



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



SEPTEMBER 2023

NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

I arrived at TSN after a short stay in Danang and was assigned to the 12th RITS. I was the shift chief and exploited all Recce imagery taken in theater. I participated in the Linebacker Campaigns and was part of the unit and base closure after the Feb '73 Peace Accord. We moved the unit operation to Thailand at that time.

Richard Rewalt  
12th RITS  
Jul 72 - Feb 73

Started at Ban Me Thuot radar site, Phang Rang AB maintaining MRC 108 FAC Radios - unit later moved to Tan Son Nhut.

Terrell R. Erwin  
619th & 620th TCMS  
Jul 71 - Apr 72

## Chaplain's Corner-Everyone Who's Spirit is Willing By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

We often read many familiar parts of the scripture without thinking about every word. We know about the plagues on the Egyptians and how Pharaoh eventually let the people leave. When they left there was so much terror in the hearts of the Egyptians that they gave all kinds of gifts to the Israelites just to get them to go. You may recall God said that would happen.

Later after the Egyptian Army was destroyed, they were out in the wilderness and God told Moses to build the tabernacle. There were many very specific details about how to build the tabernacle which are listed in Exodus. This was of course the movable tabernacle, not a permanent structure. (See the artist rendering below).

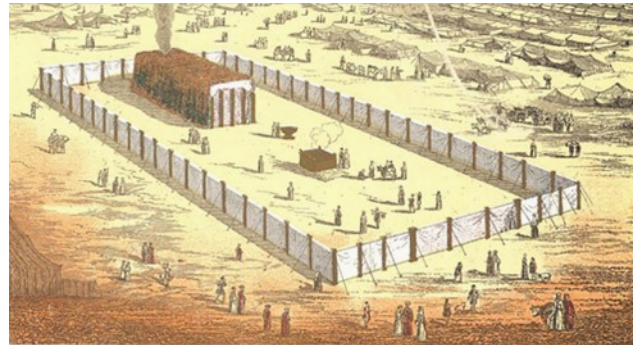
To build the tabernacle, resources were needed. These resources were given by the people in the form of gold, silver, fabrics, thread, wood, etc. I mentioned above that we do not always read each word of familiar passages. **Exodus 35:20** states: ***"Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the Lord's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting ."***

Everyone's spirit who was willing. We typically just read and remember the people brought gifts to build the tabernacle, not the little part about those whose Spirit was willing. Did the people whose Spirit was not willing please God?

Compare your spirit to the Spirit sent from God. There are many references to God's Spirit in both the Old and New Testaments. **Nehemiah** tells us in **verse 9:20**: ***"You sent your good Spirit to instruct them . . ."*** If our Spirit is not will willing to listen to God's instruction, where does that leave us with our relationship with God?

Are we willing to bring offerings to the Lord? Is God pleased when our Spirit is not willing? What are the offerings we should bring and when? God requires the tithes of more than money. Do your regular activities show your spirit is willing? Have we listened to the instructions from God's Spirit?

We need to ask, is our Spirit willing all the time? Are we willing to do the uncomfortable things? What about taking the time to really listen to God's calling and instruction? Do we ask the Holy Spirit to show us where and what God has for us? It needs to be a regular thing, not just occasionally when stirred by outside occurrences, but all the time. We need to ask what God has for us to do, not what we want God to do for us.



## WHAT ARE THE ODDS?

In Part 3 of my Vietnam Memoir (Revetments – September 2022), I included a 1967 photo of myself with Miss Phuong. She was a keypunch operator in my office, the Consolidated Base Personnel Office (CBPO) of the 377th Combat Support Group, Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

**(Miss Phuong and Phil McClurg at TSN, September 1967) →**

A TSNA member, Susie Ahrens (Dang) contacted me, saying “I think I know that girl; we speak almost every week!”

Well, I was thrilled beyond description, and tears of joy flowed effortlessly.

Never in this lifetime did I ever expect an answer to my questions: What ever happened to my friend? How did the Communists treat her? Did she ever escape Vietnam? Where is she now? Has she survived as we see our eightieth birthdays on the horizon? What are the odds that I would ever know the answers as War, Geography, and Time exponentially increased the odds against ever finding Miss Phuong?



