



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



NOVEMBER 2022

## NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

Assigned to main Air Mail terminal, Registered Mail Section. Primary function was Registered Mail Locator for missing Registered Mail.

Also assisted crews with delivery and guarding Registered Mail at airport. Injured 12/18/69 and Medevac'd back to States, arriving December 24, 1969 (Non-combat injury).

Larry W. Bush  
USAF PAC Postal Courier Region  
Dec 68 - Dec 69

## Chaplain's Corner-Integrity By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

Integrity can have many definitions as listed in the Thesaurus including: honesty, truth, truthfulness, veracity, reliability or uprightness. What do we think of when we think of ourselves and integrity? I suspect that may vary a bit by individuals, but what does God say about integrity?

Actually the scriptures mention the word a number of times in different contexts. There is discussion in the writing of David in Psalms about integrity. We all know David was not perfect, just as we are not perfect because we are men and women who sin. But some of the references in Psalms are interesting including his plea in **Psalm 25:21**, "**May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, LORD, is in you**". He bases his integrity on his hope in the Lord.

Nehemiah put two people in charge of the rebuilding of Jerusalem because of their integrity. **Nehemiah 7:2** tells us, "**I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do.**" You may recall Nehemiah was cupbearer to Artaxerxes, king of Persia and he asked the king to travel to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. Nehemiah was a man of tremendous integrity as well and God blessed him for it.

Job had a really rough time when Satan tempted him, but he stood by his faith in God and his integrity. **Job 2:3** tells us, "**Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless**

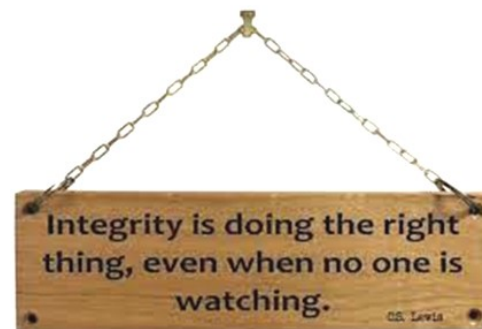
**and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.'**" Job's wife was not very much help either, **Job 2:9** states "**His wife said to him, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!'**"

Proverbs, always an excellent source of wisdom, has a number of snippets about integrity. **Proverbs 10:9** says "**Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.**" Likewise **Proverbs 11:3** tells us "**The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.**"

So where does that leave us. Do we have integrity? I suspect it means more to us as we mature, which is code for getting older. Do we sometimes fail, absolutely, but we must correct our failures by seeking forgiveness from those affected and seeking forgiveness from God.

In **Mark 12:14** the disciples comment to Jesus as he talks about focusing on the truth and part of that is integrity. "**They came to him and said, 'Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.'**"

So in conclusion remember to guard your integrity, it is easy to lose and very difficult to get back. We, at our age, all understand that concept, but sometimes it is just good to be reminded. Don't forget God and His Word are resources for keeping and repairing our integrity.



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** My thanks to David Ross for his "story", which is complete in this issue of Revetments, starting on Page 2.

**How about YOUR story? I need January 31, 1968 stories for the January, 2023 issue. Send to: [lfry2@dejazzd.com](mailto:lfry2@dejazzd.com).**

## MY STORY

By: David L. Ross  
6470th & 12th RITS  
Jun 67 - Jun 68

In early May 1967, I was completing The Air Force Intelligence Training course at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver Colorado. We started to get our orders for our next duty station. A lot of the guys were getting orders for Vietnam, Da Nang, Bien Hoa, Nha Trang, Cam Rahn Bay etc. My orders were for Wheelus Air Force Base, in Libya, Africa! Where the hell was that?? I got a map, and discovered Libya was on the Northern coast of Africa. At the time Muammar Gaddafi was the ruler and it was a very dangerous place for US personnel to be stationed. Fortunately a few days later my order was "red lined", and new orders were for Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, Vietnam. I was actually relieved to get these orders. So, my strategy to join the Air Force, and possibly avoid going to Vietnam, had failed. Such is life.

I left Lowry for home near the end of May, for 30 days of leave.

My orders were to be at Travis Air Force Base June 21, 1967.

