



REVETMENTS

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



OCTOBER 2023

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This issue of Revetments is mostly about the recently held TSNA Reunion, held in Jacksonville, FL, just two weeks ago.

Since myself and other members of the TSNA Board could not attend this reunion, I put out a general letter to the Board members who were there, as well as to all the attendees, asking them to "report" on the reunion.

The attached is the result of my request.

My heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed to this issue.

Larry

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Greetings, fellow Veterans:

My name is Richard Allen Cooley and at the 2023 Tan Son Nhut Reunion in Jacksonville, Florida, I was sworn in as the new President of TSNA. I have been a member since 2015, and have served on the Scholarship Committee, Nominations Committee, and served as Co-Director of Membership. I am looking forward to working with an outstanding slate of Officers and Directors in the upcoming years.

One of my objectives is to promote and grow our membership. Like a lot of enterprises, Covid, age, and illnesses has left us with a decline in attendance at our annual reunions.

According to our by-laws, we have four classes of membership:

Veteran: Which is divided into two categories:

Vietnam Veteran with Tan Son Nhut ties.

All other Veterans, who served regardless of time or place.

Veteran Family: Family members of those who qualified for the Veteran Class of membership.

Supporting: Other persons who share an interest in the purpose of the Association.

Honorary: Conferred by the Board upon noteworthy, deserving individuals.

The Tan Son Nhut Association does not discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, color, religion, national origin, handicap, or sexual orientation. "None Excluded, All Included"

If you are presently a member of TSNA, please make plans to join us in Huntsville, Alabama next fall for our 2024 Reunion. Details will be forthcoming on the Web page and in Revetments.

If you are not a current member, please check out our web page and learn more about us. An application for membership and Reunion information (coming soon) is available on the web page.

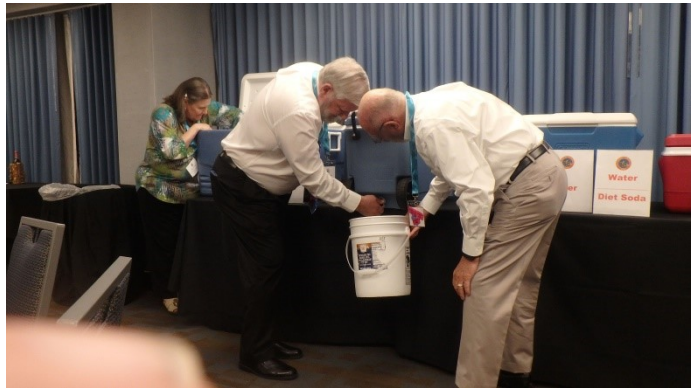
Richard A. Cooley, former S/Sgt (AFSC: 43151-C)
United States Air Force

Bobbie Chaffee Receives the Anchor Award

By: Andy Csordas

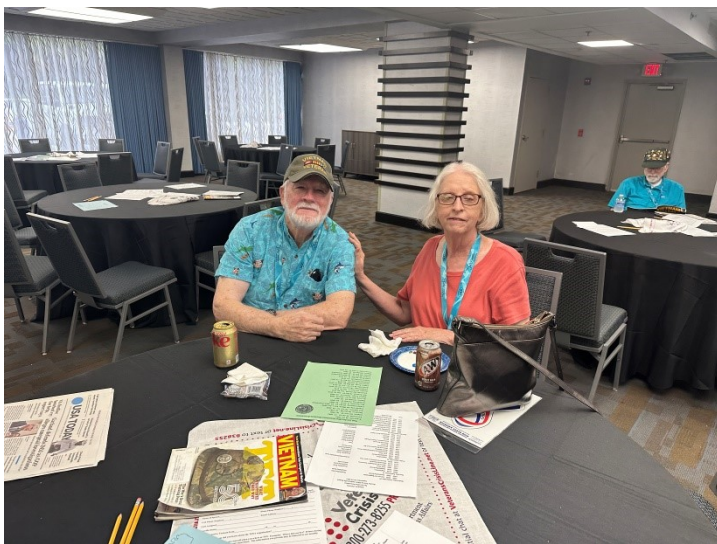
Bobbie Chaffee, widow of long time Tan Son Nhut Association Chaplain Bob Chaffee, was awarded the Tan Son Nhut Association Anchor award for her long-time support of the organization. She and her husband Bob were an integral part of the Tan Son Nhut Association for many years providing support and counsel over the years.