On June 13, 2023 we had a glorious reunion in San Jose, CA. It was a pleasure to meet Phuong’s husband, Co.

He had been a First Sergeant in the VNAF, a tech school instructor of mechanics at TSN. Co and Phuong have been in the USA for five years. It was a pleasure to meet their daughters Jolynn and Caroline, who have been here over twenty years, and granddaughter Skylar. They gave me a warm welcome, and as the eldest, I was honored to be called Big Brother.

I wanted to host them at the best Vietnamese restaurant. We had eight or nine entrees served family style. At some point a fork conveniently appeared next to my chopsticks. Later I asked Jolynn, “Do I pay here, or at the cash register?” Jolynn said “It’s already paid for.” “No! It is my honor to be here.” Jolynn said “No. It is our honor that you came.”

I am happy to have these new friends in my life. Praise God - What a miracle!

Phil McClurg, E5  
USAF 1965-1969



Co, Phuong, Phil in San Jose, June 2023



(l-r) Caroline, Skylar, Jolynn, Phuong, Co, Phil

**EDITOR'S NOTE: My thanks to Phil for his excellent work on his article on Page 2, and below.**

**And a huge Thank You also to TSNA member Susie Ahrens, who took what Phuong had written in her native Vietnamese, and translated and typed it up for your enjoyment.**

### **Phuong's life after April 1975.**

The North VN Communists took over South VN April 1975 and the life as we knew it was over. I was working for the ICCS (since 1973 after the US Armed Forces pulled out of VN) as a secretary for the Indonesia Delegation, the ICCS [International Commission of Control and Supervision] was dissolved in a hurry and all four delegations were sent home. I was out of the job without notice or compensation. Co, my husband, was a Staff Sergeant for the VNAF and his fate was unknown. A week later, the new government rounded up all the former S. Vietnamese servicemen and sent them to re-education camps, depending on their ranks. Since Co was an NCO his punishment was lighter and he spent about a month in the camp.

Life was hard since we were branded, particularly me because I had affiliations with the USAF before, so nobody would hire us. We spent the last savings and didn't have any options for a job. We resorted to buying household goods and reselling them, gathering plastic items at the landfill, washing them and selling them to a recycling place. We would do anything just to survive.

In 1977, my second daughter was born and the situation was getting worse. My husband rented a cyclo and worked in the city. It was back breaking as he was not a big, strong guy to begin with, but at least he earned some money to feed us, plus some extra for me to open a little sandwich stand (similar to Taco stand). I would get up at 4 am, prepare the cold cuts and fixings for the sandwiches and wheel it to the street corner, until the food was gone, while my mother was watching the girls at home.

In 1979, I had another baby (a boy) and immediately asked the doctor to "fix" us permanently so there wouldn't be any more kids.

In the 1980's, more and more S. Vietnamese who were in a similar situation began to escape, some by foot, through the jungles to get to the next country like Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, but most by sea, using fishing boats. Then came a wave of underground groups that would organize these escapes for gold/money. It was a life or death risk but hundreds of thousands would take just to get away from VN. Some of them made it, but countless other people perished in the sea.

We were no different. With three small children and no future for any of us, we saved up and got in contact with an organizer. We fled the house in the middle of the night, traveled to a small town by the coast, stayed in a designated shack, and waited for the right time. It took a couple of days in that shack with not much food or water. My boy was a baby at the time. He began to cry and I was ordered to put my hand on his mouth to keep him quiet. Finally, when we were told to leave, it was about midnight when the group started walking thru rice fields and pastures to the beach. My canvas shoes got all wet and were hard to walk in so I had to take them off. But when we got to the next field there were so many branches with thorns on the ground that my feet were bleeding and painful, but we could not make a sound. Then groups of soldiers appeared and we had to silently scatter, every man for himself. We tried to keep the family together and found our way to the town to catch a bus home.

We tried three times to escape and each time something happened. We exhausted our funds and our will, so we just stayed and tried to survive and raise the kids.

In 1994, my oldest daughter turned 18 and a friend lined her up with a Vietnamese American boy who lived in Seattle, this boy came to VN to marry her, and she eventually moved to the US. Then my second daughter also met and married another Vietnamese American boy so she, too, moved to the US.

