



REVETMENTS

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



MAY 2023

MEMORIAL DAY

By: The Reverend Dr. Billy T. Lowe,
Life Member, Tan Son Nhut Association (From an earlier Revetments)

Yesterday was Memorial Day. It was a day for me that was filled with reflection and thought. There is and always remains a stirring in the heart and soul of those who honor the commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill". Is there any justification for war? Please, read on.

Memorial Day was first recognized as Declaration Day in 1868, honoring those who had lost their lives in the Civil War. It has become a sacred day to pay tribute to all those who died in service to our Nation at war and peace.

Dr. Roger Shinn, professor of Christian Ethics at New York's Union Seminary, helps us to understand the conscience of the American servicewoman and serviceman when he saluted his comrades in arms with the most pungent words ever written regarding the personal and intimate courage of standing up for what one believes is right. "Grim as war was, it appeared to them a little better choice than standing by while aggressors conquered, exterminated, and poisoned the minds of children...In our world, how do responsible people act responsibly when in a senseless world; how do men act rationally in an incomprehensible era; how do they act morally in a demonic conflict; some of those who entered the war, entered with a prayer of repentance for their participation in the sins of the world that made war the best choice they could see. The wiser made no claims to perfection for their own cause. They were resolved to fight it with half-truths. They made choices when no choice was right. They sought to rid the world of its filth with no expectations of keeping themselves clean. Rarely do any of us really accept the cost of our beliefs, but times do come when they demand accountability."

On this Memorial Day weekend past, I honored those who paid the ultimate price to preserve our freedom and democracy; and who gave their all for the rights and freedoms of others in foreign lands who have and are facing oppression from a wicked regime. And this I know, that there comes a time when we must sin in order to avoid evil. I am just one of the grateful people all over our nation who offered a prayer to God for those who made the ultimate sacrifice. God will bless us and our Nation for it.



MEMORIAL DAY
MAY 29, 2023
LET US NOT FORGET

THE SEPARATION BLUES

By: Jim Dugan
178th Repl Co, 90th Repl Battalion, USA

During the Vietnam War, the greater number of those serving in the U.S. Army were draftees. That comes as no surprise to anyone, for we were engaged in a foreign conflict, and had an active Selective Service Act still in effect. At draft boards across the nation, thousands of young men who had reached an average age of 19 years, were being ordered for physicals and eventual induction into the military.

The Vietnam War resulted in thousands entering military service who otherwise never gave a serious thought to being a soldier. While the anti-war draft protesters gained most of the attention in those days, a greater number accepted their fate and donned the uniform.

For others, it was a somewhat different experience. Knowing that the draft was in their future, they enlisted. Enlistment gave them a choice of how they were going to serve their country. They had choice of branch of service, MOS and, in some cases, where their first duty assignment would be. But all knew there was a war going on in Southeast Asia, and Vietnam was in their futures.

I can still remember my basic training experiences at Fort Dix, New Jersey. There was hardly a place that was safe from some small bit of anti-Army graffiti. "FTA" was seen in the strangest places. Usually it was written in small letters in mess halls as basic trainees waited in line. Latrines were another place. In the 60's, FTA became the new "Kilroy was here." Military service was a shock to these kids. What was to come was an even bigger shock.

Vietnam and the war there, was a shock to the systems of all America. The effects of the war were so adverse to Americans, they can still be felt today, some forty years later. Perhaps it is because the war was, and still is, misunderstood. To the thousands of veterans of that war, to still not understand the whys and wherefores of the war only serves to prolong the pain of what they endured.

By 1970, when I returned home, the Army had instituted an early separation policy for returning overseas personnel who had 90 days or less remaining on their enlistments. I fell into that group.

My separation took place in June instead of September. The first emotion was one of elation. It was great to be free of the uniform and all that it brought with it. Like so many of my brother Vietnam vets, I packed my uniform, medals, and other mementos of my experience away for twenty years, and never looked at them. What I didn't pack away, was my photographs. They were the constant reminder that I had been a part of something important at one time.

In the early 70's, the feeling against the Vietnam War was greater than it had been when I left to become a part of it. I found that few people cared to see the photographs I had taken, or even cared to hear about the war. There were friends still there that I had served with, sweated with. Guys I knew were still experiencing rocket attacks at Tan Son Nhut and Long Binh, and no one cared. No one cared! I soon began to feel like I had left the real world, and had come home to a make believe one. I was separated from the Army, and couldn't seek solace of anyone who cared. The only Vietnam veterans organization in existence at the time was the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, but I had, and still do have mixed feelings about that group.

