



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam

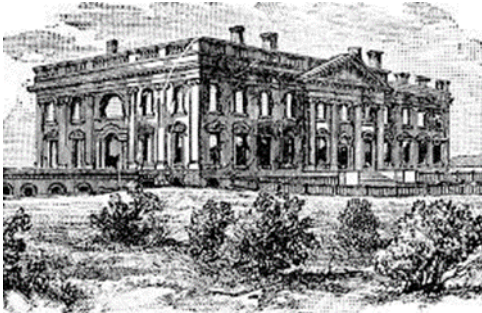
OCTOBER 2022

Chaplain's Corner-Every Good and Perfect Gift

By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain



This article is on the theme of other articles in Chaplain's Corner in that we talk about the founding of our nation and some tidbits from the papers of our founding fathers. Today we will talk about James Madison, the fourth President of the United States. He was a remarkable man and considered the Father of the Constitution. A good friend of Thomas Jefferson, he created the basic framework for the United States Constitution and helped write the Bill of Rights.



Madison was outspoken about the role of God in our country. In Federalist Paper #51 he said, *"If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary."*

Madison's time as president included the War of 1812 with Great Britain. He barely escaped capture when the British sacked Washington DC and who can forget the amazing heroics of his wife Dolly during that time. The British set the White House on fire, as seen in the drawing to the left. If you are not aware of this part of history please take time to look it up. There is information at this website <https://millercenter.org/president/madison>

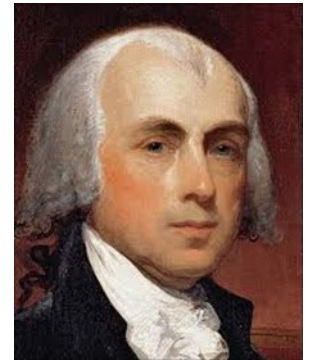
He was not known as the obvious leader in a large room or gathering, but in small circles and in serious circumstances people paid attention to him. Due to the circumstances he found himself involved in during his administration some historians compare his war management to Lincoln's during the civil war. He found himself in serious times and he was able to succeed, much like Lincoln. Both men sought the face of God while making decisions.

Madison was very well educated and founded the University of Virginia. In addition to normal school subjects he knew and studied the Word of God and used it as a platform for his life. Of course in those times the Bible was used as a textbook everywhere across this land.

In his 1815 Thanksgiving Day Proclamation he wrote. *"No people ought to feel greater obligations to celebrate the goodness of the Great Disposer of Events of the destiny of the Nations than the people of the United States . . . And to the same Divine Author of Every Good and Perfect Gift we are indebted for all of those privileges and advantages, religious as well as civil, which are so richly enjoyed in this favored land."*

The scripture he referenced in that proclamation comes from **James 1:17**, **"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above . . ."** So much of the time we forget the gifts we have been given in this nation. Is our nation perfect, far from it, it is just like the imperfect people who are in the nation, but we need to remember how good we have it.

Scripture tells us to seek forgiveness of our sins, seek God's face and be thankful for his blessings. When we do that we can continue as our founders envisioned. Do we personally feel an obligation to the Great Disposer of events as Madison said? We need to understand that obligation and if we honor God and He will continue to honor us and our nation.



The Hospitality 'Suite' TSNA 2022 Reunion Dayton, Ohio



PHIL MCCLURG, SUSIE AHRENS, AND "The Cowboys"
FROM RECENT CONTRIBUTOR, PHIL MCCLURG, and SUSIE AHRENS:

"Larry:

Near the conclusion of my September installment, I wrote the following:

In June of '68 I was rooting for the Bobby Kennedy campaign. What he called Vietnamization was Bobby's plan to increase material support, but to reduce US troop strength. This plan appealed to me because I deeply resented the cowboys, those thousands of young Vietnamese males who scooted their girlfriends through Saigon streets. They, not U.S. troops, should have been fighting and dying for their own Country.

Susie Ahrens has gently corrected my serious misperception, and, I would like my error corrected in the October Revetments. Susie says that all young Vietnamese males served in the SVN military whether volunteer or draftee. The "cowboys" I saw were off-duty troops, many of whom did ultimately die or were wounded in defense of their country.

