



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam

JUNE 2024



REFLECTIONS ON MY TIME AT TAN SON NHUT

By: Rich Carvell, Vice President, TSNA

During my one-year assignment at the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron (12th RITS) at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon, I was OIC of the RITS Photo Lab the last six months of my assignment. But I had a couple of extra duty assignments as well. Since the armory was in a room in the Photo Lab area, I was the squadron's Armory Officer. But since there were no attacks on TSN the whole year I was there, there was little business for the Armory.

My second extra duty assignment was as the squadron's Civic Action Officer. I volunteered for this extra duty when the former CAO rotated back to the states.

Our Civic Action project was an orphanage in Saigon at Sanctuary de Phu My. We visited the orphanage and the orphan children there every week. We loaded Ole Blue, the RITS Air Force pickup truck, and drove to the other side of Saigon for a visit within the walled-in area that was Phu My.

After I became Civic Action Officer for the RITS, I went to Phu My as did my maintenance chief, MSgt Joe Williams, and my supply sergeant, LeRoy Phillips. Usually one or two of the young Airmen in our unit also went along for the visit. The young Airmen played with the orphans. And played and played and played. Some of the orphans at Phu My were mixed-race children; their mother was Vietnamese and their father was an unknown American soldier. Mixed-race children were taboo in Vietnamese society, so when such a child was born, it was sometimes abandoned on a city street. Those abandoned babies became orphan residents at Sanctuary de Phu My.

It was not until many, many years after I left Vietnam that I developed a reason that the young Airmen from the 12RITS played with the orphans at Phu My.

As a photographer, I took many pictures during our visits to the orphanage. I shot with slide film so that the RITS Photo Lab could process the film for me. I have close to 300 pictures in my picture file which I took while in Vietnam for a year. Many of those pictures were taken at Phu My and include a RITS Airman playing with or helping with the orphans at Phu My. At the time, that seemed like a normal thing to do. After all we were there to help.

Many years later as I looked at those pictures again and again, I came to a new conclusion. I concluded that the orphans which our young Airmen played with at Phu My were surrogates for the brothers and sisters which they had left at home. It did not take long for that thought to be fixed in my mind as I viewed the pictures which I took at Sanctuary de Phu My. And I believe it to this day.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The following story/article is NOT specifically about Tan Son Nhut Air Base, but part of it occurred while the author was stationed there.

In addition, it involves military situations, and is just plain very interesting and informative. Soooo, enjoy!

And, as you will see at the end of this story, there will be an additional article related to it, in the July Revetments.

Bagpipe History

**Written By: Frederick R. Benda Jr.
U.S.A.F. 823rd, 554th Red Horse Combat Engineers
Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base
September 1970 - September 1971**

The Bagpipe is one of the most ancient instruments in the world, its history spans back to the beginnings of civilization. It is thought that the first Pipe came from ancient Egypt, which had just a single drone, blowpipe, bag, and a chanter. From here it eventually evolved in, with the Greeks, and the Romans having the earliest written reference.

The Bagpipes today exist in many forms throughout the world, and many people only know them as the Highland Bagpipe as it is most common and well known in the world. But it is important to note that there are many variations in countries such as Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Hungary, India, and many others. The Basic idea of the Pipe is the same with a bag, and chanter but there are varying amounts of drones, and sounds.

When the pipes were first on Scottish shores in format, they were played at Banockburn in 1314 to urge the clans to victory, but not in the form we know them today. It is probable that a single drone was used up until the 1500's when a second drone was added, and then the third drone appeared around 1700's giving us the bagpipe as we know it now. The first written reference of Great Pipes is in 1623, a piper from Perth was prosecuted for playing on the Sabbath. Various towns throughout Scotland hired Bagpipers to play. In 1486 Edinburgh had a band consisting of three pipers, and any household who declined to billet these "City Musicians" in rotation was liable to be fined nine pence in accordance with a town council decree.