Flew to Oakland, and a bus ride to Travis. After checking in, I was told that all flights to Vietnam were backed up for several days. My flight was scheduled to leave at 7:00 PM on the 25th. So I had 4 days with nothing to do. I knew a friend that was living in San Francisco, and I had his address. After a 1.5 hour bus ride I was in San Francisco. I found my friend and he said I could stay with him for a few days. He was living in a small apartment with a friend from University of Kentucky, and his future wife. They showed me all around San Francisco for the next 2 days. The day before I had to report back to Travis, they took me to a street fair in the Haight/Ashbury area of SF, the hippie anti war section of the city. Several bands were playing. It was a good time. A band called Country Joe and the Fish, played one of their signature songs. The name of the song was I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag. Here are the lyrics of the last two verses:

*"Come on Mothers through out the land  
Pack your boys off to Vietnam  
Come on Fathers, and don't hesitate  
To send your sons off before it's too late  
And you can be the first ones in your block  
To have your boy come home in a box*

*And it's one two three  
What are we fighting for?  
Don't ask me, I don't give a damn  
Next stop is Vietnam  
And it's five six seven  
Open up the pearly gates  
Well there ain't no time to wonder why  
Whoopie! We're all gonna die"*

That was a tough song to hear at the time.

Back to Travis the next day to board a flight for Vietnam leaving at 7:00 PM. 17 hours later, after making stops in Spokane, Washington, and Japan, I arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, in Saigon.

Got processed in and moved into barracks in the 1200 area of the base. Two story barracks with screens, no windows. There were 36 men per floor, double bunk beds, very tight quarters. Fans ran constantly to keep the hot humid air moving.



**RICH SCHNIEDER AND I OUTSIDE THE BARRACKS**

I was assigned to the 6470th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron. (RITS). We worked in a two story concrete building with no windows. It was air conditioned, and the building was new.



**MY WORK BUILDING 6470TH RITS 1967  
PHOTO BY JOHN BURKE**

Initially I worked the night shift, 11:30PM to 7:30AM, 6 days a week. My assignment was to review various documents that came into the unit each night. These reports came from various sources, such as forward air controllers, chopper pilots, ground units, fighter pilots, Laos Air Force pilots etc. The reports contained different kinds of enemy activity observed that day. This activity included troop movements, truck activity, suspected artillery sites or mortar and rocket launch sites. My job was to concentrate on truck activity. The area covered was South Western Vietnam, and South Eastern Laos. The truck activity was not on roads per se, they were on dirt trails in the jungle. The trails would flood at times so the truck routes were constantly changing. These trucks were transporting supplies and troops from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. After analyzing the reports I would notate on a portable poster size map where the truck activity was and on what route number. For the first two weeks I

was trained on how to do this by an airmen first class who was about to end his tour of duty. Each morning at 6:30AM we would take the map board out of the building and walk over to the next building which was 7th Air Force Headquarters. We would then brief Brigadier General Jammie Philpott! When I first learned we were going to be briefing a General, I was amazed that us lowly airmen would be doing the briefing. The A1C that was training me, explained that the General wanted to be briefed by the person who found the intelligence, not by a higher ranking officer that was reporting it second hand. Smart guy. At the time General Philpott was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, for the Seventh Air Force, Saigon. He was really a nice guy, always asking us how we were doing and was there anything he could do for us. The General would take the intelligence we gave him and use it to direct his Air Force pilots which truck routes were to be bombed that day.

Soon after my trainer left the country, General Philpott was reassigned to MACV Headquarters. So thereafter I would brief lower level officers, who were real jerks. Other members of the unit worked on specific targets such as bridges, road intersections, ammo dumps, tunnels, etc. These were labeled as "high value" targets that needed to be eliminated at the right time. There was one target that got the attention of few officers. Every target was given a specific number so it could be identified by multiple intelligence personnel. This target was P2118. It was a section of road on the Ho Chi Minh trail that went under an overhang on a mountain side. In order to make the road impassable the Air Force would bomb the mountain side above the road. This would cause rock slides that would make the road totally impassable.