Life finally was a little better with the help of two daughters in the US. Co and I were getting older so the idea of getting out of VN was not important anymore.

In 2017, both daughters convinced us to move to the US to be with them and by then, they had become citi-

zens. They were able to sponsor us so we could leave VN legally.

We came to the US on Jan 14, 2018, and lived with older daughter in Seattle for a while, but the cold climate did not agree with some of my health issues, so we moved to San Jose to live with the second daughter.

Then a miracle happened, thru a close friend who is member of the TSNA, I got reconnected with Sgt Philip McClurg, whom I worked with at the CBPO office on TSN AB during 1967-68. Phil made a trip to San Jose to visit me and my family in June and what a reunion it was! We had fun reminiscing old times/people we knew on the base. It has been 55 years between us and we both have gray hairs but it didn't seem like a big gap between us.

Life here in the US is so much better as we know we have the total freedom and no fear of the Communist way to suppress you. With old age, we both have health issues and we are so impressed with the healthcare we've received and it's nice to be treated like human beings regardless of our financial situation. We appreciate so much the democracy and freedom this country offers and we feel so lucky to be here in the US. This year marks our five-year anniversary and we are now preparing to take the citizenship test, so please keep your fingers crossed for us. God Bless America!

**AGAIN, THANK YOU PHIL, PHUONG, AND SUSIE!!**



**ATTENTION REUNION ATTENDEES**

Do you have any allergies, "intolerances" or handicaps??

If you do, and did not note them on your Reunion Registration, please get in touch with me to be sure your information gets passed on to the Hotel and Reunion Staff.

Larry Fry Email: [larlo4044@gmail.com](mailto:larlo4044@gmail.com).



**EDITOR'S NOTE: I have no idea who to attribute this picture to.**

**But I do remember—in reference to this newsletter, that I titled this picture, "Picture of a great Revetment"!**

## THE TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION CAROL BESSETTE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Tan Son Nhut Association has awarded a record six scholarships to students entering college in Fall 2023. The record six scholarship was made possible by a generous donation in memory of TSNA Board member Carol Bessette. The TSNA Scholarship Program was started during the term of President George Plunkett.

Scholarship recipients are:

**Makenzie Halama** is from Pinedale, Arizona. She plans to major in biology with an emphasis in pre-physical therapy at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona.

**Samantha Haywood** from Bonnerdale, Arkansas, will attend Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, and major in medical humanities.

**Carter Pence** from Rector, Arkansas, will begin his college work at Black River Technical College in Pochontas, Arkansas, and after two years at Black River, he will transfer to Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas, to major in astrophysics.

**Caiden Sisson** is from Bald Knob, Arkansas, who in the fall will major in civil engineering at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

**Hillary Williams** is from Sheridan, Arkansas. Hillary will major in nursing at Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

**Christine Woods** is from Canton, Georgia. Christine will attend Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, and will major in engineering.

The Tan Son Nhut Association Scholarship is in the amount of \$5,000 and is available to those who are a direct descendant of one who served in Vietnam for any time from January 1, 1959, to April 30, 1975. Service may be either with the Armed Forces of the United States or the Republic of Vietnam or as a civilian at Tan Son Nhut Air Base either as an American or Vietnamese citizen.

The scholarship is awarded in equal amounts over four years, provided the student maintains a B average (3.00 grade point average) at the end of the spring semester school term and completes a minimum of 30 semester hours each year.

TSNA Scholarship recipients must pursue a four-year degree as a resident student at an accredited United States college or university which grants bachelor or higher degrees but may begin higher education studies at a two-year accredited institution and transfer to an accredited school to complete the final two years leading to a bachelor's degree.

Complete information about eligibility, distribution of benefits, and renewal of the scholarship and the application are available at the Tan Son Nhut Association website -- [TSNA.org](http://TSNA.org).

If you wish to honor a person or make a donation in memory of someone, please provide contact information so that we may properly advise the honoree or surviving family of your donation. Please send donations to Tan Son Nhut Association, P.O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236.

