



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



JUNE 2020

EDITOR'S NOTE: Just as I was finishing up the May Revetments, I received word that TSNA had lost another member.

Terry Moore was a member of TSNA since 2009. I have received a number of calls from him over the last 10+ years.

The most recent call (on March 28th) was for him to get the correct email address so his wife could send out the notification of his death to TSNA.

Here is some other info from his obituary:

Terry Glynn Moore, 76, entered into eternal rest April 19, 2020 in Slidell, LA. Terry was born on June 12, 1943 in Lewisburg, TN. He passed away of pancreatic cancer.

He is survived by his wife; a son; and a daughter, as well as numerous other relatives.

Terry retired from Charleston Naval Shipyard in 1995 where he worked as a warehouseman and as a pipe-fitter. After moving to Slidell in 1996, he worked at Gallagher Moving and Storage in New Orleans for several years. But the job he was most proud of was the four years he spent in the United States Air Force. He was trained as a radio repairman specializing in the F-4 fighter jet. While in the Air Force he was stationed at several air bases in the states and did a tour of Vietnam in 1968-1969. He was stationed at Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base in Saigon during the Tet Offensive of 1968. He was a member of the Tan Son Nhut Association of Vietnam Veterans.

“Mr. Terry” was a familiar figure around town, often stopping at one of the local Waffle Houses for a glass of tea or a cup of coffee. He always had time to talk to people and wish them “good day.”



Chaplain's Corner

One day I was reading a passage in Exodus that I had read a number of times in the past, but noticed something that had never struck me until that day. Exodus 30:37-38 talks about the priests making incense for the Lord.

Sometimes Exodus is a hard read. It contains lots of details about the tabernacle including dimensions of all articles, the quantity of things like curtains, how many clasps to hold the curtains, how to build the altar, etc. It is easy to get lost in the details and miss what God has put there just for you.

That was the case with these two verses. The verses leading up to these verses gives very specific instruction for the priest to make the incense they are to burn to worship God. The verse gives a serious warning, “But of the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves according to this composition”, Exodus 30:37

It goes on to say this particular incense composition, is Holy to the Lord. If you make some for yourself because you like the smell you will be cut off from the people. This particular incense is for the Lord only.

So that made we think, what else do we take that is the Lord's? How about time, do we spend time with the Lord in prayer and in the scriptures or waste it on things that do not matter such as social media? Do we listen for the Lord's small still voice to speak to us, or are we so busy we do not have time to listen for the Lord's instruction?

Do we make other things an idol? An idol is a substitute for God. How about money and other things? Are they the center of our lives and activities? Personally, over time money and things are much less important than my family and more significant activities. That includes God, plus helping and loving others.

As we age let's make wise use of our time to help others, enjoy our family and be thankful to God for all he has given us. God's scriptures can help us make wise use of our time.

Andy Csordas, TSNA Associate Chaplain

FACTS ABOUT MY ARTIFACTS

By: Gary Monahan
Jul 67 - Jul 68
58th and 110th Transportation Company

I served my tour of duty in Vietnam from July of 1967 to July of 1968 at the Tan Son Nhut Air Base located just outside of Saigon in the Gia Dinh Province. I served with the 58th and the 110th Transportation units and was billeted at the "Tent City B" complex located behind MACV Headquarters. During my time there I endured, along with many others, numerous Rocket and Mortar attacks, Viet Cong infiltrations of our perimeters, late night guard duties, countless trips driving trucks from the airbase to Long Binh and Bien Hoa, and was a member of "Task Force 35 Army One" during the January 31st 1968 TET offensive. Upon my return back to the world and my subsequent discharge from Military service in February, 1969 I re-assimilated back into civilian life and like many others, didn't talk much about the war and my participation in it. In the early to mid-1980's we Vietnam Veterans began to receive our just due for our service to our country during that war. A lot late but better late than never. I began to associate with and trade stories with my fellow vets and began to collect artifacts from the war, some of which I received from a very close friend who was there as well. Attached are a couple of pictures of just a few of those items...I hope you find them as interesting as I have.