The VFW and American Legion were frowning on the membership of Vietnam veterans at the time, and it would be another eight years before Vietnam Veterans of America would be formed.

Although not everyone received an early separation like I did upon their return from Vietnam, I believe that policy was as much a contributor to the cases of PTSD that Vietnam veterans are experiencing today. That is not intended as a political statement but rather, a statement of lessons learned. Anyone returning from a war experience needs debriefing time. They should not just be released in a world back home that has no concept of what they experienced.

Today, I take pride in saying, "I am a Vietnam veteran!" Vietnam veterans are now the largest group of still living war veterans. The old veteran organizations that shunned us in the early 70's, now beg for our membership. The top positions of the VFW are held by Vietnam veterans. We have arrived in the community of American veterans. But it is still hard to forget those days when we were left out in the cold to fend for ourselves alone. Perhaps our experience was a learning experience for the rest of America. Perhaps, without knowing it, Vietnam veterans were continuing to serve America by their

ill treatment during the post-Vietnam War period of the early 70's. As we look around today it is evident that things have changed in America's feeling toward its returning war veterans since those days. Let's hope so.

The above from the May, 2009 Revetments. Thanks, Jim.

Chaplain's Corner- Liberty and Virtue

By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

John Adams, our second president, was not shy when he discussed the general principles of our liberty and our citizen responsibilities to our country and society. He believed that the only principles *“that the beautiful assembly of young gentlemen could unite”* were Christian principles. As a side note many of the signers were in their 30's and 40's, we tend to think of them as old men. John Adams himself was 40.

He believed that these principles had united all parties in America in sufficient majorities to assert and *“maintain her independence.”*

“Now I will allow, that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity, are as eternal and immutable, as the existence and attributes of God, and that these principles of liberty, are as unalterable as human nature and our Terrestrial, mundane system.” Did you see that, he said the principles used by our founding fathers are as immutable as the existence and attributes of God? That is no little comparison

Luke 21:33 (NKJV) says: **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”** Many, if not all, of our founding fathers believed God's principles were the only thing that could allow men to be truly free, not subject to the whims of a king or despot. After signing the Declaration of Independence Adams wrote to his wife. *“I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this declaration. . . . I can see that the end is more than worth all the means, and that prosperity will triumph in that days transaction.”*

It is said that John Hancock signed his name large enough for King George to read it without his spectacles. The signers knew the risk and the costs, but they believed the risks for freedom were worth it. They also understood that it was the morally correct thing to do. They understood that liberty required bravery. It took a huge step of faith to sign that document.

Adams also said that *“Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”* **Galatians 5:14-15** (NKJV) tells us: **“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”**

Ask yourself, is our nation more or less moral and virtuous now versus another point in history. Does that threaten our liberty as we know it? I believe Adams' words are as true today as they were when he spoke them. We need to be part of the solution to the erosion of virtue and morality. We need to provide the leadership for our families and extended families. The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow, let's teach them the truth about our country's founding and their role and obligation to future generations to keep it going.



Editor's Note: When checking the VFW calendar beside my desk to get the date for Memorial Day, I noticed a flag image flying at half-staff, with the note: *“(Until noon).”* I never knew that. Did you?

FAVORITE SAYINGS

Living on a budget is the same thing as living beyond your means—except you have a record of it.

My Two Tours

By Eric Arentz
Via Email to George Plunkett

FROM MAY 2009 REVETMENTS

Not sure what you picked up on my tenure in Vietnam or TSN. I also had multiple tours; 1965 & 68 as aircrew member on EC-121-D AEW&C aircraft. Keeping track of every aircraft in the air over or near Vietnam! My AFSC was A301X2; Airborne Radar Technician. Probably talked with you many times while on our missions. Alternated between overland & over the Gulf! Would take off out of TSN for overland missions & head basically N for Laos, Cambodia, etc., WAY UP NORTH, where we never were!! Land at Korat, Udorn, or Ubon to refuel after 7-9 hour mission & then back up north for another 7-9 hrs. We would fly at 10-12,000ft & the mountains were 7-9T, if I remember right. Well within almost any decent arms range & we were maybe doing 150Knots in a totally unarmed, defenseless, old crate designed in the 30s & built in the 50s!! Scary!! Next day we would fly the Gulf route & refuel at Danang & fly way up north in the gulf up near Hainan Is., & well north of the MIG base at Ving,(sp)!!

