



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association
A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



DECEMBER 2023

Christmas 67

By: Bernard Bucholz
1876th Communications Squadron

I spent Christmas 1967 at work in the 7th Air Force Command Post Comm. Center. Christmas greetings were going back and forth between the comm. centers on all the teletype circuits in addition to the normal traffic. Many people brought cookies, candy, and other edibles received from home to share. We also had received from the Red Cross or USO a couple of large mail bags full of Christmas cards from citizens from all over the USA and we enjoyed looking through them.

My Christmas 68 at TSN

By: Bob Lee
377th SPS

As it got closer to Christmas 1968 at Tan Son Nhut, everyone seemed to go into themselves. It didn't seem possible to find much to be merry about. The weather, the atmosphere, and the confusion of war certainly didn't remind anyone of our most celebrated holiday.

On a day about one week from Christmas, I found in my mailbox, as I often did, a card that said I had a package to pick up at the counter. As the postal clerk (wearing a red Santa hat) rounded the corner, I could barely see him behind the two large boxes he was trying to balance. He passed them to me with a smile and a "Merry Christmas!" It was my first glimmer of Holiday Spirit.

I walked the short distance back to the 377th compound, and made my way to my ground floor "cube". A crowd began to gather around, because boxes from my family in California usually contained treasures, like : SPAM, Best Foods mayonnaise, Roman Meal bread, chocolate chip cookies, fresh oranges, and Bazooka Bubble Gum.

Today was different. As I got the tape, the cardboard, and the plastic trash bag covering opened on the larger of the two boxes, I was overwhelmed by the smell of a high Sierra forest...!

Inside of the box was a perfect, 4-foot tall, Silver Tip Fir tree. Its stump wrapped in a damp towel, and enclosed in a plastic bag. I carefully removed the tree and looked around at my mates...I saw more than one tear, as we all took in the familiar sight and smell of this little beauty.

We quickly opened the smaller box, to find a tree stand, twinkle lights, garland, and ornaments. We decorated and carefully placed the little tree atop my small fridge.

Through the Holiday season, the tree became a place where everyone would come to spend their night off. And a place where more than one toast was made. And a place to pinch off a few stubby needles and smash them in your fingers to release that wonderful smell of every Christmas tree you had ever cut.

As the holidays passed, and I got "shorter" and "shorter", no one would allow me to take the tree down. It became brown, and frankly, a fire hazard. The ends of its branches were bare from having its needles "pinched", but the lights still twinkled. As I left for home in March 1969, my cube mate said that he would like to keep the little tree there for the next Christmas.

Bless all who came home, and especially, those who didn't...!



TSN Christmas 67

By: Jim Stewart, 377th SPS , Sept 67 – Sept 68

I was stationed at Tan Son Nhut from Sept. 67 through Sept. 68 in the 377th Security Police Sentry Dog Section as a dog handler. I have attached a photo of my dog Dobe 7X49 and me from December 1967 probably taken by Bob Need's photography unit.

Here's my tale:

On Christmas eve 1967 I was posted with my sentry dog Dobe on post kilo 13 north of the runway. Most K9 posts had a small sand bag bunker on them. Dobe and I were taking a break at the bunker. I was listening to the Armed Forces radio broadcast of the John Doremus show on my "unauthorized" radio. Bing Crosby was singing White Christmas. I sat there with tears in my eyes feeling very home sick and sorry for myself. Bing Crosby's version of White Christmas is still my favorite Christmas song. Every time I hear it I think of my time at Tan Son Nhut.



Chaplain's Corner-Christmas Andy Csordas-Associate Chaplain

During December we celebrate the holiday of Christmas. So often we really forget what Christmas is about given the surrounding circumstances. As things happen to us, our loved ones gathering, and things occurring in our country and around the world, they may become our focus and our continued thought process.

Most of us have heard about the Christmas Truce of 1914. There has been a lot of speculation as to, did it actually happen or is it a legend? As with many stories of old there is more than one version of what actually happened. After a fair amount of research I believe the Imperial War Museum of Great Britain tells the story accurately.



day troops from both sides met between the trenches. They exchanged some gifts and some even enjoyed a pickup game of football (soccer).

There is even a story about a British soldier who set up a barber shop and charged the Germans a few cigarettes for a haircut. Diaries and letters confirm the stories are authentic. There are more stories if you wish to do some research.