However, the day after a bombing, trucks were observed crossing this section of road. How could the VC possibly clear that road so quickly? It was estimated that it would take 100 to 150 men and women, all night to clear the road.

After further bombing runs, attempts were made to observe individuals clearing the road. They failed. The thought then was to use infrared photography. The theory was that night infrared photography would pick up the heat signature of the individuals clearing the road. No individual body heat signatures were observed. Instead one very bright blip was seen. After many nights of photographing this image it was determined that it was a large bulldozer! During the day bulldozer was parked under the overhang of the road, and could not be seen. At night the bulldozer would come out and clear the road of rocks and debris within a couple of hours. As far as I know that bulldozer was never put out of commission.

The next few months were routine. Worked nights, walked to the chow hall around 5:30 AM, first in line for breakfast. Ate a lot of SOS. Started working days in August 1967. My job changed to conducting a Route Deterioration Study. During the rainy season the supply roads coming into Vietnam from Laos and Cambodia would deteriorate and become impassable. My job was to analyze various intelligence reports and document on a daily basis what roads were passable and which were not. Reported all of this to 7th Air Force Intelligence units.

In November, I started a side job working for Pan American Airways. Pan Am flew regular passenger flights in and out of Tan Son Nhut. They also had a contract to fly GI's in and out of the country. Two Air Force sergeants had an agreement with Pan Am to provide security and cleaning services for every flight that came into the base. Our job was to clean the interior of the plane or to guard the Vietnamese workers loading and unloading items from the cargo holds. We got paid by the flight so the hours were very flexible.

One perk of the job was using the food left over from the flights. New food was loaded onto the plane and the unused food would have to be removed.



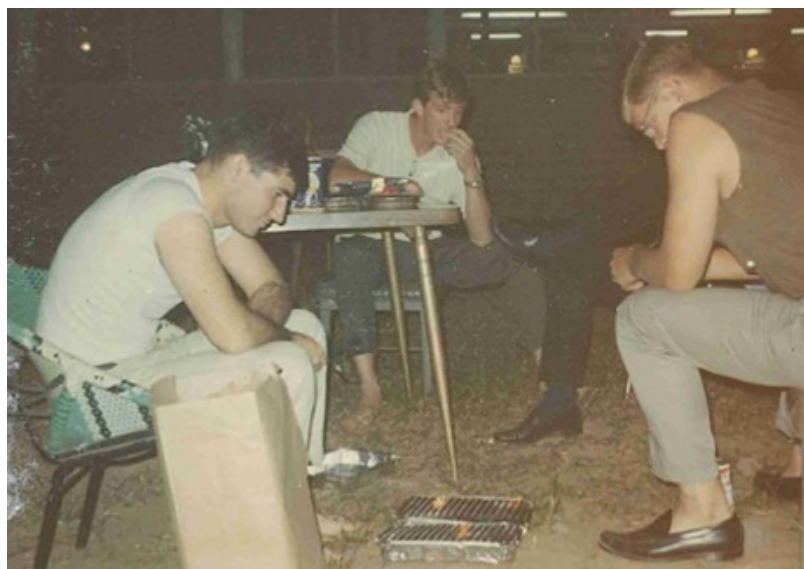
**PAM AM PLANE AT TAN SON NHUT**

The stewardess said take what you want because it must be removed from the plane.

The filet mignon steaks were the best. We would take them back to the barracks and cook them on makeshift charcoal grills.

**CHRISTMAS EVE 1967**

**PAN AM STEAKS ON  
CHARCOAL GRILL**



One day while walking on the tarmac in my white Pan Am jumpsuit, I passed Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts. He was in Country for a fact-finding mission. We later found out that he asked who were those men in Pan Am jumpsuits. When he found out we were American GI's, he said that was not right, and those jobs must go to Vietnamese civilians. About a month later the two sergeants lost the agreement they had with Pan Am, and our jobs ended.

In December we all had to move from barracks in the 1200 area to new barracks built right next to the base helipad. This area was called the 500 area, and was just across the street from the building I worked in. They were 2 story barracks with screened sides holding about 24 men per floor. I was assigned to the second floor, top bunk. The choppers coming in and out of the helipad would literally fly 20 feet over the barracks and would create tremendous clouds of dust and grime. Of course, the dust clouds would go right thru the screens and settle on our bunks. The good things about these barracks was that the toilets worked and you could take a shower without walking a half mile.