I would regret if my error were to survive within TSNA archives without correction."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Phil mentions above about Susie's response to his article. Here is her complete email:

"Dear Philip,

First of all, I'd like to say "Thank you for your service "(in VN in particular) and I'm very glad you made it home OK and in one piece.

Second, I am also a member of the TSNA even though I am a civilian. I had worked for the USAF at TSN AB for 6 years before South VN fell in the hands of the North VN Communists.

The reason for my email is your comment about those young Vietnamese "cowboys" that cruised the streets of Saigon and not in uniform defending the country. Well, I have to be blunt and say that your perception is not correct. At that time, ALL Vietnamese males had to join the service, or be drafted. Very few had exceptions. I lost most of my male relatives (cousins, nephews). Every so often our family had to go to the military hospital to identify the bodies of some loved ones; all the bloody bodies would lie in the hallway like sardines because there was no room in the morgue.

The "cowboys" you saw on the streets were those soldiers out of uniform on their day off to rush in a date with their girlfriends and not knowing if they would have another date! Or they were on the street doing a job as taxis to make some extra income because their wages were terrible, One of my cousins was a Captain in the VNAF with a wife and 5 kids and he made less than me being a secretary for the 377 Services Sq.

I don't think there's an accurate number of the South Vietnamese service men deaths. I know for a fact that every Vietnamese family would lose someone, I myself, only have a couple of surviving cousins and nephews. Of course the death of all Vietnamese were up to millions during that senseless war.

After Apr 30, 1975, the new Communist government rounded them up and sent them to so called "Re-education camps" for months and years depending on their ranks; the higher the rank, the longer and worse conditions. Some of these camps were in the jungle in the Northern parts of VN, where they were treated like prisoners. A lot of them died of torture, malnutrition, sicknesses, hard labor, stress etc. Most of these men's families had no idea where they were, and they had no idea how long the sentences were.

Some of these men survived and made it home, some unlucky ones lost their families as well as their wives had remarried because of hardship.

Later years when the US government started the Humanitarian Operation and brought a number of them to the US, they were already middle aged, feeble or had some kind of disabilities, yet they had to make a living to support their families. You can imagine how hard it was for them to start their lives over with a damaged body, language barrier and a whole new culture to learn.

I had the privilege of serving in the Vietnamese Community of Utah for 10 years. I met several of them and I can't help

but have great admiration for how intact their spirits were even after years of being brainwashed by the Communists in those camps. I'm still amazed to this day how they also managed to survive the new life in the US as well (the government helped the first 6 months and you're on your own after that). And yet nobody seemed to have any kind of PTSD or any kind of mental illness as they ALL live with the anguish and shame of not being able to defend their own country.

I have a surviving first cousin (I regard him as my brother) who was a Captain in the VNAF, who was stationed at TSN for many years. He is 86 years old and lives alone so I would visit him every week and we would have long conversations about the VN war and I learned so much about what was going on with soldiers like him. I can only conclude that they were real warriors.

Again, thank you for your service, and as a Vietnamese, I have always been grateful to all the Viet Nam veteran's because I know first hand what you went through while serving in Vietnam!

Sincerely,

Susie "

EDITOR'S NOTE: [Here is a note from Phil, regarding another part of this whole story:](#)

Susie Ahrens responded to my recent Revetments story and a photo therein. Susie recognized the photo of Miss Phuong and has subsequently put me in touch with Miss Phuong with whom I worked in the IBM section of 377th CBPO. We are renewing our precious friendship after a 55-year separation!



2022 TSNA REUNION BANQUET ATTENDEES

2022 Dayton Reunion

By: Paul Mortensen, TSNA Director of Reunion Planning

We had a great reunion in Dayton September 22-25, 2022.

We had 85 registered to attend, including many who attended a reunion for the first time. Everyone had a great time telling stories, renewing friendships and sharing experiences.

Registration went smoothly registering all attendees and supplying a hospitality bag, information on Dayton, pens, and dog tags with built in flash drive to all attendees.

Extra dog tags are available in the BX on the website.