It was not all fun, they also used the time to recover and bury the dead from no man's land. This was not a complete cease fire or truce. At other places along the trenches the fighting continued.

Some officers were upset about the truce because they thought it would endanger the fighting spirit of the men. After this event both sides tried to prevent a reoccurrence of this truce, but it did happen occasionally, not just at Christmas. Soldiers used the brief pauses to repair the trenches and collect the dead.



So what do the scriptures say about Christmas? Christians believe that God sent his Son to be born of a virgin to rescue us from our sin. In **Matthew 1:22-23** we read the familiar story; ²²**All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:** ²³**"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").**

So, as we celebrate this Christmas this year make sure you include God among the fun we have during this season. **Praise God for His blessings and His indescribable gift, life with Him forever because of the birth we celebrate on Christmas!!!**

*Opinions expressed are the author's and not an official stance of the Tan Son Nhut Association

From the Editor:

I would like to thank EVERYONE who has been contributing to Revetments—not only this one, but all of them! And my thanks to Jim Stewart for asking his 377th SPS buddies to contribute their Christmas TSNA memories, including many who are not members of TSNA.

My Christmas 1967 Story

By: Dan Lawler
377th SPS
Oct 67—Oct 68



My name is Dan Lawler. I was stationed at Tan Son Nhut from 20 October 67-20 October 68. I primarily worked the main entry control point to the flight line. This is not much of a story but it did happen to me.

Christmas Day 1967 was my first Christmas away from home. I was lonely and very homesick. I was on my way to the chow hall to enjoy a Christmas Dinner. I was about to cross the street to go into the chow hall, when a jeep with four Green Berets pulled up to the stop sign and was turning left to go towards the heliport. Inside the jeep were a Captain, 2 Lieutenants and one female Lt. Colonel. As they drove by I saluted them, and the female Colonel popped me a salute. As I looked down she smiled and said “Merry Christmas troop”. I looked at her and recognized her as “Martha Raye”.

For those who don't know Martha Raye, she was an Actress, Singer and Comedian. During the war, she was made an honorary Green Beret because she visited U. S. Army Special Forces in Nam without fanfare and she helped out when things got bad in Special Forces Camps. As a result, she came to be known affectionately by the Green Berets as “Colonel Maggie,”

Recollections Christmas 1969

By: Don (Big Al) Segraves
377th SPS

I was an A1C, assigned to Bravo Sector, 3/69-3/70. A lot of us in Bravo Sector made bets with other sectors to “pop” our pop flares at midnight on Christmas, Dec 69. I was assigned to Tango 16 that night and the observation tower was right next to the Shell tank farm, also across the road from Bravo Bunker 7.

Well there were prevailing winds which almost prevented me from doing so, but I took the top cap off a couple of flares and put the cap underneath and slapped the cap with my hand, sending the flare skywards. I saw all kinds of flares going up. Not only our sector but outside the fence line with all kinds of colors of tracer rounds going up in the air.

When we got off work in the morning, lots of the guys had gotten “care” packages from home and we drank beer, barbequed, and shared what we received from home.

One airman, nicknamed “tank”, honest to God, received a case of Coors beer from his family. In those years you could only get Coors west of the Mississippi, and in country you had to drink what the Class VI store had.

Also the two large white radar domes had Christmas lights decorated all over it. We thought what a great target to aim at (for the VC). Sure enough, Dec 19 there was a rocket attack and a couple of the 122mm. rockets landed near the domes.

Coming in from downtown Saigon, you could see the lights miles away.

Anyway those were some of my recollections from Christmas December 1969.

Don (Big Al) Segraves E-6, retired after 25 yrs with the 55th Aerial Port Sq. (USAFR) at Travis AFB, CA.

My Christmas 68 Picture

By: Edwin Smith
377th SPS
TSN Dec 68 – Dec 69



I saw Jims' (Stewart) request for Christmas stories from Tan Son Nhut.

Well here goes. I entered the USAF on Nov 7th 1967. I finished basic at Amarillo AFB and was home on leave in WV for Christmas of 67. I had always been with my family every Christmas.