The belts displayed in this frame are very rare. They were worn by communist soldiers during the Vietnam War. The rarest is the top belt which was most probably a belt worn by the Laotian Communists, referred to as the "Pathet Lao". The belt second from the bottom is an NVA Officers belt and is made of plastic. The remaining belts are NVA regular belts two of which are fashioned from US Military web belts with NVA buckles affixed.



HAND MADE VIETNAMESE ELITE MILITARY INSIGNIA

TRINH SAT means RECONNAISSANCE in Vietnamese. The warriors who qualified to wear the insignia were the ELITE of the ELITE. Most of their insignia design included tigers, bats, skulls with cross bones. Many times parachutes are represented to identify insertion from the air skills.

The insignia are identified by numbers one (1) through ten (10), left to right:

1. Is a pocket patch worn below the flap of the right pocket. It was worn by the ARVN BDQ, or the Vietnamese Army Commandos (Rangers).
2. Is a shoulder patch for the 173rd ABN Brigade (SEPARATE). Many CVMs (American Advisors) came from the 173rd.
3. Is a Reconnaissance pocket insignia of unknown origin. Best guess, is the 9th Nhay du(VN ABN).
4. This a very rare insignia, much sought by collectors. "Quyét tu" (prepared to die). It has a close association with 8, in mission and rarity. They dove-tailed into the US lead MIKE FORCE, but they preferred to operate outside of the jurisdiction of the American Command structure.
5. ARVN combat intelligence specialists with ABN skills. The black parachute signifies (Intelligence authority).....add the recon tiger and the enemy would prefer not to be there.
6. LLDB the VN Special Forces.....they ran hot and cold in recon.....depended who the higher ups were trying to protect in their family.
7. "MANH HO" (big mean hell to meet tiger) was an outstanding VN Navy (or VN Marines) recon organization.
8. "DON VI THAM SAT" were small recon units that made regular BAD seem like a GOOD DAY for the enemy.....if any of them were left to tell about their encounter.
9. "LUC LUONG THAM SAT" (National umbrella for individual province LLTS units).
10. LLTS for QUANG NGAI Province.....QUANG NGAI, BINH DINH and PHU YEN bordered on each other and had a very heavy concentration of MAIN FORCE VIET CONG and NORTH VIETNAM ARMY CADRE.....These Provinces were given a lot of special attention by units not represented in this frame, including PHUNG HOANG (Phoenix)



At the top left of the frame is a Mike Force (Mobile Strike Force Command) insignia which was worn by Montagnard Soldiers our friends and dedicated allies during the war who deserve our undying appreciation.

CIRCUS OF THE ABSURD, by James O'Leary

The driver had that old Army bus cranked up well beyond its capabilities as we careened down the road from the 90th replacement camp to the Bien Hoa airfield. It was a very different ride from the more leisurely trip down this road that I had made upon my arrival in Vietnam. This high-speed run was taking place well after dark, on a night with very little moonlight. The only splashes of light in the night sky came from fiery artillery shells arcing toward their targets and flares illuminating the perimeters around nearby US and ARVN defensive positions. The only sounds were the groan of the bus engine being over-stressed, the whistle of artillery rounds overhead, small arms fire, and distant bombing runs.

Our little convoy consisted of a military bus with one jeep in front and another in the back. Each Jeep had three occupants—a driver, a passenger armed with an M-16, and a third guy manning a machine gun mounted behind the front seats. Only the jeep in front had its headlights on.

The mission—make the trip through hardcore remnants of the NVA and VC armies that were being driven out of Saigon; and, do it without getting the unarmed passengers shot or blown-up. Being one of those unarmed passengers, I was certainly rooting for a successful outcome.

