



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam

JULY 2022

Chaplain's Corner-Search the Scriptures

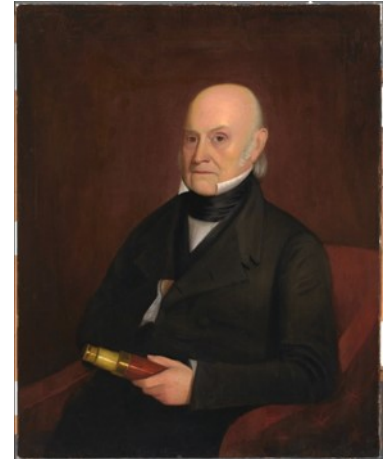
By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain



Our sixth President, John Quincy Adams, was the son of John Adams, our second President. He served as a Senator from Massachusetts, a Representative from Massachusetts and as US Secretary of State. Adams was groomed for public service by his father and addressed major diplomatic challenges of our new and growing country.

He was an eyewitness to the Battle of Bunker Hill, he served in the government of George Washington and in Congress with Abraham Lincoln. Benjamin Franklin and Charles Dickens were his friends. He negotiated the end of the War of 1812. He started his journal at age ten and it provides fourteen thousand pages of American History from the eve of the American Revolution and to the eve of the Civil War.

Adams wrote hymns and was also a man devoted to the Bible. He wrote in a letter on June 22, 1838: *"The first and almost only book deserving universal attention is the Bible. I speak of a man of the world to men of the world; and I say to you search the scriptures! The Bible is the book of all others, to be read at all ages, and in all conditions of human life; not to be read once or twice or thrice through and then put aside, but to read in small portions of one or two chapters every day, and never to be intermitted (interrupted), unless by some overruling necessity."*



We must search the scriptures to learn what God has for us and what God wants us to do in his name. Not once or twice (see above quotation), but continuously and repeatedly. As noted other places, we can read the same verse repeatedly but suddenly a new and incredible truth will speak to us from that verse.

Adam's version of **Psalm 65:11-12** became popular in many hymnbooks:

***Thy goodness crowns the circling year,
The wilderness repeats Thy voice;
The mountains clad with flocks appear,
The hills on every side rejoice.***

Perhaps his most important activity made him "America's first champion of human rights". He stunned Congress and the nation by demanding that Congress extend constitutional liberties to Americans of African descent by abolishing slavery.

As Adams aged he never stopped in his campaign for African American rights. In his last case before the Supreme Court he was successful as he fiercely represented the slaves aboard the slave ship *Amistad*.

His closing statement to the court included the following: *"In taking, then, my final leave of this . . . honorable Court, I can only (offer) a fervent (prayer) to Heaven that each member of (this court) may go to his final account with as little of earthly frailty to answer for as (possible) . . . and that you may, everyone (of you), after the close of a long and virtuous career in this world, be received at the portals of (Heaven) with the approving sentence, **Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of the Lord**"*

Will we, you and me, be received with that sentence after our time on earth is over? Will all of Heaven rejoice when you arrive? We cannot do that by being good, but only by doing what the scriptures say. Search the scriptures as Adams said to discover what God says to you through them. We must turn our life over to God. There is no other way.

MY YEAR AT TSN - Part 1 of 3

July 67—July 68

Philip McClurg

BACKGROUND

During Basic Training at Lackland AFB, I scored high on a radio operator aptitude test. Odds were that I would be sent to language school to learn Russian or Chinese, and then be sent overseas as a radio intercept operator. I was excited that these language skills perhaps might lead to a State Department job someday in my civilian future. There was much anticipation in my basic training flight as PCS orders drifted in over several of our final days in *Basic*. Guys were excited to learn which technical schools they would be going to for more training. So I definitely felt let down when my orders assigned me *not* to a school, but to *on-the-job training* as a Personnel Specialist at 325th Combat Support Group CBPO. To my exceeding joy however, I was assigned to McChord AFB, seven miles from my home in Tacoma, Washington! The Air Force even let me live at home. Though I always had a bit of envy for the airmen who worked with aircraft, I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed that *Personnel* was essentially a nine-to-five, Monday through Friday job. To this day when I hear *Do You Believe In Magic* by The Lovin' Spoonful, I flashback to my seven-mile commute to McChord in April '66, and the incredible adrenaline rush....when the endless gloom of the Pacific Northwest winter starts to give way to springtime. Before I proceed to my Vietnam experience let me share two anecdotes at McChord AFB.