The Highlanders were the ones to develop the pipes into the instrument it is now and made it the National instrument of Scotland in peace and war. All chiefs of the Highland Clans employed pipers. They were considered a very important part of their establishment. The music of the pipes spurred the troops on too many a victory. They were used in many great battles. Playing of the Bagpipes was banned in Scotland after the uprising of 1745. They were classified as an instrument of war by the loyalist government. They were kept alive in secret. Anyone caught carrying pipes were punished the same as any man that bore arms for Bonnie Prince Charlie. In 1746, in York, James Reid, a piper who bore no arms against the English King was tried for treason. The court concluded "no highland regiment ever marched without a piper, and therefore his bagpipes in the eyes of the law, was an instrument of warfare" He suffered death on the 6th of November 1746.

After the ban was lifted, Highland Bagpipes playing really began to emerge. They became very popular with Scottish Soldiers who carried the instrument the world over making the sound of the instrument more popular and encouraged others to learn. This has helped the sound of the pipe to survive, and to ensure that wherever you travel in the world that there is a Scottish presence you can be sure to hear the great Highland Bagpipes.

WW 1

Canadian pipers in World War I were soldiers who contributed to the First World War by playing the bagpipes as they marched the troops to the front. These men were often members of a pipe band that chose to enlist at the outbreak of World War I to assist with the Canadian war effort. Although most of the pipers were trained to fight, many of them played the bagpipes throughout the war to encourage the troops as they walked into battle.

The sound of the pipes on a Scottish battlefield echoes through the ages. The original purpose of the pipes in battle was to signal tactical movements to the troops, in the same way as a bugle was used in the cavalry to relay orders from officers to soldiers during battle.

The bloodcurdling sound and swirl of the pipes boosted morale amongst the troops and intimidated the enemy. However, unarmed and drawing attention to themselves with their playing, pipers were always an easy target for the enemy, no more so than during World War One when they would lead the men 'over the top' of the trenches and into battle. The death rate amongst pipers was extremely high: it is estimated that around 1000 pipers died in World War One.

Piper Daniel Laidlaw of the 7th Kings Own Scottish Borderers was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in World War One. On September 25th, 1915 the company was preparing to 'go over the top'. Under heavy fire and suffering from a gas attack, the company's morale was at rock bottom. The commanding officer ordered Laidlaw to start playing, to pull the shaken men together ready for the assault. Immediately the piper mounted the parapet and began marching up and down the length of the trench. Oblivious to the danger, he played, "All the Blue Bonnets Over the Border." The effect on the men was almost instant and they swarmed over the top into battle. Laidlaw continued piping until he got near the German lines when he was wounded. As well as being awarded the Victoria Cross, Laidlaw also received the French Croix de Guerre in recognition of his bravery.

WW 2

During World War II, pipers were used by the 51st Highland Division at the start of the Second Battle of El Alamein on 23 October 1942. As they attacked, each company was led by a piper playing tunes that would identify their regiment in the darkness, usually their company march. Although the attack was successful, losses among the pipers were high and the use of bagpipes was banned from the frontline.

Lord Lovat, was commander of 1st Special Service Brigade for the Normandy landings on D-Day 6th June 1944, and brought with him his 21-year-old personal piper, **Bill Millin*****. As the troops landed on Sword Beach Lovat ignored the orders restricting the playing of bagpipes in action and ordered Millin to play. When Private Millin quoted the regulations, Lord Lovat is said to have replied: "Ah, but that's the English War Office. You and I are both Scottish, and that doesn't apply."

Millin was the only man during the landings who wore a kilt and he was armed only with his pipes and the traditional sgian-dubh, or "black knife". He played the tunes "Highland Laddie" and "The Road to the Isles" as men all around him fell under fire.

Millin's actions on D-Day were immortalized in the 1962 film, 'The Longest Day' where he was played by Pipe Major Leslie de Laspee, later the Queen Mother's official piper.

Millin was awarded the Croix d'Honneur by France in June 2009. In recognition of his gallantry and as a tribute to all who contributed to the liberation of Europe, a bronze life-size statue of him was unveiled on 8th June 2013 at Colleville-Montgomery, near Sword Beach, in France.

Billy Millin remembers wounded men were shocked to see him. They had been expecting to see a doctor or some kind of medical help. Instead, they saw him in his kilt and playing the bagpipes. It was horrifying, as he felt so helpless.

