



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



AUGUST 2022

Tan Son Nhut Reunions

By Andy Csordas

In 2009 I had just had both knees scoped and was pretty much confined to my recliner for a few days. Boredom set in quite quickly and I just started plugging random search terms into the internet. One of the things I entered was Tan Son Nhut.

The Tan Son Nhut Association came up and as I looked at items on the website I found a place to send an email for more information. George Plunkett was the President at the time and he very quickly sent an email back. He mentioned, among other things, that there was a Reunion coming up soon in Pigeon Forge, TN.

My wife, Rena, and I decided to check it out and registered for the reunion. We were very impressed with the family atmosphere, the welcome we received from vets and families from all of the services plus the quality of the entire weekend program. I decided to join the association while we were there. When Larry Fry asked why we joined I just said it was a quality organization and not just a bunch of drunks sitting around lying, as I could do that at a local organization.

Over the years Rena and I have become more and more involved in the organization and it has given us the opportunity to become friends with some very amazing people from all over the country. We, along with many others, do enjoy the chance to help put together the reunions in different parts of the country.

The most positive thing I can say about our reunions is that it truly is a family affair. Spouses and other family members are all welcome and we make sure there is time to just sit, talk and enjoy each other's company. We also have the opportunity to take in some local attractions. It is much more like a family reunion than other military reunions I have attended. All services and disciplines are welcome. It truly is amazing how many military occupations are represented.

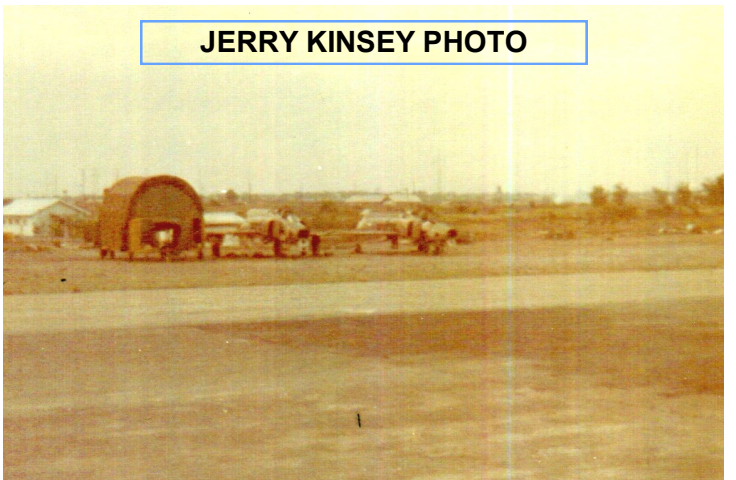
In short it is a real fun time to be with other vets and their families. You may have noticed we are not getting any younger, so let's enjoy these times together while we are still able.

SEE YOU IN DAYTON!!



JERRY KINSEY PHOTO

TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE, RVN 1968-1969
ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE C-123



JERRY KINSEY PHOTO

TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE, RVN, 1968-1969
2 F-4 PHANTOM'S AT THE BONEYARD



Roadside sobriety tests are getting ridiculous.
Last night I had to fold a fitted sheet.

EDITOR'S NOTE: STARTING ON PAGE 2 IS PART 2 OF PHIL MCCLURG'S STORY OF HIS YEAR AT TSN. ENJOY!



One day our secretaries invited me to lunch in the civilian air terminal area. I proudly pointed to Tacoma, WA printed on my can of Carling Black Label and announced *my home town*. The waiter placed a small bowl of soup before each of us. I lifted mine to my lips and took a sip, which created a great deal of laughter among my lovely hosts. It was not soup, but the pungent dipping sauce of fermented fish known as *nuoc mam*. When GIs said Vietnam smelled bad very possibly they had been exposed to nuoc mam somewhere. Actually, it is a versatile seasoning, and I always have a bottle of *Three Crabs* brand in my kitchen.

With Miss Lang and Miss Phuong

Dining Hall #3 was within 100 yards of my barracks and my office. The *Assignments* section in the CBPO had some control over your DEROS. The guys in Assignments had the option to get you out of Vietnam anywhere from a week early to a week late. A tasty trade with the dining hall management kept us supplied with steaks, bacon and eggs for our barbeques, and the cooks got to go home a week early.

Throughout the year several guys in the CBPO fell victim to *a problem*. Visits to the bordellos for a *short-time* cost \$3..... so they tell me.