Aboard the bus, we all hunkered down in our seats to avoid making an attractive target for any unseen snipers. Of course, there was the inevitable grumbling and second-guessing, regarding the wisdom of putting us on this bus without giving each of us a weapon in case we came under attack and were forced to fight our way out. After all, killing a busload of unarmed US soldiers on their way home would be great PR for the other side and a demoralizing blow to our side, especially for those of us who would be the victims in this little scenario. Nobody wants to die or be severely wounded, especially on his last day in-country.

Several days earlier, one of the guys in USARV personnel gave me the news that they were going to attempt to move some new troops in and old ones out. He arranged for a jeep to take me over to the 90th, so I would be one of the first guys out of this shooting gallery, whenever they decided to gamble on restarting the flights.

After three or four days at the 90th, a formation was held and my name was on a list of those who would finally be heading back to the real world. We were told that they had a plan to try to get us out of Bien Hoa that night. I let the words plan and try to slide off my brain. I'd been around long enough to know that whenever an officer or noncom tells you that the undefined, they have a plan, watch out, because it almost always turns into a humongous problem.

There were probably fewer than thirty or forty guys making the trip. Fortunately, on this particular night, "Charlie" was busy with other more pressing issues like trying to stay alive, looking for a way out of the hellish situation he was in, or lying in a ditch bleeding out on his own personal journey into oblivion. Our wild bus ride came to a successful end as we barreled through the gates and into the defensive envelope of the Bien Hoa Air Base without any incidents involving death or dismemberment. Once inside the perimeter, everyone pretty much agreed that maybe—just maybe—the pinheads who came up with the drive fast in the dark plan got it right...this time.

We spent the next couple of hours lounging on the tarmac in a holding area near the main runway. Just behind us, members of an artillery battery were hard at work, blasting their way through one fire mission after another. Aside from the seemingly endless stream of fiery projectiles soaring into the night on their way to various map coordinates, the entire air base appeared to be shrouded in darkness. Even the runway lights were turned off.

There was a lot of speculation regarding how our exit from Vietnam was going to be handled. Some figured it wouldn't be on a commercial jetliner, since our group didn't constitute anywhere near a full load for one of those big troop planes. Others thought that maybe they just couldn't get their stuff together at the 90th and cobbled this group together at the last minute. The guesses were all over the place from plausible to idiotic.

Although, I think one guy hit it right on the head, when he said, "I've been sitting at the 90th for over two weeks and this morning's formation was the first one that had anything to do with getting out of here. You know what we are? We're the lab rat brigade. You know, the rats they use in laboratories to see if a new drug works or kills you before trying it on humans. They don't know if their brilliant plan is going to work or not. That's why there aren't very many of us going on this trip. I'll bet there are about the same number of replacements on the in-coming flight. If the NVA scores a rocket or RPG hit on that plane on the way in or out, the death toll will be far less than a hundred...a number that will easily get lost in the noise level of this offensive."

The lab rat brigade...I had to admit, it made sense.

The more pessimistic among us were beginning to bitch about the likelihood of an Army screw-up that would leave us spending the entire night squatting on this patch of tarmac, when a couple of noncoms appeared out of the darkness—one Air Force the other Army. "Time to get off your backsides and get yourself together! You

are about to get the hell out of here!” yelled the Army sergeant. He then turned our meeting over to the airman.

“OK fellas, here’s what’s gonna happen. There’s a 707 on the way in. When he starts his landing approach, we’ll flip on the runway lights. Once he’s on the ground and rolling toward us, the lights will be turned off. We don’t want to give the VC a chance to get a bead on that plane, so things are going to be moving fast. You have to be ready to go the minute we give the order.”

He then went on to fill us in on the high-speed boarding operation that was about to take place. The 707 was NOT going to stop. It would roll by us at walk speed. You’ve probably seen those airline stairways that they roll out to permit aircraft boarding when no permanent ramps are available. Just beyond where we were clustered stood two of those stairways on wheels. Each was manned by a couple of airmen. As our ride rolled by, these portable stairways would be pushed alongside the plane to stay even with the front and back entry hatches. The new troops would be coming out the back hatch, while we would be running onto the plane through the front hatch.