There was a small entrance road leading off the beach and ten or twelve were lying wounded at its entrance. Some of them said: 'Are the medics here, Jock?' Millin told them not to worry; the doctors would be coming. He took shelter behind a low wall and watched as a flail tank made its way towards the road and the wounded men. He quickly got up and waved his hands frantically over his head, hoping to get the attention of the commander whose steel hat was just visible out of the top of the tank. He seemed not to notice and went straight ahead over the top of the wounded soldiers. It was very traumatic watching those men die. There was no time to feel any real emotion. Normandy was a most upsetting campaign because there were so many casualties. It was a killing ground.

Private Bill Millin was always amazed that he was never shot - not only did he walk up and down the beach of Normandy standing up, but the sound of the bagpipes could be heard over the noise of the gunfire.

A captured German sniper later told the private that they did not shoot him because they thought he had gone mad and had taken pity on him, deciding to avoid hitting him.



The D-Day pipes are now displayed at Dawlish Museum, Dawlish in Devon, England. Bill Millin presented his pipes to Dawlish Museum along with his kilt, commando beret, and dirk. These items are still on display at the museum library with photographic archives and looped video telling of Millin's exploits.

Millin saw further action with the 1st SSB in the Netherlands and Germany before being demobilized in 1946 and going to work on Lord Lovat's highland estate. In the 1950's he became a registered psychiatric nurse in Glasgow, and then moved south to a hospital in Devon in the late 1960's until he retired to the Devon town of Dawlish in 1988. He made regular trips back to Normandy for commemoration ceremonies.

Millin, who suffered a stroke in 2003, died in hospital in Torbay on 17 August 2010, aged 88. His wife Margaret, from Edinburgh, died in 2000. He was survived by their son John.

With the help of his son John Millin and the Dawlish Royal British Legion, a bronze life-size statue of Piper Bill Millin was unveiled on 8 June 2013 at Colleville-Montgomery, near Sword Beach, in France.

Over the past few years, I have become friends with John Millin through Face Book. We both played the bagpipes, and our fathers were both Veterans of the Normandy Invasion. Throughout our conversations we have talked about the tunes his father played on D-Day, and I told him I would play them the same time as he did. In 2020, due to the Covid 19 Virus on June 6th the 76th Anniversary of D-Day he played those two tunes at his home in Scotland, and I at my home here in the States!

The Piping Times Organization in Scotland I belong to, back in 2018 asked Piper's all over the world to register their names, and where they would play. They asked all Pipers to play a tune called "The Battles Over" on November 11, 2018, to mark the 100th Anniversary WW 1. This tune was played at the end WW 1 by Soldiers on their pipes. After the Veterans Day Ceremony here in Westfield this took place at American Legion Post 124 on that date. Roger Bernier, Patrick Scanlon, and I stood outdoors in front of the Post's flags and played this tune to mark the 100th Anniversary of WW 1.

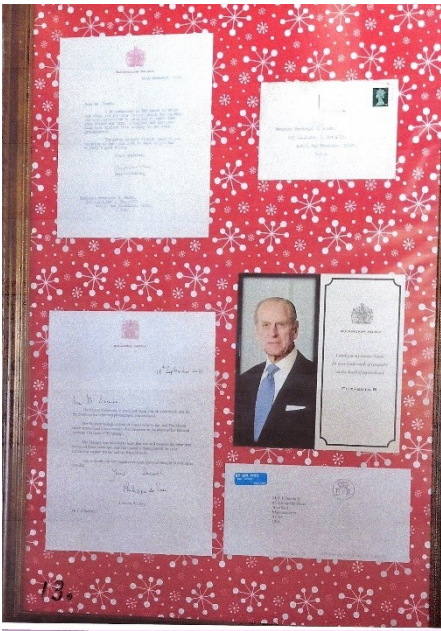


The year 2020 marked the 75th Anniversary of VE-Day and VJ-Day. Due to the Covid 19 Virus, celebrations all over England and Europe were cancelled. Again, pipers were asked to play "The Battles Over" at their homes.