Each airman had to take an all-day turn at KP several times per year. Against regulation, it was well worth \$20 to pay Walter to sub for me when it was my turn to perform the onerous 12-hour KP duty. And he was happy to get out of a day of work in our office anyway. Well, at 0500 the CQ called my parents' house where I was living, and said that the mess hall reported me missing from KP duty. *Walter had failed to show up in my place!* This was not going to settle well with our tough First Sergeant! I rushed out to McChord. Walter schmoozed the CQ into *rewriting* the daily log, omitting the entry about the AWOL Airman McClurg. With great relief and a little skepticism I said "Walter, I don't believe it!" So Walter went back to the CQ and pulled from the wastebasket the crumpled, damning report which to this day remains among my archives.

Our TSgt NCOIC was in *Madigan Army Hospital* (Fort Lewis) recovering from a bad auto accident. His bed was on the ground floor next to a window. This was very convenient as Sam, Richard and I honored our boss's request to smuggle a case of *Carling Black Label* through the window, which he hid under his bed.

VIETNAM

In Memory of Marvin Thurman, fellow TSNA Member, who passed this January. We worked side-by-side from July '67 until his DEROS in Mar '68.

Marvin Thurman (I) and Harold Cosgrove guarding CBPO step-van in Cholon



MEMOIRS OF AN ULTRA REMF

PREFACE

I have read many dozens of books about the Vietnam War, the most compelling of which are the first-hand accounts of the Army and Marine infantrymen. The physical and psychological terror they suffered *outside the wire* exists in stark contrast to the relative safety that the vast majority of us enjoyed. While all of us were targeted by the enemy, clearly the risk varied greatly. So it is no surprise that the guys who humped the boonies were extremely jealous of us who worked *inside the wire*. So they derisively called us rear echelon mf'ers - *REMFs*. Yet, even we REMFs were exposed to varying degrees of risk in this *no-front-war*. I don't have a dramatic war story. Gathered from 86 letters I sent home, I wish from an E4's perspective to bring back memories of daily life at TSN 1967-1968 which perhaps the reader has forgotten.

GOING OVER

After nineteen months in my home town (Tacoma, WA) at McChord AFB, 325th Combat Support Group-Consolidated Base Personnel Office (CBPO), I was ready for a PCS and I knew that volunteering for Vietnam was a PCS guarantee.

And having a good friend in *Assignments* enabled me to select Tan Son Nhut. I was a 21 year old E4. I departed Travis AFB at 1450 hrs on Tuesday, 11 July 67 on Continental Airlines Boeing 707. First refueling stop was Wake Island. Having no knowledge about air navigation at that time, I marveled how we could fly 4,400 miles over open water and find an island slightly over two square miles. Another 2,500 miles took us to Okinawa to refuel. Then after 1,800 more miles we arrived at Tan Son Nhut at 0110 hrs local time, Thursday, 13 July 67.

Magnesium flares parachuted lazily around the perimeter as the heat and humidity were the first sensory assaults with which Tan Son Nhut greeted me. I lived in the 900-Area which was just west of MACV, and just east of 8th Aerial Port. Just beyond 8th Aerial Port to the west was Runway 25. With the exception of the Base Mail Facility and the Base Exchange everything else that I needed in life was within 75 yards of my home in Hut 911. Within a 30-second walk were the latrines, Dining Hall #3, the snack bar, the makeshift movie screen, and the 377th Combat Support Group Consolidated Base Personnel Office (CBPO) in which I worked. Within that large *un-air-conditioned* office building was a relatively small *machine room* dedicated to data processing. And because the IBM cards required a low-humidity environment we fifteen airmen/NCOs and our three Vietnamese secretaries were extraordinarily blessed to work in our own private, *air-conditioned* office! Duty hours were 0730-1800, six days per week.