What could possibly go wrong with this plan?

Not long after that speech, the artillery fell silent and we could hear the muted roar of the 707 jet engines in the distance.

Suddenly, the landing lights came on and the pride of Boeing’s commercial aircraft fleet swooped in and down the runway. The lights flicked off as the plane lumbered toward us. The artillery started firing again and the adrenaline started pumping.

The hatches opened and the new guys came pouring out of the back hatch and down the moving stairs. We began trotting toward the front hatch and our own stairway out of Vietnam. As the two groups passed one another, the close proximity created a stunning dichotomy. On one side were the fresh troops in laundered fatigues, looking like frightened cattle being herded into a slaughterhouse. The fear in their eyes and demeanor was palpable, as they desperately tried to process the chaotic sights and sounds of war. Their first closeup look at our group also had to be a disturbing sight—hardened veterans in grimy jungle fatigues, some only partially clothed, others sporting bloody bandages, and all giving the new guys appraising stares.

Adding to their misery was the cascade of “welcoming” catcalls and jeers from some members of our departing group.

“Chaaarrrreee!” was shouted over and over. The word was stretched out in a high-pitched scream that served to further unnerve the new arrivals. Most of them probably didn’t know that it was a favorite grunt term used to describe virginal newcomers to war, who have yet to attain the dubious distinction of having been shot at.

“Welcome to the Nam” yelled some, with more than a touch of sarcasm in their voices.

There were also other more personal gibes, “Gimme your girlfriend’s phone number! I’ll take care of her for you...just the way you did mine!”

As I mentally processed this display of barely controlled animosity, the moving stairway loomed in front of me. My focus shifted from the new arrivals to charging up those stairs and into the plane. The stewards kept shouting, “Grab a seat...any seat and strap yourself in!” I dived into an open row, taking the window seat. The back hatch slammed shut as the last of the new guys left the aircraft. The front door was closed shortly thereafter and the plane sped up, heading for the runway.

Once on the runway, the pilot made a momentary stop to rev-up the engines. The runway lights popped on and we began hurtling down that ribbon of asphalt. The entire unloading and loading process couldn’t have taken more than three or four minutes.

Almost immediately after I felt the wheels leave the ground, the pilot did something that I really didn’t think could be accomplished in a commercial airliner. He had us on a trajectory that wasn’t far off from straight up. That aircraft was powering out of there at about a 60-degree angle with the engines at full blast. We were at cruising altitude in a matter of seconds. The plane leveled out far above the range of any rocket, RPG or machinegun fire, and we were on our way. The pilot came on the intercom and delivered a very understated message that drew an immediate round of applause and cheers, “Welcome aboard, next stop the REAL WORLD. So, sit back and enjoy the trip.”

I don’t know how much the civilian crew of this contract airline was being paid to make the high-risk flight into a hot war zone, but they deserved every penny and more. Given the pilot’s willingness to test the limits of Boeing Aircraft’s engineering prowess, I suspect that he was an ex-military aviator. They tend to have an irrational belief in their ability to make an aircraft do anything they want—until the wings fall off.

The young women of the cabin crew were not only extremely brave and professional, they were also warm, caring, and sensitive to the harsh conditions from which these men had just emerged. The stewards were not dealing with anywhere near a full load of passengers, so they had some time to either sit in their crew seats and relax or spend that time talking with many young guys who hadn’t had an opportunity to carry on a civilized conversation with a pretty English speaking woman in over a year. Much to everyone’s delight, they chose the

latter approach.

Throughout the first leg of the journey, the stewards circulated through the cabin, serving real milk (almost impossible to get in Vietnam), soft drinks, and snacks, while always taking the time to sit and spend a few minutes with anyone who needed to talk. All the while, these pretty, sweet smelling women never let on how bad we smelled or how disheveled we looked.