My first base was Nellis in Nevada. I received orders for Vietnam in Oct of 68. My first Christmas away from home and family was at Tan Son Nhut. I arrived in country with the 377th SPS on Dec 3rd, 1968. What a shock it was to think that I might never see my family again. I tried to keep a good outlook on. I was really more concerned about my family missing me. Our family has always been a close group with all my cousins and aunts and uncles meeting at my grandmother's home for the big Christmas party each year. There was 34 of us in the family. So to try and let them know that I was having a great Christmas I had my picture taken on Christmas Day 1968 with a little tree we had in the 377th SPS area.

I know this is not much of a story but I do have the picture. I have attached it to this email.

Welcome home brother.

Jack The Old Cowboy poet

My Christmas Story

By: Fred Stein 460th TRW

I have been a member of TSNA for ten years or so; and my family and I attended the Reunion near Chanute AFB, Illinois in 2004. Here is my Christmas memory at TSN:

I arrived at TSN AFB in November 1968. My AFSC was 402X0, an aerial photo systems repair technician. I worked on the RF-4C's in the 12th and 16th TRS. To continue on with my Christmas story, I was sent TDY, mid Dec, to Phu Cat AFB, near Qui Nhon, north of Cam Ranh Bay, up the coast. I was at Phu Cat for over two months. My job there was to turn around RF-4C's that had flown a sortie from TSN, and were flying another sortie before returning to TSN. The story on the flight line, a day or two before Christmas Day, was that Bob Hope and his entourage was coming to the base. Earlier, a C-7 Caribou landed with its nose decorated in red, and a Santa Clause painted on the fuselage. Yep, Mr. Chuckles himself had landed, and there would be entertainment soon. I was on duty on the flight line on Christmas Day. There were only one or two birds expected in, to be turned around, but it was my turn to stay on duty as backup / on call. My NCOIC, a young Staff Sgt, told me to "disappear", as he would handle any work that came up. Bless his heart, I thanked him several times, and I was gone.

By the time I arrived at the site of the Bob Hope Show, there were thousands of troops already waiting. People were sitting everywhere, and anywhere, in an attempt to be part of this historic event. There were awesome sound systems set up, so that everyone could hear the show..

From my vantage point, everyone on stage appeared to be two inches tall, as I was far to the rear of the audience. It was a wonderful show full of comedy and entertainment, with Rosie Grier, Ann Margaret, the Gold Diggers, Les Brown Orchestra, and many others who I do not recall. Bob was his usual charming, humorous self. Everyone loved him and his cast of entertainers.

I was sent back to TSN in Feb 69 and I remained there until I shipped back to the "world" in Nov 69. I stopped enroute at Anderson AFB Guam to visit my twin brother, who was stationed there for 18 months, as a top-secret crypto decoder/encoder. He and I had an early holiday celebration visit for two days. And after my 30 day leave, I was assigned to Beale AFB CA. until I was discharged Dec 70, along with my twin bro, who was stationed at Vandenberg AFB Ca later in 70. We drove home together back to the Midwest on Dec 9, 1970.

My Christmas Gifts, TSN 1969

By: Ed Raube, 377th SPS

Hi, I was assigned to the USAF, 377th SPS at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN from July 27th, 1969 to July 27th, 1970. So my Christmas in 1969, in Vietnam, was an experience.

We got hit with a rocket attack on 12/19/69, and as an Air Force Security Policeman, I responded, as per pre-ordered. Prior to which, I had received a "dear john" letter from my estranged girlfriend, of/at that time. Christmas time was a great time to write such a letter, but who knew about "political correctness" at that time (39 years ago).

And I had also received a Christmas gift of a small tree decorated from my (only a year prior) high school graduates. And also a gift from an aunt and uncle, that I really thought a lot of, and, of course, especially, after they sent to me a Christmas gift.

The problem with both of the gifts:

The problem with the much appreciated gifts at that 1969 Christmas, was that the gifts had chocolate and candy attached, or somehow, with the gift's. And, me being the traditionalist, decided to wait until Christmas morning to open the gifts that I had received. Hey, I was 19 years old, and away from home for the first time in my life. I wanted some sort of a Christmas tradition, so I decided to wait until Christmas morning to open my gifts from home. I was looking forward to that morning, for at least a week. The good news was that the sending parties were aware of the time reference difference and did send their gifts early enough for me to receive them prior to Christmas day in Nam.