January, 1968 started off as a normal month, but as the month went on it became obvious that things were about to change for the worse. By the last week in January, the base was put on high alert. The base was closed and nobody could leave. Intelligence reports concluded that the VC, and PAVN Peoples Army of Vietnam (North Vietnam Regular Army) were about to launch an offensive soon. They concluded the offensive would be concentrated in outlying areas where the enemy could gain control of large areas and then attack bases and cities. How wrong this intelligence was.

The security of Tan Son Nhut was the responsibility of the 377th Security Police Squadron (377th SPS). They had more than 50 observation towers and bunkers surrounding the interior perimeter of the base. South Vietnamese Army units (ARVN) were responsible for the exterior perimeter of the base. Around 3:00 AM on the morning of January 31, 1968 the attack on the base began.

At that time I was sleeping in the barracks. I remember there was a tremendous cracking sound followed by a large explosion, and hearing rocks and debris falling on the barracks roof. We were all confused and had no idea what was happening. We all went to the first floor of the barracks and were ordered to stay there the rest of the night. Off in the distance we could hear several other explosions. We also could see flames and smoke coming from the internal compound of the base which was not too far away. We later learned that the Base Chapel had taken a direct hit from 122 mm rocket, and it burned to the ground.

At the same time the enemy was lobbing rockets and mortars onto the base, the base perimeter was breached by VC and PAVN forces. A main breach happened near Gate 051. This gate was guarded by 5 men from the 377th SPS. They immediately responded from their sandbagged rooftop bunker with M60 machine gun fire and their M16 rifles. They also radioed ahead that they were under attack and surrounded by about 100 VC, and requested immediate help. They held their position as long as they could but were overtaken and 4 were killed. They were Sergeants Fischer, William J. Cyr, Charles E. Hebron, and Roger B. Mills. I did not know any of these men, but know they are brave heroes. I am forever grateful to them and all others that gave their lives that night, so the rest of us could live for another day. Look for their names on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington DC; they are all there.

The attack on the base lasted all that night and well into the next day. Units of the 25th Infantry Division and other Army units were called in to end the attack. The toll of the attack that night was staggering.

As long as I was there, until June, 1968, the base perimeter was not breached again, as the defense of the base was greatly increased. The VC and PAVN forces did however continue to send in rockets and mortars almost on a nightly basis.

Before TET the base commander had ordered a "base beautification project", which meant all make shift bunkers and non approved shelters were to be taken down. That all changed the day after TET.

All barracks were told to build their own sandbagged bunkers, if they wanted to. They all did. Truckloads of sand and empty sand bags were dumped at the barracks, and we had to build the bunker. We worked on this around the clock for a few days until we had it built.



**NO EXPLANATION NEEDED!!**

**PUFF!!** →

I remember one night where the VC would send one or two 122 mm rockets into the base between 2 and 4AM. The base siren would go off and we would all run down to the bunker and sit in it until the all clear was sounded. This sleep deprivation tactic worked as we were all exhausted the next day. This nightly bombing ended when the base got a few C-47 Gunships. They were nicknamed "Puff the Magic Dragon". These side mounted gunships would fly the perimeter of the base and when they saw the flash of a rocket launch would immediately fire on that location. This did not stop the rocket attacks but did slow them.



Most of the rockets and mortars hit buildings and did not hurt anyone. The airport terminal building did get hit and it did cause a few injuries.

One night a rocket did hit between two skids of supplies that surrounded the 377th Security Police barracks. These skids provided protection to the barracks instead of using sand bags. The two skids that the rocket hit contained cases of beer and Right Guard deodorant. Both skids exploded and the smell that was created was horrendous. We were also outraged that they were messing with our beer supply!

On another night a rocket did hit a 4 man hooch on base. This was a direct hit and all 4 men were killed.