Selling tickets to the door prize and the 50/50 drawing. The winner of the 50/50 drawing received over \$150.00 and the winner of the door prize had a 50" TV sent to them.

Gary Fields and Amy Mortensen did a great job with all the ticket sales. The above picture shows Gary counting off tickets.

The winners of both drawings were first time attendees.

A radio station was set up to play Vietnam era radio and slides from TSN and surrounding areas.

The DJ shared his own experiences of his time in Vietnam.

(See later article by Harold Boon and Rich Cooley.)



2022 TSNA Awards Citations

The following was conducted by Secretary Dale Bryan and Treasurer Andy Csordas:

Andy:

Before moving to tonight's awards, we need to update everyone on the awards status. The last presentation like this was in 2019 in Little Rock. No awards were bestowed in 2020, and there were four in 2021:

Supreme Military Order of the Dragon to Dale Bryan
Military Order of the Dragon to Paul Mortensen
Anchor Awards to Trish Plunkett and Rena Csordas

Tonight, we are presenting awards in three of four possible categories to some most deserving members of our Association and to other persons or organizations that have been supportive of veterans over the years. Most recipients are very well known to all of you in attendance tonight.

We will bestow the Golden Knight and Anchor Awards and perform Supreme Military Order of the Dragon inductions. The first honor we bestow will be the Golden Knight Award.

Golden Knight:

We are bestowing this Golden Knight Award to a veteran organization in the Dayton area.

The organization has been very supportive of Tan Son Nhut Association to assist in conducting ceremonies at Wright-Patterson AFB. They also conduct a ceremony at the TSNA bench on Memorial Day. Because of them, our Bench Dedication in 2012 was a success.

This year, they were key to our rededication.

Would someone in attendance from Beavercreek VFW Post 8312 please come forward to receive the award.

Anchor Award:

This Anchor award is being presented to one that is no stranger to our association. She has assisted in more ways than one can list. All reunions that have been conducted here in Dayton are a success because of her assistance.

I'm sure that most of you have already concluded that Sharon Jernigan is the recipient. Sharon, please come forward.

Dale:

I now ask that all holders of the Supreme Military Order of the Dragon that are present to come forward to help us induct the new members.

If it were not for the work of the next inductees, this organization would not be the organization we all benefit from today. They, of course, were always key to successful reunions.

1st Dragon Induction:

This Supreme Dragon inductee has been on the Board of Directors since 2008 and has served as an officer of the Association. He has been a constant fixture at many reunions to always pitch in to make every one of them a success. The Board of Directors is fortunate to have him impart his wisdom during times of possible contention.

After Air Force service, he followed an academic career to put many people on a path of service and success in life. Much more complimentary information could be stated, but let's get to the presentation.

Rich Carvell, Vice President and Chairman of the Scholarship Committee, please come forward to be inducted into the Tan Son Nhut Supreme Military Order of the Dragon.

2nd Dragon Induction:

This inductee's contribution to TSNA has been very much in the open as a major officer of our organization. When asked if he would run for office in 2015, he did not hesitate in stepping up.

He is also very active in support to those veterans that suffer the maladies of Agent Orange exposure.

President Randall Brown is not present this evening, so we have him on line to be informed of his induction into the Tan Son Nhut Supreme Military Order of the Dragon.

Editor's Note: See the pictures of the above on the next page.



TSNA Member Robert Kaminski accepts the Golden Knight Award on behalf of the Beaver Creek VFW Post 8312, from Andy Csordas and Dale Bryan.



Andy and Dale present the Anchor Award to Sharon Jernigan.



Andy presents the Supreme Military Order of the Dragon to Rich Carvell.

TSNA President Randall Brown pictured in his living room in Paul's Valley, AZ. On his Cell Phone is a picture of his Trophy, and his Award Certificate. Our Prez, Randall Brown, received the Supreme Military Order of the Dragon award but was not at the Reunion because of his health. He was contacted by phone and his acceptance of the award was fed into the PA microphone.