My first friend at TSN was Jack Turner, from Walnut Creek, CA. One of his neighbors was captain of *USS Flying Dragon*. When the ship came to the port in Saigon, Jack invited me to join him in a visit to the ship. Captain Varone was a cordial host. He told us that the passage up the Saigon River was extra dangerous at one particularly narrow bend. He showed us the helmets and flak jackets issued to his crew.

The barracks in the 900-Area were single-story, divided into 20 cubicles. The exterior walls were screened, louvered open air and we had ceiling fans. The air-conditioned dayroom in the middle separated 10 cubicles at each end. Our dayroom was comfortably appointed with a bar, a card table, a TV, refrigerator, several upholstered lounges, and a water cooler. We had three *mamasans* who swept the barracks, did our laundry, ironed our clothes and shined our shoes. Each of us paid about \$5 per month. Privacy was not guaranteed. One time I was joined in the shower by a *mamasan* who wanted to wash her sandals.

Wishing to add some variety to my desk-bound duties, I decided to volunteer a few hours to "kicking" flares from the C-47s which circled TSN all night. It was disappointing to learn that this opportunity was no longer authorized. But.....! I learned that I could volunteer as assistant loadmaster at the 19th Air Commando Sqdn. The aircraft was a Fairchild C-123K Provider. This "K" was a new modification which added a jet engine on each wing just outboard from the piston engine on each wing. The *jet-assists* improved the performance on short dirt landing strips, and allowed a better rate-of-climb to avoid enemy small arms fire. On a day in October and a day in November I flew a total of 14 sorties. Flying as far north as Song Be (40 mi) and south to Ca Mau (150 mi), we delivered munitions, aircraft parts, and petroleum to various remote outposts. At one deserted airstrip no one was there to sign for the cargo. So we had to wait for an Army Major to helicopter over to us. He warned us not to fly a particular vector because they were firing artillery. Captain Knox replied "Hell! We came *in* that way!"



Capt. Knox and Lt. Lafferty

Does anyone remember Captain Knox and Lt. Lafferty?

TET !!!

On Tuesday, 30 January 68, Staff Sergeants Wagner, Ellsworth and I walked over to the MACV theatre to see *Georgy Girl*. I returned to my Hut 911 at 2130, went to bed at 2330 and was asleep by midnight. At 0400 Wednesday 31 January I was awakened by someone running through the 900-Area shouting *hit the bunker!* I figured that some drunk airman was just trying to scare us. Nevertheless, I awakened Steve Buntich in the top bunk and peered out the south door of my hut. All was quiet as I observed the usual number of flares in the sky. This relaxed normalcy was suddenly broken by LtC Zelezic who shouted from the CBPO "Stay inside!" Why was the Colonel *not* in his villa downtown at this crazy hour? A growing sense of unease was exponentially heightened when suddenly not too distant, demoniacal undulating red rivers of fire poured out of the sky.

The Communists' TET Offensive had come to Tan Son Nhut, two weeks into the second half of my one-year tour. The first six months had settled into routine and boredom. The final six months were to become an anxious countdown to the day I hoped to escape Vietnam alive. The "TET" story has been exhaustively chronicled, so I'm just going to describe how the war directly affected my life during the final six months.

Letter home:

Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN

5 Feb 68

Dear Folks,

..... 31 Jan 68 – Having been ordered to stay inside, I returned to my bunk at 0445 hrs. Small arms fire very close, crawled under my bunk. Steve was already there – asleep. I slept intermittently until 0700. Many of us sat on the sandbag wall discussing the situation. Again we were ordered to stay inside. I returned under my bunk as nearby explosions and small arms fire intensified. By 0930 we were outside again to watch helicopters fire machine guns and rockets at a rumored 500 enemy on the golf course northeast of our 900-Area, adjacent to MACV. Then to the southeast we watched A1-E Skyraiders, so close that we could see the individual bombs they were dropping.

The chow hall was doing its best to feed everyone. At 1130 SSgt Webb and I headed for Dining Hall #3 when a mortar whizzed overhead and exploded behind the chow hall. I raced to return under my bunk. Bullets were spattering our cantonment wall which separated the 900-Area and MACV. Two airmen crouched at the wall, M-16s at the ready. At 1330 I made a successful trip to the chow hall for lunch but fear had destroyed my appetite. Cobra gunships continued to fire on the enemy at the golf course. During each pass they would fire six rockets, two at a time. Apprehension grew as darkness came. At 2300, sore from the cement floor, I climbed into my bunk and woke only a few times until daylight, Thursday, 1 February. Some of us went to our office at 1000 but there was nothing to do. At 1530 we took the step-van to the 377th Headquarters Squadron Orderly Room in the 700-Area to get paid, then on to the BX where for some reason only beer and cigarettes were for sale. (Three cheers for the essentials!) By evening it was rumored that the Army (elements of the 25th Div Tropic Lightning) had surrounded the perimeter so that no enemy infiltration was expected, but there was concern that enemy snipers were still on the Base.