The following year 2021 was here before you knew it, and in August it dawned on me that come September 7 it would make 50 years since I left Tan Son Nhut AFB, and then traveled up to Cam Rhan Bay to process out to go back home to the States. It got me thinking, while at Tan Son Nhut I sat down one evening at the Barracks and wrote a letter to my mum back here in Westfield MA. Then I got to thinking, you know I think I'll write a letter to the Queen of England for the heck of it to see what might happen. I wrote the letter and told her "The Queen" where my mum was from, "Porthleven Cornwall" and how I would every few years get to visit my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and all my cousins. Been across twice on the ship Queen Elizabeth in 1958 and 1962. I still have family there. Well, after a couple weeks I got a reply from Buckingham Palace. A lady with the title "Lady in Waiting" wrote me a short letter telling me the Queen really liked my letter. Well, I saved that letter all these years.

So just before September 7, 2021, I sat down and wrote the Queen another letter. This time I congratulated her on her 70th Anniversary. I also sent a copy of the letter that I got from her in Vietnam 1971. I also sent pictures of Doug Emch and I at Tan Son Nhut AFB, west end of the runway on perimeter road where we were building a 10-family housing unit for the Vietnamese Air Force NCO's and their families. I also sent my condolences to the Queen because her husband Prince Philip had passed away that year also. On or about September 20, 2021. I received a letter and a beautiful card paying respects to Prince Philip. I then took the old letter from 1971 and this letter and put them both in a picture frame and hung it up. [\(Photo at top of next page\)](#)

Organizers again asked pipers all over the world to play as the sun sets on June 2, 2022. The Queen ascend-



ed to the throne on June 2, 1953. The tune, a 6/8 march titled "Dui Regnare" (Latin for "Long to Reign") has been composed by Pipe Major Stuart Liddell as part of the piping element of a larger and wider tribute. I had the pleasure of teaching my grandson Isaac T. Benda how to play the bagpipes. He's a very good piper too. On February 29, 2019, at a competition in up-state New York he placed 1st place on his competition tune he had to play. On June 2, 2022, Isaac, and I both played the bagpipe tune " Dui Regnare" for the Queen at Isaac's house. His father, my son Frederick R. Benda III, took pictures of us as we played. Unfortunately, Queen Elizabeth passed away September 8, 2022, at Balmoral Castle in Scotland at the age of 96. At the Queens funeral at Westminster Abby on September 19, 2022, in London England the funeral ended with the Queen's Piper, Pipe Major Paul Burns of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, playing " Sleep, Dearie, Sleep", adapted from a Gaelic song called Caidil mo Ghaoil.



I can't believe how fast the past couple years have passed. Isaac and I still play the pipes for the Springfield Kiltie Pipe Band. The band has played with Celtic Bands on stage such as Galic Strom, and the famous Irish Band, The Chieftain's on stage at the Springfield Symphony Hall, Springfield MA.

I have been playing the pipes now for 26 years. When I had my first lesson back on November 19, 1998, my teacher Mike Griffin, asked me what my goal was. I told him I want to learn how to play the pipes to the best of my ability and use them to honor our fallen Veteran's at these ceremonies. Two years ago, I was nominated to be the American Legion Post 124 "Post Piper" It's been a complete honor playing the pipes at our different event's that we have at our Parker Memorial Park each year.

I must get ready for June 6th D-Day ceremony. I went to Pine Hill Cemetery where I had a small monument and flagpole installed. That was back in 1994-95 when I was Commander of the VFW Post 1847 in Westfield.



At that time, we were honoring the 50th Anniversary of WW II. Now, every June 6th I go there and play the Tunes called "Highland Laddie" and "The Road to the Isles".

Last summer 2023 I was having a conversation with John Millin on Face Book about this year's event. This year marks the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Invasion. During our conversation a gentleman from France named Fabrice Polin added in on the message and said hello. He then sent a photo of a tattoo that he had on his arm. It was titled "D-Day Pipers United". It had a bagpiper in the center with the words around him. Awesome it was.

So, I got a crazy idea, and sat down did some artwork, and designed a tattoo of my own titled the same but I have my father's 29th Div patch in the middle and a picture of Billy Millin's statue on top of the patch. The statue is at Swords Beach Memorial in Colleville - Montgomery France. On the left side of the circle 1944, Bill Millin, #4 Commando Swords Beach. On the right side I have 2024, Fred Benda, and 29th Div. and Omaha Beach. At the top Middle there is 80th, down near the bottom is Anniversary of D-Day! I thought that would make a proper tattoo for the Anniversary Day and I will be playing the pipes!! (See photo at the beginning of the next page)



Well, I think that's it for my story. I do hope you enjoyed reading some of the history about the pipes, Billy Millin, and some of my doings. We Pipers are always told:

“You know the Drill - Keep on Piping.”