She received the award from Andy and Rena Csordas at her home in Tampa on September 26, 2023 after announcement of the award at the 2023 Reunion in Jacksonville. Bobbie has always been a bright light of our group. She is loved by all and is missed as she cannot attend the reunions due to health concerns.



The above photo by Gary Redlinski

These 3 photos by Brenda Cooley



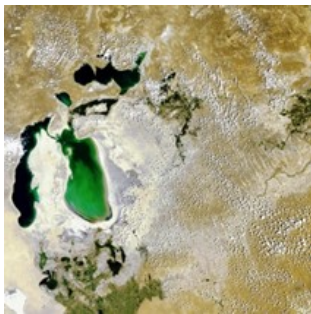
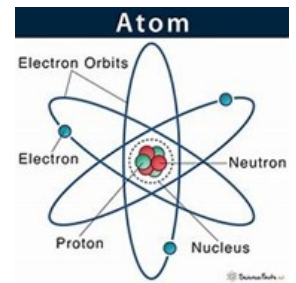
AROUND THE HOSPITALITY SUITE

Chaplain's Corner-The Atom vs. Life

By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

The world is so immensely complicated that we literally cannot wrap our heads around it. The more we study things the more we realize what we don't know. My eighth grade teacher, Mr. Litzinger, said a lot of things in class that year that I have no memory of, but I do remember one thing he said. "The more you learn the more you realize what you do not know".

When we were younger there was a tremendous amount of discussion about the atom and its components. Many thought that they had finally discovered the basic building blocks of matter. Things were made up of molecules and atoms made up the molecules. Atoms are made up of neutrons, protons and electrons. Back then they thought that was it, now we know that protons and neutrons are composed of other particles called quarks and gluons. The gluons are responsible for binding the quarks together. I'm sure that more minuscule particles will be discovered in the future. But an atom is the smallest particle that contains all of the things that are needed for a specific element.



We can go on and on about atoms, but they are just a part of the building blocks of life. Life requires different fluids in different kinds of cells to produce the desired result. Hence the chemical reaction in cells allow for life.

Things were not created to just exist. If you go to an area that is devoid of vegetation and animals it is a wasteland like the Aral Sea to the left. There may be small microbes or insects around but if it is not inhabited it typically has no draw for people. Man can destroy places like the Aral Sea and we do not want to live there. We are to take care of the earth that was created for us.

Scripture tells us when the world was created; it was created to be inhabited, which means inhabited by living beings. **Isaiah 45:18** says: ***"For this is what the Lord says, He who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it as a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited): "I am the LORD, and there is no one else."*** NASB

So where is the balance between a wasteland and a crowded city? Many of us do not want to live in a large city. Others think it is uncomfortable living in the "sticks" as they say. Most of us prefer something in between such as suburban communities.

God created us to be social beings. We typically enjoy company and fellowship as a group or family. **Hebrews 10:25** tells us: ***"not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another. . . "*** NASB

This is more difficult as we age and health problems affect us and our friends. But make sure you keep fellowshiping with others and, more importantly, with God. It will make your life so much more pleasant and peaceful. You can also be a blessing to others. Isn't it amazing how much better we feel when helping others instead of moaning about how bad things are for us?

In short do not be an atom just sitting there, be the life that God created you for and live. Do that by asking God what His plan is for your life. I have heard that the most productive days of a person are after they are 65; can you say Colonel Sanders? Almost all of us have passed that birthday. Go out there and be a blessing whatever your location and circumstances.



These photos by Brenda Cooley

TSNA 2023 REUNION

By George Plunkett, TSNA President, 2011-2015.