Friday, 2 February – I climbed to the second floor of an unoccupied building at 8th Aerial Port. A sweeping view beyond the flight line revealed Forward Air Controllers in O1-E Birddogs identifying enemy positions where F-4 Phantoms were dropping napalm.

I hope I never have to go through days again like Tuesday and Wednesday were. None of us had ever gone through that before and we were plenty scared.

I'm getting hungry for some ginger bread, chocolate chip cookies, and Mountain Bars if you can send some.

Love, Phil

Just 18 days into the *second half* of my one-year tour TET '68 changed everything for me. Downtown became off limits except for official business. My plan to experience Vietnamese culture via the Vietnamese-American Society was thwarted. Due to a curfew imposed by the Vietnamese government thousands of Vietnamese were unable to come to work at TSN. Thus, I was scheduled to report for KP duty in Dining Hall #2 at 0400 on Sunday, February 18th. Enlisted ranks below E-5 were tasked with this unpleasant duty. So I went to bed at 2130 Saturday night....but on Sunday morning at about 0110 I was blasted awake by a rocket attack.

Letter 20 Feb 68:

By 0230 I was over in the CBPO where Al Gidley, working by candlelight, was doing Casualty Reporting. This is a job that must be done immediately regardless of circumstances. Three airmen listen in on the same telephone call and each writes his account of what the various units at TSN are reporting. This ensures accuracy before messages are sent to the next of kin. At 0400 some APs came into the office and I told them I had to get across the base for KP. They said to forget it, so I went back to bed. I reported to Dining Hall #2 at 0800. Several times during the day the AP at the intersection would announce "Attention in the area! All personnel take shelter immediately! Occupants of cars, trucks, motorbikes, and

pedestrians stopped and dived into the ditches. We in the dining hall hid under the tables. I was released from KP at 1600. I hitched a ride back to my hut 911 and was under my bunk by 1800.

This was the attack that destroyed the base chapel, several F-4 Phantoms, and a C-130. Then on Monday the 19th a rocket killed a civilian in the civilian air terminal. On 24 Feb a rocket killed several airmen in Hut 742. About this time each of us was issued a flak vest and M-16.

Chaplain's Corner-Seek God By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

All of us have ups and downs in our lives. Some bad times came due to nothing we said or did. Others came because we made a bad decision or forgot to put our brain in gear before we let our tongue loose. Some great uplifting parts of our lives may have the birth of our children and grandchildren, marrying our spouse, successful jobs, etc. Some of the bad times may have been a serious medical diagnosis or the loss of loved ones such as children, parents, or even a spouse.

Where do we turn during the really bad times? An interesting thing happened after the 9-11 attacks. Church attendance shot up significantly. Our national psyche was affected; we could not understand why it could happen here. We were angry at the perpetrators and the people that allowed them to pull it off. These types of things are supposed to happen elsewhere. But it gets real personal when something like that happens here.

Bad times tend to make us turn to God, or perhaps return to God. But where are we with God day to day when everything seems to be running smooth and normal. Do we ask Him before we make decisions? Not typically because we tend to trust our experience and skills.

Perhaps we need to reconsider our relationship with God. Is he just there to prevent the plane from crashing only to forget Him once we are on the ground? Or do we only call out to Him in the proverbial foxhole only to forget Him when danger has passed? **Micah 6:8** gives us some insight, “. . . **and what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**” That means love mercy and walk humbly with Him all of the time.

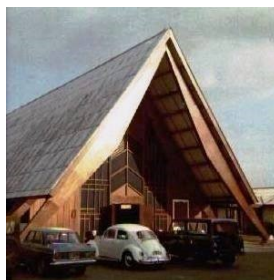
We humans are stubborn, in fact **Isaiah 48:4** states “**For I knew how stubborn you were; your neck muscles were iron, your forehead was bronze**”. This is commonly known as stiff-necked. I am sure we can think of someone that fits this description. But do we sometimes fit this description?

If we walk with God all of the time, the hard times, while still difficult, are easier to handle. Remember God does care about you. You are made in His image and he knew you before you were born. In **Jeremiah 1:5**, while talking about the prophet himself it says, “**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart . . .**”. This applies to us as well, we were made in God's image, he knew us before we were born and He set us apart for a unique work in this life.



The picture to the left is a visual reminder to the answer to the question, “where were you God when I needed you, there is only one set of footprints in the sand”? God answered, that was when I carried you.