MOVING IN

My new workmates forecasted a case of *Ho Chi Minh's Revenge* for me. It was delayed but not denied. In about two weeks our proximity to the latrines became especially appreciated. To excuse oneself for a bathroom break you announced "I'm going to the White House." Irreverence & grumbling being the historical privilege of the enlisted ranks, our biting irreverence targeted the President and everything else associated with Vietnam. (But don't complain, McClurg – you volunteered, remember?)

DAILY WORK

My AFSC was 73250 – *Personnel Specialist*. My job was to use a *Sharpie* to code your military record onto a blank IBM card. Then our Vietnamese office girls would keypunch your code onto IBM punch cards. Each officer's and airman's personal data required 8 to 10 cards. This data automation allowed us to run hundreds of cards per minute through a sorting machine and quickly solve, for example: *Print a list of all Captains with a date-of-rank of May 1, 1967*. Special projects occasionally extended the workday well past the normal 10.5 hours.

OFF-DUTY TIME

At the Airmen's Club we could enjoy refreshments, play the slot machines, and listen to excellent live music by talented Filipino bands.

The 900-Area had a little outdoor theater where movies were shown on a white wall. There was also a movie theater across base and one in the MACV compound.

Visit the Saigon Zoo.

Visit Saigon Tea Girls. *Hahn* was a very pretty girl with whom I spent many hours in delightful conversation. The bars employed these girls to entice GIs to buy them very small cups of tea or soda at inflated prices. So feminine and fragrant she was! Even today, a certain perfume instantly brings back vivid memories.

Visit the commissary in Cholon.

Cholon street scene, October 1967

I enrolled in a Private Pilot Ground School that one of the senior NCOs was teaching.

In my living quarters I would sit on a straw mat writing letters. My favorite snacks time were Beanie-Weenies, Ritz Crackers, Mateus Rosé wine, or warm beer. Warm? Yes, because in the dayroom we had a magic refrigerator which would make beer disappear.



The commissary selection of beer varied throughout the year and was usually limited to one brand at a time: Budweiser, Schlitz, Ballantine, Carling Black Label, Pabst. And there was a time, thankfully brief, when the only selection was that unpleasant Korean beer named Crown.

Recall that tobacco and alcohol were rationed. I don't remember the limits per airman but there were always a few buddies who did not use their rations, so there was always enough tobacco and alcohol for those of us who did.

Do you remember these prices at TSN?

Beer, \$2.40 per case

Cigarettes, \$1.40 per carton

Seagram's VO or Crown Royal, fifth, \$4.25

Snack Bar. I do not recall the prices in the 900-Area snack bar. The hamburgers had an unusual taste so there was always speculation that they were made with other than beef. And the milk shakes tasted as if made with evaporated milk. I could not stomach them. But over at MACV the milk shakes were delicious.

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Tune in" for Part 2 of Phil's story in the August issue of REVETMENTS.

SAVE THE DATE

The Tan Son Nhut Association is hosting a reunion in Dayton Ohio on September 22-25, 2022. COVID restrictions have hurt military reunions extremely hard, but some associations are trying to make reunions happen in 2022. We are one of those associations, so please "save the date."

The registration form is printed elsewhere in this issue of Revetments.

We are contracting to meet at the Hope Hotel and Richard Holbrooke Conference Center, 10823 Chidlaw Rd, Wright Patterson AFB, Dayton Oh 45433. (Just outside Gate 12A) Room rates will be \$109.00 and a Breakfast for two is included in that price. Additional information is being developed and as it is developed it will be posted on the website: <https://www.tsna.org/mainpage.html> and in the Revetments Newsletter.

Amenities

Hope Hotel is a Full-service convention and banquet facility with:

Versatile, fully equipped meeting rooms.