The TSNA crew gathered at the DoubleTree by Hilton at the Jacksonville Airport for our annual reunion beginning on Wednesday, September 20th and ending on Sunday, September 24th. Whoever selected this venue did a great job. The rooms were comfortable, the food was absolutely awesome and every staff member was friendly and very courteous. The area surrounding the hotel was beautiful and the sounds of aircraft arrivals and departures brought back memories of the never quiet Tan Son Nhut Airport.

Unfortunately, our honored guest speaker, CDR(USN ret), Al Billings was unable to attend due to health problems. He has written a highly acclaimed novel, SEAWOLF 28, that I have read and highly recommend. Hopefully, Al will be able to join us at a future reunion.

The substitute honored guest speaker, Ron Williamson, did a great job in describing the history of the Jacksonville Naval Air Station. His many slides and commentary were most interesting. A big thank you to him. He wrote a book on NAS Jax history: <https://www.amazon.com/NAS-JAX-Illustrated-History-Jacksonville/dp/B001AM9XG4> .

The number of reunion attendees was very low, compared to previous reunions, but the enthusiasm and camaraderie levels were high. Cold beer and wine helped...

Andy and Rena Csordas did an absolutely outstanding job in procuring food and beverages, and in setting up the hospitality suite. Maintaining this area is a never ending job. They received assistance from several members and spouses in packing up supplies at the end of the reunion.

The Board of Directors held their annual meeting and selected Huntsville, AL as the site for our 2024 reunion.

Randall Brown, TSNA President since 2015, declined to run again for President, due to health reasons and Rick Cooley was elected as our next President. Kudos to Randall for his outstanding efforts in leading the organization the past 8 years..

Andy Csordas gave a report on the scholarship program and the news was simply awesome. We have awarded 21 scholarships since the inception of the program in 2015, with 6 being awarded this year. The scholarship program was proposed by me when I was President from 2011 to 2015, and heartily approved by the TSNA Board of Directors. It is a lasting contribution by Vietnam Veterans who were not given the recognition and acclaim that they so richly deserved.

Trish Plunkett's 2023 TSNA Reunion Memories

Not having seen TSNA friends for several years, I was really looking forward to seeing everyone. The only problem was EVERYONE wasn't there. For a time I felt sad. Then the memories started to kick in. Thank God for memories. The first memory for George and me was in St Louis. We didn't know what to expect. George had spent days, hours and months on the phone with people at the hotel and with Larry. Little did I know that once we arrived, I would be assembling a fruit tray with Lois in her hotel bathroom for the hospitality suite. The room was small and the area for food was about 4' X 6'.

The next reunion memories were from San Antonio. I still didn't know everyone and spent part of a day riding trolleys with a nice lady. I didn't know who the hell she was, but Sue, it was you. At that same venue, I met a lovely woman who pitched in helping at the registration table and helping to drag drinks and food out from under the tablecloths – once again in a hospitality room. This one was 6' X 8'. Rena, that was you.

The years flew by as George became TSNA president while directing reunions – always with the help of the wonderful people on the board – Larry, Lois, Johnnie, Dale, Rich, Carol, Charles, etc. I found myself bonding with Sharon and others while we set the banquet table arrangements. Then, at the Chattanooga Choo Choo, how could I ever forget the duet by Sharon and Sue with a stunning rendition of Patsy Cline's "She's Got You". How could Sue's dress hold so many different items?

I think the most fun memory was playing "Left, Center, Right" at a table making huge laughter with Rita, Rena, Jan and all manner of crazy ladies. Some busybody men accused us of gambling. How dare they – sitting at a table hawking raffle tickets? Jim threatened to call the authorities.

These past reunions have brought amazing men and women and their tales of bravery into my life. Speakers have shared stories that are fit for Hollywood, and make me proud to be a member of TSNA and an American. Tears are now flowing. This year's reunion was small, but still had the characteristics of larger reunions: hugs, laughter, new friends and most of all folks pitching in and doing the hard work of creating a reunion. This year, with just a few people managing things, that spirit of "pitching in" was astounding – Andy, Rich, Rena, Bobby and Joyce. We look forward to our new president, Richard, supported by Brenda (girl doesn't know what she is in for), and TSNA lives on. It has been such a precious part of many lives.