Supreme Military Order of the Dragon Award to Randall Brown:
From Dale Bryan to Randall:

Reunion was great, but incomplete without you. So many were disappointed they missed being able to visit with you. Hope we were, with Rita's help, able to surprise you. Take care of yourself. Prayers, Dale

From Randall:

Dale, SURPRISE is not the word for it. When I get the award I will show my Cardiologist right away. Dale, I hope all is great for our reunion. I am totally shocked and in awe. Thanks to all for stepping up. Tell everyone I love TSNA and will be back. My Surgeon says so! Ha! I had my Dayton shirt on today for a reason of remembering you all. Thank you, thank you

Randall

TSNA Banquet Speaker
By: Rich Carvell, TSNA VP

Tan Son Nhut Association members got a nice history lesson at our Saturday night TSNA banquet. The speaker was Steven Byington, and the history lesson – complete with slide show – was about Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Byington reviewed the history of the base from its beginning.

Byington is the Cultural Resources Manager at Wright-Patterson AFB.

Byington told TSNA members and their guests that Wright-Patterson traces its military origins to World War I, but that its aviation history began with manned flight. And who would pioneer that manned flight at what would become Wright-Patterson? None other than Wilbur and Orville, the Wright brothers.

Following their successful flights at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in December 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright returned to their home in Dayton, Ohio. They chose an 84-acre plot of land near Dayton to serve as an experimental flying field to develop a practical airplane. As Orville wrote, it is where they “really learned to fly.”

It was at the end of 1944 during World War II that large concrete runways were constructed, Byington said. Four years later, the field became Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

The base’s name of Wright was chosen to honor both Wilbur and Orville Wright. In 1931 the War Department redesignated a portion of Wright Field as “Patterson Field” in honor of Lt. Frank Stuart Patterson who was killed during a test flight over Wilbur Wright Field in 1918. Patterson was the son of the founders of the National Cash Register Company.

Wright-Patterson, a 8,145-acre military reservation, is the most organizationally complex base in the U.S. Air Force and over the years has supported many research projects for the military.

World War II enemy aircraft captured by allied forces were studied at Wright-Patterson, Byington said. During Project Paperclip in 1944-45, Byington told the TSNA audience, German scientists helped to develop rockets and other advanced technology. In 1950, scientists at the Air Force base, tried to develop a nuclear-powered B-36 bomber with a reactor aboard, but the reactor never actually powered the aircraft. However, from 1962 to 1971, Byington noted, there was a nuclear reactor at Wright-Patterson.

In the 1960’s, research on tactical aircraft took place, and the result of some of that research was used in Vietnam. Scientists quickly learned that things developed in Ohio did not function as well in Vietnam’s tropical climate.

Byington noted that Wright-Patterson employs 31,000 persons and has the largest economic impact in the state of Ohio.

FROM GARY FIELDS, TSNA DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Lard Butt 5K was a success.

We sold enough 50-50 tickets to give away \$180. We sold enough tickets for the door prize Raffle to almost break even.

Each attendee was given a ticket; additional tickets could be purchased.

Both prizes were won by the family of a first time attendee, and a new member. The family of Randy Brown purchased the trip for their Dad as a Father’s Day Present.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING
Here are the TSNA 2022 Reunion Santa’s
Rich Carvel, Jimmy Smith, Lynn Patton



Tan Son Nhut Reunion Bench Rededication

By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

During our Dayton Reunion we had the opportunity to rededicate the Tan Son Nhut Association bench and the two plaques in the Memorial Garden. It is hard to believe we first placed those items in the garden 10 years ago. The bench is dedicated to all who served at Tan Son Nhut. One plaque is dedicated to the memory of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice while defending Tan Son Nhut, the other is dedicated to the rest of us who may have suffered injury, no matter what kind either then or now, from our service there.

It is quite ironic that the bench next to one of our plaques is from the Operation Ranch Hand group. They were the group that was tasked with spraying the Agent Orange in country. Virtually all of us have been affected by Agent Orange. If we have minimal affects at the moment that may change to major illness in the future. Of course the Operation Ranch Hand troops were just doing their job, as we all did our jobs while in country.

We talked about how things that seemed so important in the past do not seem that important today. The question about what is actually important was posed. The answer is each other, our families and friends. We are all getting older and we can't take possessions with us as we leave this earth. What we leave can be much more important. Perhaps we need to learn to forgive and forget.