We were in constant radio & radar contact with just about every conceivable communications means available!! That aircraft was crammed with so much TS electronics gear, we were always afraid of our fate just because we were so TS & vulnerable!! Even carried some special mission electronic "spooks" on the missions in 68!!

As combat aircrew members, most of us were multiple "talented" or informally trained to do each other jobs & I often times monitored the radio ops position, as others. Was even sitting in the co-pilots seat, AC, (Major), was so pre-occupied taking pictures of jucks, etc., that he never acknowledged the Weapons Controllers notification of a "Spike" which indicated that we had been locked on by a Migs radar & after more alerts, without him coming out of his own little world, I had to put that crate in a nose-down dive for the deck to go screaming into Danang;

The AC came around real quick, when that aircraft changed course so suddenly! Of course, the radar crew in the back was on every radio frequency possible getting "Crown" fighter cover, etc., to come to our assistance!! I was a SSgt at that time! Got selected for commissioning near the end of that tour and then came back to TSN in 71-72 as a gold bar to serve as Night Operations Officer with the 377 SPS.

(FROM TSNA APPLICATION!!)

Lived in large barracks type hooch with small officers rooms; located across from Armory—NON-air conditioned rooms! As night Operations Officer/Commander C Flight, always worked at night. Had many small rocket/mortar type attacks, usually 3 rounds. Often had to stay up through morning to assist "day shift" with launch assignments! Also served as CSP at Binh Thuy, closing down the base. *Special Interest* I inherited "Rochester" the monkey, from troops at BT when I rotated back to TSN and most of the troops went home! Have pictures and Rochester is on BT website!

Eric G. Arentz, Sr.
377th SPS
June 71—April 72

From Jimmy Avera

One of the pictures I sent was of me standing at the entrance to the 800 barracks area, in front of bldg 897 and the security police checkpoint. I lived in bldg 892. If I remember correctly, this entrance was across the street from the terminal area that supported the morgue and processing. The second pic was of the 1876 Comm Squadron's Base Dial Central Office. I was a technician who maintained all of the base phone distribution, long-haul, autovon, etc communications that helped us get the job done, as well as be able to call home to the relatives. I was stationed at TSN from June 1 1971 to Jan 1 1972. I also supported the Security Police as an augmentee. We would fly out on Hueys to the Montagnard villages and provide security, give shots, vaccinations, first aid or whatever the mission was at the time.

Welcome home to you too brother!!

Jimmy Avera
SMSgt USAF Retired
Vietnam Veteran
First Sergeant
Member of East Tennessee Patriot Riders, Patriot Guard and Tan Son Nhut Association



2023 Tan Son Nhut Reunion

Jacksonville Florida
Double Tree by Hilton
Jacksonville Airport
September 20-September 24
Hotel Information

DOUBLETREE by Hilton JACKSONVILLE AIRPORT

2101 Dixie Clipper Drive

Jacksonville FL 32218

855-689-8135

Registration must be made by telephone. Mention Tan Son Nhut Association, Code: TSN

Standard Rm Rate \$124.00 plus taxes (Suites \$144.00 plus tax)

Beaches. Parks. Museums. Sports. Shops. Food. Street Art. History. Jacksonville has it all, and now it's your turn to experience this exciting Florida destination!



TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION 2023 **REUNION REGISTRATION**

Jacksonville FL
Sep 20 - 24, 2023

NAME _____ GUEST NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TEL (____) _____ EMAIL _____

SPECIAL NEEDS (if applicable) _____

Choose one of the following:



1: FULL Reunion Registration including banquet

Number attending _____ **\$95.00 = \$** _____

Full Reunion Total Remittance: \$ _____

2. Banquet Only Friday, September 22, 2023

Number attending _____ x **\$65.50 = \$** _____

Banquet Only Total Remittance: \$ _____

3. Bus Tours

Bus tours can be selected and will be billed separately when destination and price is determined

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, 2023

Questions regarding Registration should be directed to:

Paul Mortensen

Director of Reunion Planning

TSNAreunions@gmail.com

Hotel Information

Double Tree by Hilton Jacksonville Airport

2101 Dixie Clipper Drive

Jacksonville FL 32218 Phone (855) 689-8135

Booking Link: <https://bit.ly/TanSonNhut>

Please note, the entire URL must be copied and pasted for it to work properly.