So when bad times occur and you feel yourself apart from God, just remember, no matter how far you have walked away from God, the return trip is only one step. He will carry you through the tough times. Take that step to seek God's face and his love. As the scripture states above love mercy and walk humbly with Him all the time. He will provide peace.



2022 TSNA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

By: Richard Carvell
Vice-President, TSNA
Chair, TSNA Scholarship Committee

Four \$5,000 scholarships have been awarded by the Tan Son Nhut Association Scholarship program to high school seniors who will attend schools of higher education in the Fall. The recipients are 2022 high school graduates who are descendants of one who served in Vietnam.



Noah Brown of Leslie, Arkansas, is a graduate of Koinonia Cooperative Academy in Conway, Arkansas. Brown is the son of Daniel and Judith Brown. His grandfather, SP5 Timothy Park served in Vietnam. Brown plans to earn a degree in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, MO.

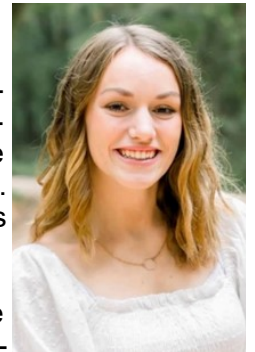


Marc Foster, a 2022 graduate of Valley View High School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, has been awarded a TSNA scholarship. Foster's grandfather, James Elmer Butler, served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam. Foster will major in biology at Xavier University in New Orleans to prepare for medical school and eventually work in healthcare. He is the son of Marc and Juli Foster of Jonesboro, Arkansas.



Nathan Ortolano will attend the University of Georgia, pursuing pre-med studies with a major in biochemistry/molecular biology. He is the son of Alex and Robyn Ortolano of Suwanee, Georgia. He attended North Gwinnett High School in Suwanee. His grandfather, Army Lt. Alexander Ortolano, served in Vietnam.

Emma Wirthlin, the daughter of Spencer and Cheri Wirthlin, is the granddaughter of Lt. Col. Glen Hales who served in Vietnam. She attended Bentonville High School in Arkansas. She plans to attend Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, where she will major in nursing. She has already earned her nurse aide certification and works at a northwest Arkansas hospital.



The TSNA scholarship is awarded in equal amounts over four years, provided the student maintains a 3.00 grade point average at the end of each school term and completes a minimum of 30 semester hours each year. Scholarship recipients must pursue a four-year degree as a resident student at an accredited United States accredited college or university that grants bachelor or higher degrees but may begin higher education studies at a two-year accredited institution and transfer to an accredited school to complete the final two years leading to a bachelor's degree.

If you wish to honor a person or make a donation in memory of someone, please provide contact information so that we may properly advise the honoree or surviving family of your donation. Please send donations to "The Tan Son Nhut Association, PO Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236."

TSNA is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt veterans' organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia.



Please join us in Dayton Ohio for our annual reunion

Time IS running out to get your registration in and also make your reservations at Hope Hotel.



We need 15 more people to register in order to meet our contracted obligation.

If you are thinking of joining us, please do so prior to August 25.

**2022 Tan Son Nhut
Reunion
Dayton OH
September 22-25
Registration available in
this issue or at
TSNA.org**



Hotel Information

Hope Hotel and Richard Holbrooke Conference Center
10823 Chidlaw Rd (Outside Gate 12A)
Wright Patterson AFB 45433
937-879-2696

Reservations must be made by telephone. Mention Tan Son Nhut Association, Do not say TSNA

Rm Rate \$109.00 plus taxes
Breakfast Coupons will be provided at check-in

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION 2022
REUNION REGISTRATION

Dayton, OH
Sep 22 - 25, 2022

NAME _____ GUEST NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TEL (____) _____ EMAIL _____

SPECIAL NEEDS (if applicable) _____

Choose one of the following:

1: FULL Reunion Registration

Number attending _____ x **\$85.00** = \$ _____

Full Reunion Total Remittance: \$ _____

2: PARTIAL Reunion Registration

Access to Hospitality Room (includes snacks & beverages):

Number of days: _____ x **\$12.50** = \$ _____ x No. of people: _____ =

Partial Reunion Total Remittance \$ _____

3. Banquet Only Saturday, September 24, 2022

Number attending _____ x **\$44.50** = \$ _____

Banquet Only Total Remittance: \$ _____

Mail this form with payment (check only) to:

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 236
PENRYN, PA 17564-0236

REGISTRATION FORM WITH PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED
NLT September 1, 2022

Questions regarding Registration should be directed to:

Paul Mortensen
Director of Reunion Planning
TSNAreunions@gmail.com

Hotel Information

Hope Hotel and Richard Holbrooke Conference Center
10823 Chidlaw Rd (Outside Gate 12A)
Wright Patterson AFB 45433
937-879-2696

Registration must be made by telephone. Mention **Tan Son Nhut Association**, Do not say TSNA
Rm Rate \$109.00 plus taxes
Breakfast Coupons will be provided at check-in

**ELECTION 2022
TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION**



We need to conduct an election applicable to five (5) of the Board of Directors positions, as shown below. Though the candidates are running unopposed, we still need your vote. The ballot follows this announcement. If you vote via email, send your vote to me at dale.bryan@gmail.com. If you send by surface mail, send it to: **Tan Son Nhut Association, P. O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236** Completed ballots must be returned by September 1.

Dale Bryan
TSNA Secretary

BALLOT

I VOTE TO ELECT THE FOLLOWING TO THE POSITIONS SHOWN:

- Treasurer - Andrew Csordas**
- Director of Communications - Gary Fields**
- Director of Membership, Revetments Editor - Larry Fry**
- Director of Membership Development - Richard Cooley**
- Director of Reunion Planning - _____**

Signed By: NAME: _____ DATE: _____

(The bylaws require that there be 30 days between the date of this announcement and the deadline for voting, so please have your ballots mailed or emailed by September 1, 2022).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS ACTIVITY!!

LEAVING TAN SON NHUT, MARCH, 1962

By: Larry Fry, TSNA Director of Membership, & Editor, Revetments

A permanent replacement had come in for me one afternoon, and I showed him around that evening and early the next morning. There wasn't much to show him at that time on TSN. At 8:30 AM I received permission to leave, hopped on the Chaplain bicycle, pedaled my tail off down the road to the operation's shack and got my name on the manifest for the next C-124 out of there. And thanks to the fact that we had all (or almost all) of our stuff right there in our tent, I was on a flight at 10:30 AM. Well, almost all of our stuff. I got to talking to the incoming Chaplain about my laundry. He offered to take care of picking up and mailing my laundry to me—and he did just that! I've never forgotten his thoughtfulness.

It was night when we got to Clark AFB, Philippines'.

Three unusual things happened as we were attempting to land, and I found out all the details from the Loadmaster, AF-TER we finally landed.

On either the first or second attempt, we took off very high angled and fast. Turns out that was to get out of the way for jets taking off to check out an unscheduled and unidentified aircraft coming in near Clark.

Again, on either the first or second attempt, we took off without landing because we had overshot the runway.

On the third attempt we made it onto the ground, BUT there were red lights flashing all over the place as we went down the runway.

Turns out we were coming in on three engines, not 4. I have no idea when that happened on the flight, but we made it. We had a little debriefing at Clark, for maybe a day, and then we got scheduled on a C-124 headed for Japan. On board with us, and right in front of our faces, was a good-sized fuel tanker trailer, which thankfully was either new or cleaned out, or ???, because there were no fuel smells.

This was early March, and the humidity in the Philippines was horrible. It seemed to take forever for the plane to get enough airspeed to get climbing. I remember seeing an awful lot of buildings and treetops for quite a while until we started climbing.

Unfortunately, this flight was not headed for Tachikawa (Tokyo), but for Sapporo, in northern Japan.

We got to Sapporo, and were sitting having some food and drink, when all of a sudden there was a public address announcement for us to get the heck on the plane – pronto!

We now had an empty C-124 with a dozen or so passengers, headed for Tachikawa. Having had a few take-offs in C-124's' in the past 3 months, we realized that something unusual was going on because that aircraft took off at a speed and sharp up-angle that we had not been part of before.

We got to Tachikawa, and were moving fairly fast coming to the location where we had to stop. They hit the brakes so hard and fast that we could hear the tires squealing.

We had barely gotten unstrapped and gathering belongings, when coming down the ladder/stairway was one of the officer aircrew members, a 1st Lt. We found out a little later that he was in a hurry to get to a show – it was a Friday night. Someone informed us that we had cut something like 25 minutes off the “normal” flying time between Sapporo and Tachikawa.

So, after a little over two months TDY at TSN, I was back at Washington Heights Housing Annex in “downtown” Tokyo, with just 3 months left until my DEROS date.

Little did I know that that date would also be changing, thanks to my time at TSN.



TENT CITY, FEBRUARY, 1962

Tan Son Nhut Association
P. O. Box 236
Penryn PA 17564

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



MACV Annex Chapel, inside and outside.



Andy Csordas Photos.



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