We also discussed the Tan Son Nhut Association family. It truly is a family. Some of the hotel employees noted that our reunions are so different from other reunions. We enjoy each other's company and that is the emphasis, not just bending elbows. We so appreciate all that attended, especially the first time attendees. You too are now part of our family.



ARMED FORCES VIETNAM RADIO - STEPHEN SMITH AT THE TSNA REUNION

Stephen Smith is more noted for his work with the Armed Forces Network Vietnam. He arrived in Vietnam in April of 1968 following his training in the Army Signal Corps. He had prior work experience in radio engineering before he became a soldier.

During his in-country travels for the Armed Forces Network, he found time to do some extensive photography work. His photographs give an overview of just how vast the war efforts were. In particular, one can easily see through his photos the herculean tasks which were needed to fulfill the logistical needs of the war. To most guys, Tan Son Nhut Air Base was large and busy. His photos of Long Binh Army post show how big it was since it was the logistics center for the Army.

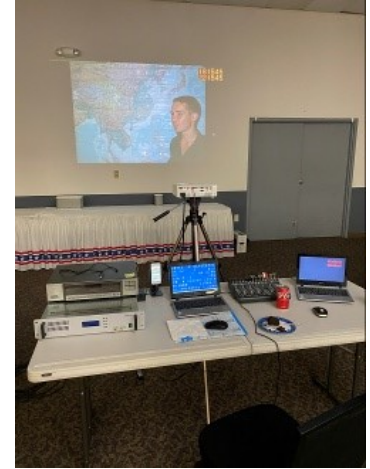
Mr. Smith's efforts in the Vietnam War went far beyond capturing the images of war. Probably most of us have fond recollections of listening to the radio and in some cases the viewing of a TV show. For the most part, it was the music and not the Disc Jockey which causes us to remember. Music just didn't happen. If you had a radio, you simply turned the switch on and listened. Mr. Smith and others like him were the engineering minds and hands which made the broadcasts work. In a nutshell Stephen Smith was a Radio Nerd, a Geek of sorts and a title he proudly wears even to this day. From the ordinary operations of the equipment, Mr. Smith would on occasion cobble together various pieces of equipment to improve sound quality. One of his fond memories was when he pieced together equipment which allowed him to broadcast in stereo. That was special.

The Vietnam War had a hint of politics involved (surprise). This comes to the forefront in the broadcast of music and mov-

ies with regard to censorship. As Mr. Smith tells the story with a broad smile on his face, the Pentagon reviewed records (got to remember this was before CD's) and then would press the songs into another disc for shipment to Vietnam. As one would expect, songs with controversial lyrics and themes would not be allowed. The lone exception was a song entitled "Acapulco Gold" which is about a strain of marijuana. Since the censors allowed it to be played, it was assumed they did not know what the lyrics of the song meant. To add to the inside humor, the radio folks were required to play a public service announcement about avoiding drugs at 7:00 pm. This was named by the radio folks as the "Pot Spot" which was immediately followed by the playing of "Acapulco Gold". Such fun by the radio folks. As censorship goes, Mr. Smith said the only movie not allowed in Vietnam was the hilarious M*A*S*H.

And now you know.

Article written by Harold Boone, Photos by Rick Cooley



**Andy Csordas, TSNA Treasurer
and Associate Chaplain,
at the TSNA
Bench Rededication Ceremony**

**TSNA 2022 Reunion
September 22-25, 2022
NMUSAF, Dayton, Ohio**

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Web Site: www.tsna.org
Annual Membership: \$20.00
Five Year Membership: \$80.00
Life Membership: \$180.00



EDITOR'S NOTE:

I was not able to be at this reunion, but based on our registration information, I am sure this is Randy Brown, his wife, Barbara, and their 3 daughters.

This reunion was a Father's Day gift for Randy from his daughters.

NEW MEMBER

Timothy B. Smith Middletown OH tsmith1989@cinci.rr.com Jun 69 - May 70 1st Marine Air Wing, Marine Air Control
Admin. Chief Not at TSN - at DaNang. Jimmy's brother

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