**ROCKET HIT ON TERMINAL ROOF**



**DIRECT ROCKET HIT, 4 MEN KILLED**

The closest I came to being a casualty of war happened right in the barracks I lived in. Three of us were standing on the 2nd floor landing in the rear of the barracks. It was an open area, and we looked down at a unit of the 25th Army Infantry Division, which were camped out just across a fence separating the helipad from our barracks. We were just standing there as the Army guys and us Air Force guys were bantering back and forth. I just remember hearing a tremendous sound of wood splitting. The 3 of us immediately hit the deck not knowing what happened. A sniper had fired a shot that hit a 2x6 post about 2 feet from our heads. It shattered the 2x6. Looking down we saw some guys from the 25th pointing at a water tower about 150 yards away. A few guys from the 25th grabbed their M16's and ran towards the water tower. We later found out that they got the sniper. Thanks again for the 25th!

The next few months were kind of routine, working 12 hour shifts during the day and putting up with frequent nightly rocket rounds hitting the base. I did have a two day detail that involved burning aerial photography film. Two of us were given a small truck full of reels of film. The CO told us where the burn pit was and told us to strap on the side arms he gave us. We asked him what the guns were for. He told us we were going off base to the burn pit and the film was classified as secret, so he said "if someone tries to take the film, shoot them. OK. At the burn pit we had to unroll each spool of film and get the film into the burn pit. We had at least 100 spools of film to unroll. Once the film was in the pit we ignited it. Burning film is toxic and burns extremely hot. I can't imagine how much toxic fumes I breathed in during those two days. After the fire went out, we had to wait until it cooled down. Then we had to get into the pit and poke the ashes with long poles to make sure all the film was totally burned. Now breathing toxic ashes.

As my DEROS was approaching I could call myself a "short timer". There were several short timer phrases going around. But my favorite was, "I'm so short I need a step ladder to tie my boots". The last few weeks were hard. Each night I would lie on my top bunk and look at the ceiling imagining a rocket coming through the roof. The result would be fatal. So around midnight I would get up, fully dressed, and walk the lower level of the barracks until I found an empty lower bunk. I would then lay down on someone else's bunk and try to sleep. If the owner of the bunk came back, he would just tap me on the shoulder and I would get up and leave. No words were spoken, as he understood why I was there.

Finally June 23, 1968 had arrived. My flight left Tan Son Nhut at noon. I remember that the plane was only half full. As the plane went down the runway for take off one of the guys starting saying, "GO, GO, GO". Soon everyone on the plane was shouting "GO, GO, GO, GO"!!! Once the plane gained some altitude shouts of joy erupted. WE were alive and heading home. The plane landed at a base in Japan, and it filled up with service men and their families heading back to the States. Now, the plane was packed with crying babies, and unruly kids. It was an all night flight (14 hours) to get to Travis AFB, in California. After clearing the base I took a bus to San Francisco Airport. I wanted to take a non stop flight to Boston, which left that night, so I had the whole day to kill at the airport. There was an USO station at the airport, so I checked in and was assigned a cot so I could get some sleep. A few hours before my flight, I found a very busy bar in the airport. I remember standing at the bar and looking at the people. Everyone was happy, laughing, and talking. The women were beautiful. It was so good to be in the USA.

I ordered a drink, and the bartender gave me the drink, looked me straight in the eye and said, "this one is on me, welcome home". A lot of other guys never got the "welcome home". The flight from SF to Boston was great. It was half empty, so I could stretch out and get some sleep. At the airport I was greeted by five members of my family, and, It was great.

So, that's my Viet Nam story. My last 2 years in the Air Force, I was assigned to the Strategic Air Command. Spent one year with the 17th Bomb Wing, Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio, and one year with the 72nd Bomb Wing at Ramey AFB in Puerto Rico. I loved working on those SAC bases.

Thank you for reading my story and please send your memories, corrections, questions or comments. Email to [dlross1914@gmail.com](mailto:dlross1914@gmail.com). (Or, to your Revetments Editor, at [lfry2@dejazzd.com](mailto:lfry2@dejazzd.com).)