The problem that I never ever thought about was that, where I stored the Christmas gifts, a small to medium sized locker space that we were assigned. They were no match to the rats that totally infiltrated the barracks area that we called home. These rats ate almost the entire Christmas gifts that I had received. I'll never forget the experience of opening the locker and seeing the non eaten end of those gifts, and pulling them out, and suddenly realizing that everything had been eaten by the rats. The only thing left was the end that was still wrapped, but not yet eaten. It was a shock back to reality, and most definitely, one of those Christmas's that I will never forget.

To this day, I will not open a Christmas Day gift until Christmas morning. The good news is that due to our victory to maintaining our standard of living, none of any of my Christmas gifts since 1969 in Vietnam, have been opened prior to Christmas morning, or haven been eaten by rats.

For that, I am thankful, and have been happy and proud that I served and have endured that. It has been a life long growth experience.

A Beautiful Time of Year

By: Sgt Ken Prichard
Ichi Ban M672
377th SPS
TSN K9 69-70

What a beautiful time of year in Viet Nam, Christmas.

To get the troops in the mood there where lights put up all around the base. Our favorite was the cross of bright white lights that was right behind the SP barracks. This was such a magnificent cross that it was written up in the Stars and Stripes. Sgt Terry Groves, got the S&S and threw it at me...."Hey, Prich...read about our lights and tell me what you think..." I read the article and found it strange that the author would state that the cross could be seen from 22.1 miles from the base.....I just found it strange that they would not round off the number. Groves, whose paranoid demeanor served me well many times throughout my tour of duty, then told me that that was the text book distance for the rockets that the enemy was so fond of using. We thought about shooting them out but someone came to their senses and took them down. This ranks up there with having a guardmount on the runway for the entire SQ. One sapper or rocket would have taken the whole 377th out.

Christmas of 69 in the K9 barracks was one of the best I can remember. We had a tree, packages from home (we shared) and music, and booze. It was surreal and burned into my memory. I find it hard to explain, you would have had to experience it. 18 years old in a Combat Zone, where everything was crisp, clear and heightened. Merry Christmas to all.



Christmas, 1966, Tan Son Nhut AB

Pictured above is TSNA Reunion planner, Paul Mortensen, This was in the housing area that was next to Tent City "B"

Tent City "B" was to the southeast of the MACV headquarters.

The houses were part of the French family housing unit.

Behind the houses were the tents of the tent city, and beyond that was the golf course.

I ate lunch (steak) at the golf course once with a friend and an Army major. We then went on to an orphanage to help with some cleanup and repairs that needed to be made to some of the cribs and beds. Many of the children were Amer-asians, and I have often thought about these children and how many, if any, were able to leave after the war.

We returned several times after the first visit, whenever we could get a 1/2 day off, we went to the orphanage and helped where we could.

Paul Mortensen

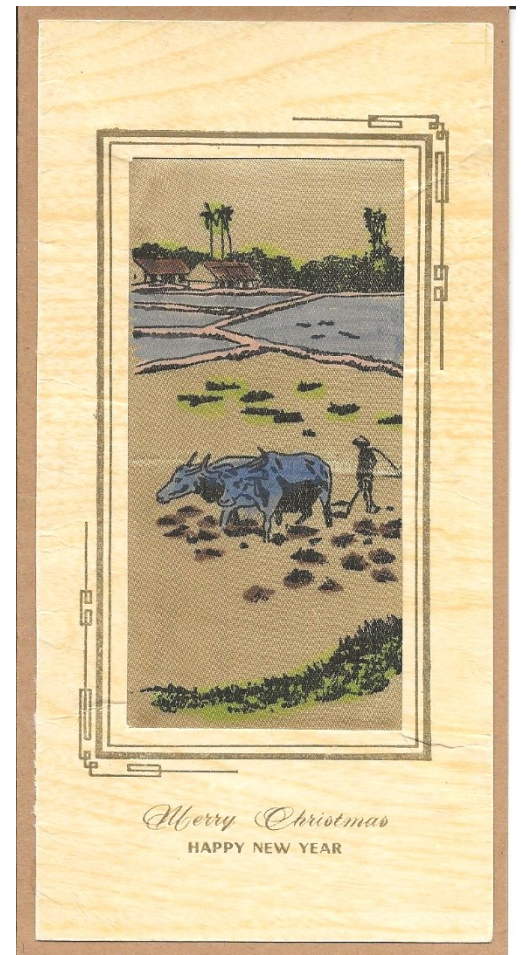
Christmas and New Year Card

In 1966, Paul Mortensen sent this card (picture to the right) to his sister who was living in Montana. Fifty years later, for Christmas 2016, his sister gave the card back to him. She had maintained it in her possession for all those years, waiting for the perfect time to return it to him.