***** THERE WILL BE A SEPARATE STORY ABOUT BILL MILLIN IN A FUTURE REVETMENTS.**

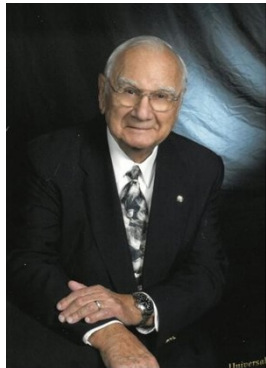


PLAQUE ISAAC BENDA AND I BOTH GOT FOR PIPING THE QUEEN TUNE ON JUNE 2, 2022



ME PIPING IN FRONT OF AMERICAN LEGION 124, WESTFIELD, MA

TSNA LIFE MEMBER BOYD SCHLUTER



Boyd Nicholas Schluter Jr., 89, of Cass Lake, died Tuesday, April 30, 2024, at Neilson Place in Bemidji.

Boyd “Nick” was born March 31, 1935, in Cass Lake, the son of Boyd and Edythe (Munnell) Schluter.

During WWII Nick and his brother lived in Seattle with their mother, returning to Cass Lake in 1948 and finishing high school in 1953. He went to Seattle and worked in the medical supply field for a year. In 1954, he returned to Cass Lake for a short visit and then enlisted in the United States Air Force and made a career in the service. He was very proud of his career having served two tours in Japan, flying all over the Far East for five years and serving one year in Vietnam “In Country.”

He also served with the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a member of the Battle Staff onboard the “Doomsday Aircraft,” the National Airborne Command Post, a Presidential Support Aircraft out of Andrews AFB, Maryland.

He flew around the world when President Nixon made his world trip. He retired in 1975, moving to Massachusetts, going to college and working in the Intermodal Industry in management positions for 35 years.

Nick was a Life Member of the American Legion, VFW, DAV, AMVETS. In 2013 he moved back “home” to Cass Lake and married “Peggy” (Margaret Reedy) Olding. They had many happy times together traveling around Europe, Canada and the USA. He was a proud member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Bear Clan.

Chaplain's Corner-The Sacred Book

By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

People have different opinions of the Bible. Some treat it as a sacred document inspired by God, some as a historical reference, others just as a group of writings by different men. This article will reference what some of our leaders over time thought of the Bible and how it shaped their own life, and our country's life.

George Washington, our 1st president, said *"May the father of all mercies scatter light, and not darkness, upon our paths, and make us in all our several vocations useful here, and in His own due time and way everlastingly happy."* He was known to use the scriptures and to reference God in many of his discourses and also used the Bible during his inauguration.



Abraham Lincoln, our 16th president, said, *"I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from The Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book."*

Ulysses G Grant, our 18th President, said, *"Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. Hold fast to the Bible. To the influence of this Book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization and to this we must look as our guide in the future."*



Benjamin Harrison, our 23rd President, said, *"If you take out of your statutes, your constitution, your family life all that is taken from the Sacred Book, what would there be left to bind society together?"* The Picture to the left shows Benjamin Harrison with a Bible.

Dwight D Eisenhower, our 34th president said, *"In the highest sense the Bible is to us the unique repository of eternal spiritual truths."*

John F Kennedy, our 35th president, said, *"Let us complete what we have started, for as the Scriptures tell us, no man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."* The picture at right shows JFK with a Bible in his hand.

Ronald Reagan, our 40th president, said, *"Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face. It is my firm belief that the enduring values presented in the pages have a great meaning for each of us and our nation. The Bible can touch our hearts, order our minds, and refresh our souls."*



If you study the founding of our country you will find that virtually all of our founding fathers depended on the Scriptures and God to guide their lives and their decisions concerning the founding of this great country. As Benjamin Harrison said above, our statues came from the Sacred Book. Eisenhower said it was the unique repository of eternal spiritual truths.