Sources and recommended read. "The Battle For Saigon TET 1968" By Keith W Nolan, Presidio Press, 2002.  
[David L Ross, E4, USAF 1966-1970](#)

**2022 TSNA Reunion – Dayton OH Silent Auction**  
By: [Rick Cooley, TSNA Director of Membership Development](#)

At every TSNA Reunion, we conduct a Silent Auction as a fund-raising event. This year the event was very successful and raised \$395.00.

As we begin planning for the 2023 Reunion, we encourage everyone to start collecting items that we can have for the 2023 auction. Simply bring them with you to the Hospitality Room and someone will assist you with the display.

Included are several photographs of the 2022 auction.



**FROM TSNA PRESIDENT, RANDALL BROWN:**  
Re: Supreme Order of the Dragon Award:

I was really shocked to get this Award.

So Honored to TSNA.

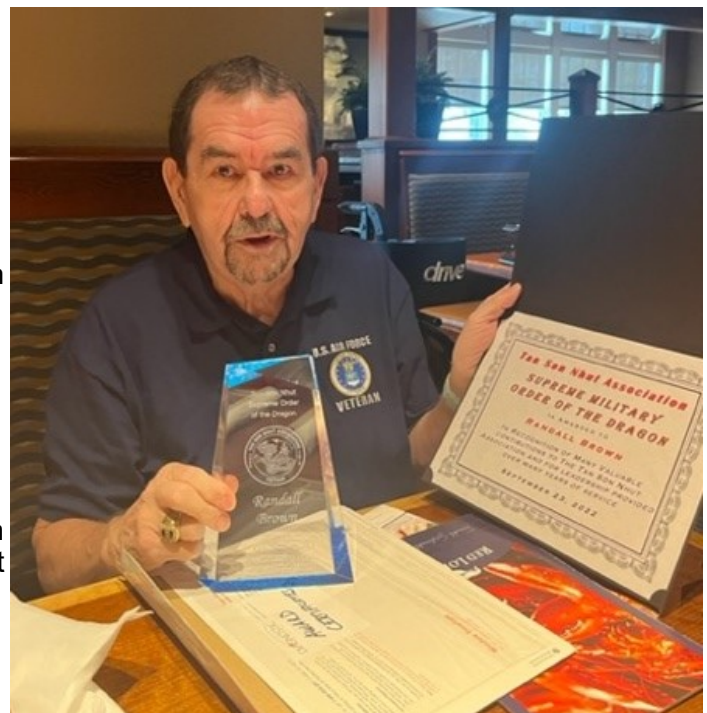
I am having some health issues and have been down and in and out the hospital. November 16th my next surgery. 7:30 AM!

So ready.

Wanting to get back and start perking up.

Thanks to all. Paul surprised Rita and I with Lunch and my Award. Restaurant gave me a Free Dessert for this!

See everyone at our next Reunion!



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**Penryn PA 17564**

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Annual Membership: \$20.00  
Five Year Membership: \$80.00  
Life Membership: \$180.00



**NOVEMBER 11, 2022**

**On Friday, November 11, 2022, please join in  
celebrating this day set aside to honor  
ALL Veterans.**

**From:** Larry Robinson <[gibraltar\\_61@hotmail.com](mailto:gibraltar_61@hotmail.com)>

**Date:** October 9, 2022 at 3:22:52 PM MST

**To:** Randall Brown <[browncigar1965@yahoo.com](mailto:browncigar1965@yahoo.com)>

**Subject: Re: Son looking for information**

On Oct 9, 2022, at 2:38 PM, Larry Robinson <[gibraltar\\_61@hotmail.com](mailto:gibraltar_61@hotmail.com)> wrote:

Mr. Brown,

My name is Larry Robinson. I have been looking for information of my fathers death Eugene Bernard Robinson on Tan Son Nhut, I believe some time in 1970 or 1971. I was happy see that there are people still interested from your website of the base. I lived in Saigon with my dad, mom, brother and two older sisters that also worked on the base. My dad worked for RMK and he was killed in a construction accident on the flight line.

I was very young at the time, 9 years old I believe, and have some memories of the two years I lived there. I was told that my father was a Construction Superintendent and was responsible for helping in building the base. I also know he was in the Navy as a Seabee during WW 2.

I was hoping that someone from your website might have some information about him. Any information would be appreciated, Sir.

Thank you.

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