All holidays in Vietnam were tough on all personnel, and many of us have a few fond memories of that time in our lives. Some of us still have memories that are not so pleasant, but the reunion committee would like to wish each and every member of the Tan Son Nhut Association, a very merry and wonderful holiday season.

**And we hope to see you at the reunion in
September 2024, in Huntsville AL**

**COME AND SHARE MEMORIES OF
TAN SON NHUT**





The Reunion Committee of the Tan Son Nhut Association wish each and every one of you a very Merry and Happy Holiday Season

Mark your calendars for our next reunion

September 18-20, 2024

**Four Points by Sheraton
(Huntsville Airport)**

Huntsville, AL



Association Members and non-members can attend (Membership information will be available for those who wish to join)

We hope to see you there, and Please invite anyone you know who was stationed at, or passed through, Tan Son Nhut AB, to attend the reunion.



**Thanks to all the
TSNA Members!**

Christmas at Tan Son Nhut, 1966

By Paul Mortensen, TSNA Director of Reunion Planning

I arrived at Tan Son Nhut in March 1966, and had already decided that I would get out of the Air Force when I returned to the "world" in March 1967, so this Christmas would be my last Christmas in the Air Force, and last and only Christmas in Vietnam.

Following is excerpts from my journal from Christmas 1966.

23 December 1966, Not working 12-16 hour days anymore, but the parcel post clerks state there still are people coming in to mail packages and hoping they get to their destination in the states by Christmas. Started developing our own pictures at the USO tonight. We had a lot of fun just playing around. Courier duty to Embassy and back. Easy day, tomorrow is the Bob Hope Show.

24 December 1966, The day before Christmas and all is well on the Eastern Front. Went to see the Bob Hope Show. It was good, I couldn't see, but I could hear everything. I really enjoyed the show. I got a half day off today and all of tomorrow off. I've never had two days off in a row. I'm getting short.

25 December 1966, Christmas day. I got up and went to church, I only have a few more Sundays left where I can go to church in Vietnam.

After Church I went to the Plaza to get some Piasters and had lunch there. It was free. A really good Christmas dinner. I really enjoyed it. My one and only Christmas dinner in the war.

Before I moved hotels I ate at the Plaza daily but this was the first time I had been there since I moved. I saw Le, Dung, Mai, Tieu for the first time in months. They all came by my table and said hi, and to see how my speaking Vietnamese was coming. (It's not) It was good to see all of them again.

I went to the Honda shop to see if they had oil plugs for the one that was stolen off my bike. They didn't have any but said they could have one by tomorrow. That made me think that they will probably borrow one off another bike.

I'll see if I can get off early tomorrow, I deserve it and I am getting SHORT.

I went to the Plaza again tonight. They had two Korean shows, real good shows. The Joe McCoy show was one. He had a female singer that was one of the best I've seen in Vietnam. Very, very good. I really enjoyed myself. My last Christmas and it has been wonderful.

Cô Lê kept bringing me free drinks and food. I think I pissed off some NCO because she kept bringing our table things rather than his table. I'm short though so I don't really care.

Tôi chúc bạn một Giáng sinh thật vui vẻ - I wish you a Merry Christmas.

Và với bạn cũng vậy - And the same to you.

Merry Christmas and good night.