The above 6 photos by Ricci Pineau



Thank You, the Earnest Family, for your assistance in conducting the Missing Man Table Ceremony.

The Gales' and the Fox's enjoying reminiscing



You're not in the picture, but you are taking photos of those who are.

I believe Rich Carvell is saying, "Now, remember, you MUST smile for this picture!!"



The above photos by Gary Redlinski



These photos by Brenda Cooley



Mini-Reunion within the TSNA Reunion -- 2023

Fifty years ago, we had worked together when we were in our twenties and early thirties performing bomb damage assessment and target development at the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron (RITS) on Tan Son Nhut Air Base and now we were meeting as spry septuagenarians and octogenarians at the Tan Son Nhut AB Association Reunion! Several of us had not seen each other since we closed down the 12th RITS in March 1973!!

Now there were seven of us 1972-73 12th RITS'ers "re-uniting" at the Doubletree by Hilton in Jacksonville, Florida.



Deese, Driesbach, Wimmer, Rewalt, Lowe, Voltz (Hammond unavailable)

Most senior back then was 1Lt Jerry Deese with 12 years prior enlisted time. Jerry was a briefing officer at the 12th RITS briefing highlights from BQM-34 "Buffalo Hunter" drone and RF-4 imagery to 7th Air Force General Officers. 2d Lt Dick Rewalt and 2d Lt Greg Lowe each led teams of photo-interpreters who worked each night "reading out" key intelligence gleaned from the daily photo-reconnaissance missions flown over North Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam during the previous day. Both teams were under strict time constraints to produce Initial Photo Intelligence Reports (IPIRs) distributed electronically to all US HQs and units' theater-wide.

Meanwhile, 2d Lt Bruce Wimmer led a targets development team of photo interpreters who carefully exploited the film for any "pop up" or newly discovered targets that could be passed on to 7th Air Force for targeting. 2d Lt Wayne Voltz would carefully annotate selected targets and transmit them over Compass Link to the Pentagon and PACOM HQ so that General Officers at those locations could discuss target specifics with the 7th Air Force Commander while all looking at precisely the same annotated image.

2d Lt Rick Driesbach worked in the Operations Division handling work orders from outside organizations and issues that involved multiple internal organizations (i.e., photo lab, map library, target development, etc.) And, finally 1Lt Marcy Hammond (picture unavailable) was the Executive Support Officer of the 12th RITS supervising the Orderly Room and the First Sergeant and ensuring smooth accomplishment of the myriad administrative functions inherent in supporting all the needs of approximately 120 USAF personnel in a war zone.

All of these officers and their duties were magnified and intensified significantly during the 12-days of Operation Linebacker II in December 1972. During that period, 12th RITS personnel performed bomb damage assessment each night in support of the next day's B-52 strikes against targets in and around Hanoi and Haiphong. Photo interpreters performed initial readout of 4 Buffalo Hunter drone missions daily over the North, while also doing secondary readout of 18 RF-4, one U-2, and one SR-71 mission over the North each day, as well as answering National Priority "Flash Override" work orders from the White House such as "Has the French Embassy been struck?" or "Has the Bac Mai Hospital been struck?"

After closing down the 12th RITS in March of 1973, most of us transferred to the 432nd RTS at Udorn Royal Thai Air Base and continued supporting photoreconnaissance missions over Laos, and Cambodia.

For us seven 12th RITS'ers, the TSNA Reunion was a great time and place to talk over these old memories and to renew old friendships!!!!

By: Rick Driesbach, 12th RITS Oct 72 - Mar 73

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Web Site: www.tsna.org
Annual Membership: \$20.00
Five Year Membership: \$80.00
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IN MEMORIAM

Michael J. Oszman Benbrook TX 64; 66-67; 68-69

Gary K. Rockett Nebo NC May 67 - May 68 377th CSG

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