In the event you encounter issues with the reservation link, please make reservations by contacting Hilton's reservations department directly at 855.689.8135 and reference the Tan Son Nhut Annual Reunion group block or the group code TSN

Room Rates: \$124.00 plus taxes for standard rooms, \$144 plus taxes for a suite

Memorial Day, formally Decoration Day, recognizes those military men and women who have given their life for their country.

Someone I think of, even though I never met the guy, served in what would be my unit in Vietnam. Bill McMahon's tour was over in early '68 and I wouldn't be introduced to the Saigon metropolitan area until August of 1969. The common denominator of these two medics is the story of the speedbumps they each ran into on their last day in Vietnam. In my case, my duffel bag and I made our way to the dispensary for my last drive behind the wheel of what I referred to as " my crackerbox " but the Air Force insisted it was 6 8 K 2 1 4 5 . A buddy rode along to drive it back. I checked in at the terminal two hours before scheduled takeoff. About a half hour before boarding I heard my name over the loudspeaker instructing me to report to a certain window. I ignored it once hoping since I didn't answer they would then pick another name from the manifest. When I heard my name announced a second time I realized they could just wait until I boarded that freedom bird and snatch my ass. I reported to the designated window and was told that someone has to go home on emergency leave and, to find that soldier a seat, somebody needs to give up theirs. Of all the names on that flight's manifest they chose mine. So the obvious question from me was when's the next flight to San Francisco, sir? The next flight was about thirty hours away and the way things were going for me, any extra time in this foreign land was jeopardizing my existence. Obvious question number two.....don't you have anything going out any sooner ? He looked at a large screen of, I assume arrivals and departures, and said there's a C-130 going to Guam , from there,he explained, I could catch a hop into Hawaii and then on into S.F. The one catch is they're ready to take off so I had to put that duffel bag on my shoulder and double-time over to the revetment where the 130 was parked. I made it and what a sense of relief as we lifted off. About twenty minutes into the flight there was a very bright flash of light which had me wondering if we could have been hit by artillery. The answer was relayed back to us in the web seats that it was nothing to worry about, the plane was just struck by lightning. Only hit by lightning, they say ! Now I'm thinking that my last day in Nam might just be my last day. Eventually I made it to Travis AFB in California where a pharmacy tech I knew from Dover showed me around the San Francisco area for a couple of days before I caught a flight to Philly and, eventually, to that little village called Pottsville, Pennsylvania.

I retold that story many times and thought mine had to be the absolute worst final day in Nam.

Several years later I learned the story of Sergeant William McMahon.



Bill McMahon

The 377th USAF Dispensary was housed in, what looked like from the air, a collection of white Legos. There were a little more than 100 mobile homes attached together to make long halls with connections to other areas.

Bill was scheduled to go home during TET but due to the attack his departure was delayed. Like me, his buddies drove him to the terminal , said their goodbyes, and Bill went into the terminal to sign in. Bill was within minutes of getting on that Freedom Bird when a rocket hit the terminal and many people were seriously injured as you might imagine.



There was only one fatality. Bill McMahon.

Did his job well and paid the ultimate price. Sounds like a hero to me .

[Joseph J. Lazaravich, Aug 69 - Aug 70, 377th USAF Dispensary](#)

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**From Bob Etherton,
Tan Son Nhut Veterans Forum**

JAMES FAULKNER

The TSNA Board of Directors is saddened to announce the passing of Life Member, and TSNA Board Member, Jim Faulkner. Jim was a great friend to many people, not just in TSNA, and he will be missed.

From his obituary: "Captain James Ray Faulkner, 78, of Port Lavaca passed away Saturday, April 1, 2023. He was born in a dirt floor shanty by a mid-wife on November 5, 1944"



NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

Lived in a hootch somewhere on base. For most of my time in country I worked the mid shift (midnight chow being of the best parts of working nights) as I did for most of my working life. Was there for Linebacker II and the cease fire.

Wayne A. Voltz, 12 RITS May 72 - Feb 73

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