TSNA is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt veterans' organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Richard Carvell  
Chair, TSNA Scholarship Committee  
Vice President, TSNA



# Do you have a desire to serve your fellow Vietnam Veterans?



The Tan Son Nhut Association is seeking volunteers who would like to serve on committees, Board of Directors, or as Officers of the Organization



If you have a desire to serve, please contact Paul Mortensen at:  
[tsnareunions@gmail.com](mailto:tsnareunions@gmail.com).

or

Visit [TSNA.org](http://TSNA.org) for more information on the organization

**EDITOR'S NOTE: As you will note in the article below, this pertains to the article Joe wrote about in the May, 2023 Revetments, about Bill McMahon.**

Re: Bill McMahon from Lazaravich

Progress has been made getting my article about Bill McMahon ( Revetments, May 2023 ) to members of his family. See attached response I received from a friend of Bill's family.

If his account of Bill's heroism on the day he died is anywhere near correct I believe that man deserves a bunch of medals.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Mickey and Margaret Cochran

Date: Thu, Jun 8, 2023 at 4:59 PM

Subject: Bill McMahon

To: joelazaravich@gmail.com

Sir,

*I received your message thru the Fredericktown, Ohio village office.*

*I knew Bill and his family. His brother, Ron is a classmate of mine.*

*The family only knew that Bill was killed at the airport his last day. The airport was being shelled, mortared and shot up by the VC. About 20 years ago I came back to town. Population 2000. I saw his mother at the bank and talked to her and asked her what happened to Bill at the airport. She said, "I just know he was killed there. There are these families, 5 or 6 that come to see me every year." I asked her who they were. "They were the men that Billy saved that day at the airport". She did not know how to contact them.*

*I lived mostly in Columbus, Ohio about 45 miles south of Fredericktown.*

*I moved back to Fredericktown about 4 years ago and hooked up with his brother. I asked him what he knew about that day at the airport.. He said he had a lot of papers his mom had but not sure what they meant.*

*I looked thru the papers and found a citation where he and a man named Charles Brooks retrieved 42 casualties off the tarmac while "under fire and under mortar and being shelled". After Bill did this heroic act he came back into the airport. A mortar came in and killed him instantly. .I have an email that Charles sent to Bills mother describing that event.*

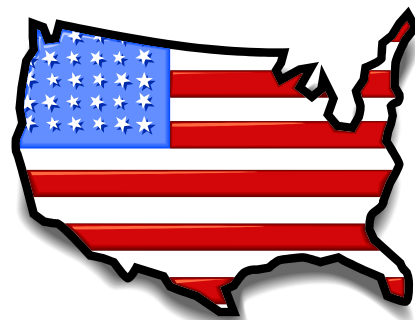
*Bottom line.....I am applying for a Medal of Honor for Bill. I have had some hiccups along the way. I asked for help from our Congressman's office. I provided them with the evidence. It got put back in my lap. I now have the application. I am seeking some assistance in filling out the application. Talked to county Vet organization. No help or interest. HELP!*

*Here is a man that gave his life on his last day at the airport to save others. He didn't have to do that..*

*I am Navy 65-68 and 8 years Army National Guard.*

Best,

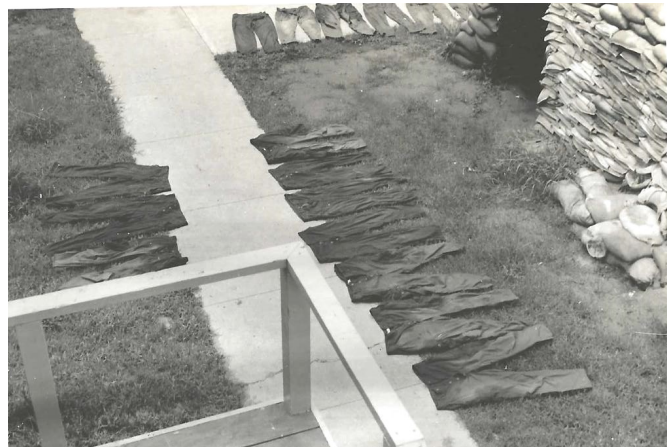
Mickey Cochran



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**P. O. Box 236**  
**Penryn PA 17564**

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**Web Site: [www.tsna.org](http://www.tsna.org)**  
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**DAVID LYNCH PHOTO**

## **NEW MEMBERS**

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