied red beets, on the line so I filled one of the compartments in my metal mess tray with a liberal serving of them.

The ICCS Mess didn't serve alcoholic beverages (at least not openly) but there was a cooler full of canned soft drinks next to a sideboard counter with condiments and tableware. In those days, soft drink cans didn't have tabs and opening one required punching a hole or holes in the top with a triangular sharp-edged opener. For convenience, one of those openers was attached to the sideboard with a lever-style handle so that the can could be placed under it and easily opened.

I carried my now filled mess tray over to the cooler, selected a soft drink, and placed it on the tray. Then I moved to the sideboard next to the cooler and placed the tray with the side holding the drink can on the top of the sideboard. I placed my right hand on the can opener lever and reached to pick up the drink can with my left hand.

Just then a gentleman who appeared to be a senior officer in either the Hungarian or Polish ICCS delegation walked up to the sideboard on my left side. Although the ICCS delegates usually wore fatigues, this individual was wearing his formal dress white uniform complete with sword and was obviously heading to some important meeting or other event. I didn't realize he was approaching from behind me on my left as I lifted my drink can off my tray. The space available on the sideboard was not big enough for my tray bottom entirely. When I picked up my drink with the weight off the tray it flipped over to my left just as the officer in dress whites reached the sideboard. I heard an exclamation, turned around and saw a white uniform with a large deposit of sticky red beet juice all over the front of the jacket. The officer stood there speechless, but his face was rapidly turning the same color as the beet juice.

Having lost several good friends or acquaintances in country, I had no appreciation for or even tolerance of Communism. Assuming this guy understood English, I didn't want to engage in any discussion, so I said "Lo siento mucho, senior." in my best high school Spanish, picked up my tray, walked over to the nearest guest table, left my tray on it, and returned to work.

So that was how I inadvertently struck my personal blow against Communism.

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Photo courtesy of George Greenwood
Dec 66 - Dec 67 460th FMS Airframe Repairman



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