So the question is do we as a country still depend on the same thing our previous leaders and founders depended on in their efforts to do the right thing for this country and its people. That is the question we all should consider.

The last line in the Declaration of Independence states, *"And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."* The divine providence referenced is God and the guidance from the scriptures.

These are just some thoughts for you to contemplate today and tomorrow as we live our life.

***Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Tan Son Nhut Association**

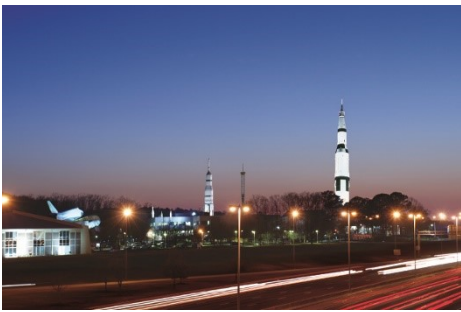
SCHOLARSHIP DONATION

Arnold Lilly 377th SPS, March '72 - March '73

I have pondered who served at TSN that I could honor with a donation. The person that I desire to honor is A2C John Matthew Cole, Jr. He was assigned to the 377th SPS at TSNAB and was killed during the December 4, 1966 attack. He was a dear friend of mine who served with me guarding a missile site in a Kansas wheat field before he went to Vietnam.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thank you Arnie, for your generous donation!





HUNTSVILLE
THINGS
YOU
MIGHT
SEE





TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION 2024 **REUNION REGISTRATION**

Huntsville AL
Sep 18-20, 2024

NAME _____ GUEST NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TEL (____) _____ EMAIL _____

SPECIAL NEEDS or MEALS (if applicable) _____

Choose one of the following:

1: FULL Reunion Registration including banquet

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

2. Banquet Only Friday, September 20, 2024

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

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 4, 2024 (No refunds after September 11, 2024)

Questions regarding Registration should be directed to:

Paul Mortensen, Director of Reunion Planning

TSNAreunions@gmail.com

Hotel Information

Four Points by Sheraton (Huntsville Airport)
1000 Glenn Hearn Blvd Huntsville AL 35824

Rm Rate \$139.00 plus taxes standard King- -\$149 for a Double Queen

Meal selection will be made closer to the event

Additional events may be added later

Rm Rate \$139.00 plus taxes standard King- -\$149 for a Double Queen

Meal selection will be made closer to the event

Additional events may be added later

Tan Son Nhut Association
P. O. Box 236
Penryn PA 17564

Revetments is an official publication of the
Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236
The Association is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt Veterans'
Organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

President: Rick Cooley
Vice President: Richard Carvell
Secretary/Treasurer: Andy Csordas
Director of Communications: Gary Fields
Director of Marketing: Andy Csordas
Director of Reunion Planning: Paul Mortensen
Director of Membership and Revetments Editor: Larry E. Fry
Director of Membership Development: Rick Cooley
Director at Large:
Web Master: Kerry Nivens
Chaplain: Jimmy Smith
Associate Chaplain: Andy Csordas
Chaplains Emeriti:
Rev. Bob Alan Chaffee (1929-2017), Chaplain: 2009 - 2017
Rev. Dr. James M. Warrington (1926 - 2022), Chaplain: 1997-2018
Presidents Emeriti:
Don Parker, (1947-2014), Co-Founder and President 1996-2002
John Peele, Co-Founder and President 2002-2004
Wayne Salisbury, (1940-2014), President 2004-2007
Robert Robinson Gales, President 2007-2011
George Plunkett, President 2011-2015
Randall W. Brown, President, 2015-2023

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



**TSNA MEMORIAL BENCH
HUNTSVILLE, AL
2016**

2024 Tan Son Nhut Reunion

Huntsville Alabama

Four Points by Sheraton (Huntsville Airport)

1000 Glen Hearn Blvd, Huntsville, AL 35824

256-772-9661

September 18 September 20, 2024

TSNA and its officers, directors, employees and agents do not make any guarantees of any kind about the content, accuracy, or timeliness of information in the TSNA newsletter, *Revetments*. The use of information from this newsletter is strictly voluntary and at the user's sole risk. TSNA shall not be liable for any damages of any kind related to the information in this newsletter. The opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and do not constitute the opinion or policy of TSNA.