Full-service restaurant, Packy's Sports Bar & Grill, inside the conference center.

Business center lounge with computers, copiers and break-out/study rooms.

Complimentary on-site parking including RV/Motorcoach parking.

265 guest rooms with microwaves, mini-refrigerators & flat screen TV.

On site Fitness Center.

Fax/copy/postage service.

ATM in lobby.

\$75.00 one time Pet Fee.

Airport Shuttle Transportation: 937.898.4043.

www.chartervans.com: 1-person \$40.00 one-way;

2 or more people \$20.00 per-person one way



A BANQUET IS PLANNED FOR SATURDAY EVENING. WE ARE ENCOURAGING ALL WHO CAN ATTEND TO COME AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN DAYTON.

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

BOARD NOMINATIONS 2022

We need to conduct an election applicable to four (4) of the Board of Directors positions.

Positions are: Director of Communications, Director of Membership, Co-Director of Membership Development, and Director of Reunion Planning.

All incumbents may run for reelection, but all TSNA members are encouraged to run for any of the offices.

A candidate may nominate themselves, or a fellow member may nominate another. Should you nominate someone, be certain they would serve.

To nominate a member or self-nominate, please contact me at dale.bryan@gmail.com. If you nominate by surface mail, send it to:

TSNA, PO Box 236 Penryn, PA 17564-0236.

I must receive all nominations by **July 25, 2022**. Voting will occur during August.

Dale Bryan
TSNA Secretary

AWARD NOMINATIONS 2022

A highlight of all reunions is presenting awards to members that have stood out in service to the Association and even non-members or organizations that have given of themselves to their community.

We need nominations for 2022. A listing of awards and their criteria are on the TSNA Website.

Any TSNA member may make a nomination, but they may not nominate themselves.

To nominate a member, non-member, or organization, please contact me at dale.bryan@gmail.com. If you nominate by surface mail, send it to:

TSNA, PO Box 236 Penryn, PA 17564-0236.

I must receive all nominations by **August 15, 2022**. An Awards Committee will make all selections.

Dale Bryan, TSNA Secretary

THE BEGINNING

Larry Fry, TSNA Director of Membership, Revetments Editor

Sometime in mid-1961, I became part of what was called an "Alert Team". That meant we had to be ready to leave the country (in this case, Japan) in TWO HOURS.

I don't remember it for sure, but I am assuming that I kept my duffel bag fairly full and ready to go. I have a diary that I kept for 1961, and one Saturday the note is: "Had an alert team rehearsal—what a blast!" I take from that, since I don't remember, that it was a disaster?

Well, that call finally came. I don't know whether I knew it or not on Christmas Day, but for sure things were happening on the 26th.

I knew I had to get out to Tachikawa, and there met up with a bunch more of our "team". I have shot records dated the 26th of December; I have a Passport dated the 26th of December; I have orders dated the 26th of December! I don't know how they got all of that done in one day?

Well, we didn't have to worry about leaving in 2 hours! We loaded four C-124's before we got off the ground. I remember that the first one didn't even get loaded before they found a problem that negated using that one.

And I remember rolling down the runway one time, and then aborting. Not sure what happened with the third

one. I know we were there like 28 hours before they finally got us some cots to sleep on. How much sleep we got I do not remember.

Sooo, we finally got off the ground and headed for Kadena, Okinawa, where we spent the night.

Then it was on to Clark, where I wound up on crutches since that good ol' shaky C-124 had created a blister for me, BETWEEN a callous on the ball of my foot and the main part of the foot.

We had some briefings, and it was only during that time that we found out where we were going.

We got off the ground and headed for TSN, with no problems. As we marched down the C-124 ramps somewhere on TSN, there was a Colonel sitting at the steering wheel of his Jeep. As it turns out, he was waiting for a load of BX items, that turned out to be coming just a little later than us.

Anyhow, he took one look at what was descending on him and blurted out, "What the hell are you doing here?" An interesting way to start our TDY tour at TSN.