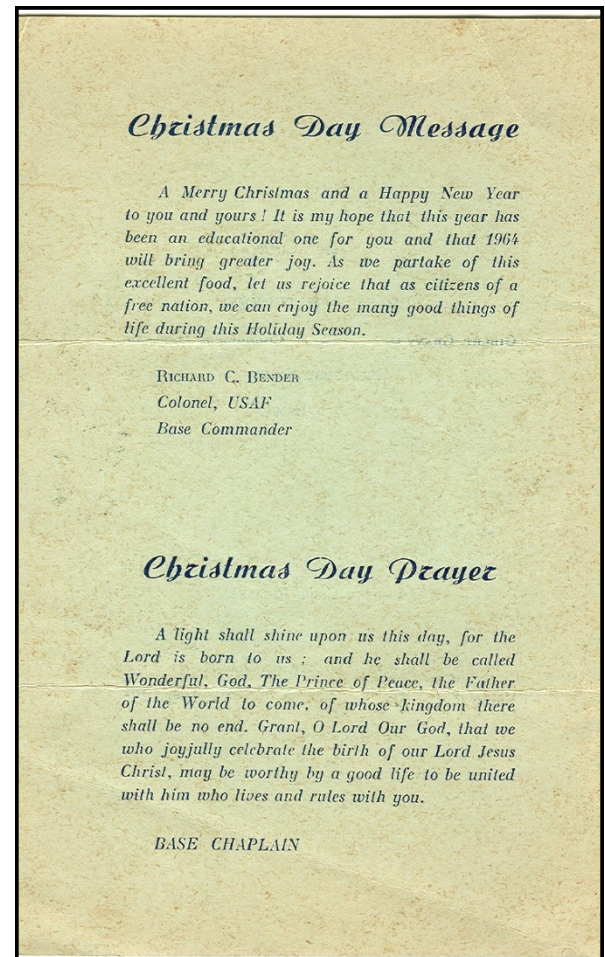
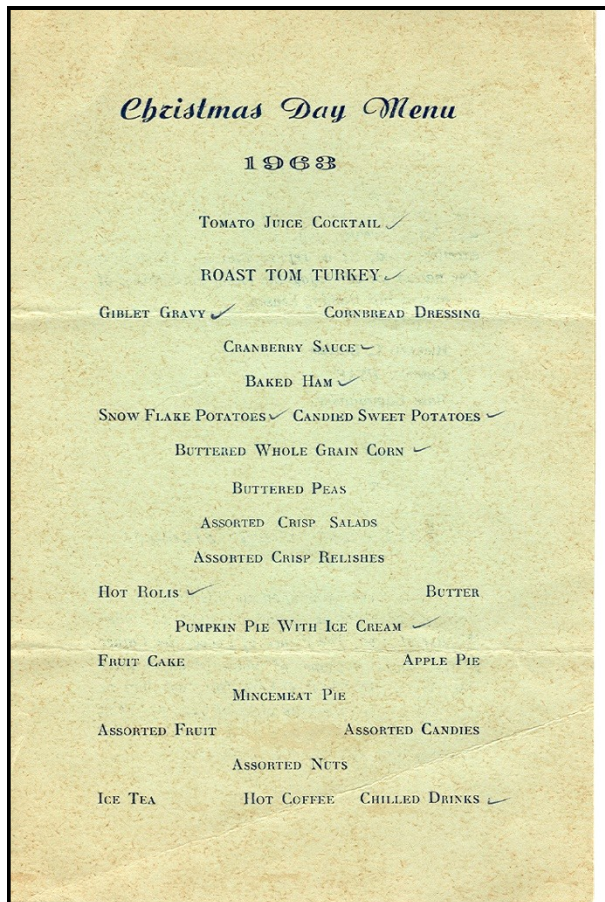


**Announcing the 2024 Reunion
Four Points by Sheraton
(Huntsville, AL Airport)
September 18-20, 2024**

Christmas 1963
Tan Son Nhut Air Base

By: Bob Jarboe
TSN '63-'64. 377th USAF Dispensary

It was a time as we all know when we were all so far from home and our leaders would always do their best to make us feel at home as we enjoyed one of our most valued traditions. You will note that I checked off those items which I had planned to partake. It is 45 years later, but, I still recall some of my fondest military memories during my assignment at Tan Son Nhut. Like as written: "All included, none excluded."



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NEW MEMBER

Ralph W. Richards Elkridge MD rsrichards@usa.net Dec 69 - Dec 70
460 AMS ECM Shop ECM support on RF-4C, RF-101-C, RB-57C

IN MEMORIAM

SMSGt. David R. Stringer, Jul 68 - Apr 75
31st ARRS 39th ARRS 20th MAS 776TAS
Passed away October 26, 2023
(More info will be in the January, 2024 Revetments)

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