Water for showering became nonexistent shortly after the onset of the Tet Offensive. All potable water was reserved for drinking and minimal bodily clean-ups. Imagine that lack of water for personal hygiene, coupled with extremely hot and humid tropical weather; living and working in the same sweat soaked fatigues every day for a month; and, in some instances, crawling through buffalo dung to get where you needed to be. Add to that the stench of death, rot, and burned flesh that permeated our clothes, skins, and the air around us; and you can imagine how gamy this group was. I'm sure there were moments when those women were fighting their gag reflexes, while appearing to be interested in what was being said.

We landed in Okinawa to refuel, resupply, and change crews. During our refueling stop in Japan on the way to Vietnam, we were not allowed to deplane. This time, there were no concerns that someone might not want to get back aboard. This time, we were headed in the right direction. So, we were allowed to get off the plane, stretch our legs, and smoke a cigarette or suck up a little weed.

Our group was clustered together, loitering in a wide terminal walkway near the spot where our plane was being serviced, when I had a real eye-opening experience. I was talking with an older noncom, when I looked over towards an adjoining walkway. Civilians were stopping and staring at us with shocked and even terrified expressions. They looked like extras in an old horror movie, where the villagers cringe at the first sight of the invading aliens or have just witnessed a mass murder.

When I pointed out the effect we seemed to be having on the people staring at us, he looked at the gawkers and in a matter-of-fact tone said, "They're civilians. They've probably never seen an army coming off a battlefield. Look around. We're not very pretty. The major difference between us and our enemies is we're alive and they're not."

As I turned to look at my companions, I realized that the sergeant was right. These were not guys you would want to run into in a dark alley. This unsavory bunch would even be scary looking in a well-lit alley. There was one skinny kid with a head laceration that was bandaged, but the bandage was dirty and sported a rather large bloodstain. Another had an arm in a sling, with only a t-shirt and a pair of fatigue pants for a uniform. There were several other "walking wounded" who also appeared to be pretty nicked up. In general, we all looked like we had been living under a bridge or in a dumpster for a very long time.

I'm sure the civilians were relieved when our band of barbarians climbed back aboard the aircraft for our flight across the Pacific to San Francisco.

As I sat back in my seat, listening to the impossible to discern words being spoken in whispered conversations, I couldn't help but wonder if any of them had been with me aboard that flight over a year ago—The flight that brought a planeload of uninitiated young kids in their late teens and early twenties into a fiery crucible that would dramatically change their being down to an almost cellular level. What about Mr. Philly and Cletus? Did they make it or had they returned home in body bags or via medivac flights, longing for their missing or irreparably damaged parts?

Deep down, I knew it really didn't matter whether any of my fellow passengers had been aboard that earlier flight. Those guys no longer existed. The men on this flight were very different from those on that long ago flight. In real time, it may have been only a year and a few weeks past, but for these men it was more like a lifetime ago.

You'd think that a bunch of young guys who had just left the rigors of a war-ravaged country and were well on their way back to civilization and home would be in a boisterous mood and relish a party-like atmosphere. Nothing could be further from the reality of this trip. It was almost dead quiet. Some carried on low volume conversations. Some slept. Others, like me, simply stared out the window into the almost total darkness of the sky over the Pacific. I didn't really want to go back home. There was nothing there for me. Maybe I should have declined the Colonel's offer and insisted that he sign the 1049, allowing me to extend and move on to the Fifth Special Forces headquarters. I was somehow in my element in Vietnam and felt comfortable there. I still had six months ahead of me in the stateside military and it would probably suck, even if I was going to the Pentagon.