Tent city was being worked on, so I would imagine there was quite a bit of scrambling going on. I know we went over to the Terminal and went through Customs—and I have a stamped Passport dated 12/28/1961 to prove it!

And then they loaded us up and took us downtown to the Continental Palace. OK, we can take this!

ITEMS FROM MARK REVEAUX

Some "Lost and Found" from TSNA Member Mark Reveaux:

I was with 377th Supply Squadron at Tan Son Nhut from May 1967 thru May 1968. My work station was in the Chief of Supply office, across from the U.S. Army mortuary. I've been trying to locate on a map where that was but can't find it. Would anyone know that location? The road intersected the road that led to the main gate.

Your Revetments brought back memories of the 31st. I was in the 377th supply and our hooch was across from the French cemetery. Shortly before the alarms sounded we heard two whistle sounds that was immediately followed by automatic weapons fire. Then the sirens sounded. One of my hooch friends said he felt a sting in his ankle, like he was stung by a bee. But when we looked at his boot, it was really an AK47 round that went through one side and out the other.

Regarding celebrities visiting TSN, in the hooch someone had their radio on...don't recall if it was "Good Morning Vietnam". The narrator said.....we have Robert Mitchum with his. Robert, do you have any advice for our troops? "Keep your heads down" was his reply.

Don't recall the entire conversation. This was in the May 1967 - May 1968 time.

Just a trivia. Couple of incidences during my time at TSN from May 1967 through May 1968. I reported to a major in the supply squadron. One night we went to midnight chow. He had to stop at his hooch to pick up a pack of cigarettes. As he walked on the sidewalk the first mortar hit on the flight line, about 100 yards from where we were. If he hadn't stopped for cigarettes we would've been on the flight line and in immediate proximity to the mortars. That's when a pack of cigarettes may have saved our lives.

In early 1968 I was volunteered for sandbag detail on the parameter. We worked through the evening. As we shoveled the sand into the sand bags, we made trenches where we could dive in the event of a rocket attack. I was with another airman when the rockets started walking across the base. One landed about 50 yards to our left and another sailed overhead and landed about 100 yards to our right. I heard later that it had hit the motor pool. After the attack I said to the airman that they should delete the sandbag details. He replied: "Well they can sure as Hell delete me!"

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

Revetments is an official publication of the
Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236
The Association is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt Veterans'
Organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

President: Randall W. Brown
Vice President: Richard Carvell
Secretary: Dale Bryan
Treasurer: Andy Csordas
Director of Communications: Gary Fields
Director of Marketing: Johnnie Jernigan
Director of Reunion Planning: Paul Mortensen
Director of Membership and Revetments Editor: Larry E. Fry
Director of Membership Development: Rick Cooley
Director at Large: Jim Faulkner
Web Master: Kerry Nivens
Chaplain: Jimmy Smith
Associate Chaplain: Andy Csordas
Chaplains Emeriti:
Rev. Bob Alan Chaffee (1929-2017), TSNA Chaplain: 2009 - 2017
Rev. Dr. James M. Warrington, TSNA Chaplain: 1997-2018
Presidents Emeriti:
Don Parker, (1947-2014), Co-Founder and President 1996-2002
John Peele, Co-Founder and President 2002-2004
Wayne Salisbury, (1940-2014), President 2004-2007
Robert Robinson Gales, President 2007-2011
George Plunkett, President 2011-2015
Web Site: www.tsna.org
Annual Membership: \$20.00
Five Year Membership: \$80.00
Life Membership: \$180.00



ROBERT SCOTT, SR. Photo



ROBERT SCOTT, SR. Photo

TSNA and its officers, directors, employees and agents do not make any guarantees of any kind about the content, accuracy, or timeliness of information in the TSNA newsletter, *Revetments*. The use of information from this newsletter is strictly voluntary and at the user's sole risk. TSNA shall not be liable for any damages of any kind related to the information in this newsletter. The opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and do not constitute the opinion or policy of TSNA.