Images of Jeannie stealthily crept back into my consciousness. I could almost feel her soft caresses and warm kisses. Although the desire to slip back into the arms of that beautiful and very sensual woman was almost irresistible, a more sensible thought slammed into my mind. You've already hurt her once with that insensitive and horribly inarticulate "Dear Jane" note. It wasn't long enough to be called a letter. It was more of an, "It's over. Get on with your life. Goodbye and good luck," grenade. She has probably found someone new, who

treats her far better than I did. And, whoever that new guy was, he probably didn't have an agenda that would put her back on hold for who knows how long. While I would certainly love to snatch her into my arms and restart our relationship where it left off thirteen months earlier, it wouldn't be fair. I would only disappear again in a few weeks, heading for Washington, DC. Six months later, if all went according to plan, I would be mustered out of the Army and free to find a gig working for a news syndicate that would send me back to Vietnam and the war I had grown to love—with all its uncertainties, danger, and dissolute pursuits.

As I ruminated about potentially missed opportunities, bad choices, and my ambivalence about rejoining the real world I dug into the recesses of my wallet to pull out the little photo of Jeannie that I couldn't bring myself to discard when I cut her out of my life. I gazed at it for a while, tucked it back into its safe place, and drifted off to sleep.

I awoke to the pilot announcing that we would soon be landing in San Francisco. We had been warned at the 90th that we would have to go through customs when we arrived back in the states. So, we were advised to dump any weed, heroin, opium, weapons, ammunition, or other contraband prior to boarding our flight home. Walking up the aisle to deplane, I amused myself wondering how much good stuff the cleanup crew would find stuffed in various nooks and crannies of this aircraft.

Those who did dump their goodies, needn't have worried. They could have deplaned with a duffle bag full of dope and enough weapons to start a war. There wasn't a gauntlet of customs inspectors or any other guardians of the government gates awaiting our arrival.

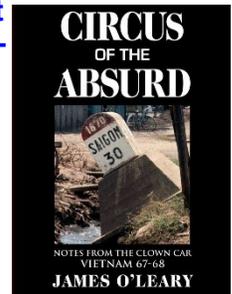
Our aircraft came to a stop at a non-gate toward one end of the passenger terminal. We were quickly hustled off the plane and through a largely empty area of the building to a military bus. As we scurried through the terminal, I glanced down the hall and saw why the government had dispensed with any re-entry formalities. There was a phalanx of well-armed MPs down that hall, keeping civilians in the terminal from getting a good look at us. I'm sure LBJ and the rest of the folks that made up the highest echelons didn't want civilians, especially those with cameras, to see and potentially record what, as that noncom put it, "an army coming off a battlefield" really looks like.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The preceding story is from a Vietnam Veteran, although he is not a member of TSNA. I saw this, I believe, on Facebook and contacted him for permission to use it.

This is an excerpt—Chapter 41, of his book titled: "Circus of The Absurd":

Jim sent it to me after reading my account of leaving Tan Son Nhut back in 1962

How about writing about your account of Vietnam?? I need articles!!



ON TO TUCSON - IN 2021



The Board of Directors of the Tan Son Nhut Association have voted and approved a motion to "Keep ON with TucSON!!"

Obviously, it's time to say, "Stay Tuned for Further Information."

IMPORTANT DAYS FOR JUNE!

- JUNE 4, 1942 BATTLE OF MIDWAY BEGINS
- JUNE 5, 1947 MARSHALL PLAN CREATED FOR EUROPEAN RECOVERY
- JUNE 6, 1944 D DAY
- JUNE 14, 1916 FLAG DAY ESTABLISHED
- JUNE 14, 1775 US ARMY ESTABLISHED
- JUNE 22, 1944 GI BILL SIGNED
- JUNE 25, 1942 EISENHOWER TAKES COMMAND OF US FORCES IN EUROPE
- JUNE 25, 1950 KOREAN WAR BEGAN.

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Annual Membership: \$20.00
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I don't know who took this or whatever, but found it interesting.

NEW MEMBER

Norman J. Blake, Durham, NC njulianblake@hotmail.com. Apr 72 - Mar 73 310th TAS and MACDO-225

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