



REVETMENTS

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



MAY 2024



MEMORIAL DAY 2024

By Ira Cooperman, TSNA member
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The Vietnam War was the central event of my life. It was, to quote several historians, “an epic event.” Vietnam was one of the longest wars of the 20th century lasting, as it did, from 1959 - 1975. And it was the most challenging U.S. military experience despite being delivered with the greatest volume of firepower the world had ever seen.

The cost of human suffering was monumental and difficult to calculate. In South Vietnam, the war produced an estimated seven million displaced persons, in addition to two million Vietnamese casualties. And it nearly destroyed the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia, each of whom suffered more than 100,000 deaths.

Among other miasmatic effects, the war had a profound impact on American culture and politics. Only now, after decades of avoidance, repression and silence, Americans are finally coming to terms with this war which deeply divided the nation.

Sometimes it wasn't even called a “war.” Memorials in many state capitals contain lists chiseled in stone of casualties of American actions: The Revolutionary War. The War of 1812. The Civil War. And so on, until you come to the “Korean Conflict” and the “Vietnam Era.” No such euphemisms are possible today for the over 58,000 Americans who were killed and over 300,000 seriously wounded, and the thousands still listed as “missing” in a war that lasted for America more than 15 years. Whatever the history books call it, you and I — and all veterans who served in-country — know it was war.

However, it was a *different kind of war*. Politically, militarily and in its outcome, Vietnam didn't resemble what I learned in school about America's other wars. In Vietnam, the U.S. triumphed over no “evil empires,” and the troops did not receive a joyous homecoming. Most soldiers went to Southeast Asia uneducated of the people and cultures of the region, and returned home more confused than ever.

During the war, our civilian government and military establishment busily manufactured half-truths and *disinformation*, disseminating them at daily news briefings (I attended a few) in downtown Saigon sarcastically known as the “Five O'Clock Follies.” Another significant difference concerned the media coverage. This was the first war the American public was force-fed to watch on television. A few TV reporters, such as Peter

Jennings of ABC-TV, tried to warn viewers of the quagmire that the war was becoming, but to no avail.

Bloody events, which included the coordinated attacks that occurred throughout South Vietnam as part of the Tet (New Year) offensive of 1968; the My Lai massacre of March 1968; and the Kent State shootings in 1970 also contributed to making it a different war.

Vietnam was a different war in-country. Different in the cities, in the villages, in the field and in the rear. Different in a helicopter or an F-4 Phantom jet, or a B-52 bomber. Different in the Delta, the Highlands, near the DMZ, Laos or Cambodia. Different on the rivers, in the mud, in field hospitals.

Some soldiers never saw Saigon. Some never left the Saigon area, having flown in and out of Tan Son Nhut Air Base as they began and ended their tour of duty.

It was a different war for women, the seven thousand American women, mostly nurses, who volunteered to help those doing the fighting, and the eight who died and whose names are on the black Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Today it is a different war in its physical and emotional aftermath. For Americans and Vietnamese suffering from Agent Orange absorbed decades ago. For the Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians still dying from exposure to toxic chemicals and unexploded ordnance left behind. For those Boat People who survived and those who did not. And for those who relocated their lives and are still struggling to adjust to foreign cultures.

Finally, it is remembered as a different war today than it was 50 or 60 years ago — for those who cannot forget it, whether they were in Vietnam or not; for those who cannot remember it because they were too young; and for those of all ages who look back at Vietnam through the lens of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Vietnam War offered few great battles and no clearly defined enemy. Its casualties included America's longstanding and broad national consensus that had defined American foreign policy since the end of World War II. This has made just about any discussion of the war particularly depressing and inherently polarizing with a built-in *unhappy ending*. Particularly unhappy for the families of veterans who are counted among the war's casualties. Especially each year on the observance of Memorial Day.

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

CIVIC ACTION OFFICER

12th RITS

PHU MY ORPHANAGE

By: Rich Carvell, Vice President, TSNA

During my tour of duty in Vietnam June 1970 - 1971, I was the OIC of the Photo Lab at the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. I also was my unit's Civic Action Officer, an extra-duty assignment I volunteered for when the person who held that job rotated back to the U.S.

Our Civic Action project was the orphanage at Sanctuary de Phu My in Saigon. Phu My was operated by a German order of Roman Catholic Church Nuns but all of the Nuns at the Sanctuary were Vietnamese. Phu My had about 70 orphans in its care.

We made trips to Phu My every week to help when we could but mostly just to visit with the children at the orphanage.

On my orientation trip after I was appointed Civic Action Officer, I met the only two folks at the orphanage who could speak English; that was good for me because I knew little, if any, of the Vietnamese language. One of those folks was a civilian staff member at Phu My.

The other was a lady who lived in the retired housing at Phu My. And what an experience meeting her it was!

We stood outside her room at Phu My and talked. She told me her story.

Seems that many years before that time and before the war, she met and married a guy from Texas who was working on a project in Saigon. After he finished the project in Vietnam, he and his new Vietnamese spouse left Vietnam and headed for Texas. After arriving in the U.S., she was enrolled in Texas Women's College in Denton, Texas, to begin work toward a college degree.

But she told me, she learned her Texas husband was not true to her ... that he was seeing other women. So, she left him, left Texas and returned to her home country, Vietnam.

And she ended her story with this comment: "Worst mistake I ever made."

After she finished her Texas story, she asked if I had a candy bar to give to her. I did not, but I knew that one of the Airmen with us that day did have a candy bar, so I borrowed it from him and gave it to her. I never visited Phu My again without a candy bar for my new friend.

A SPECIAL SUGGESTION!

I have a suggestion for the Tan Son Nhut Association. Simply put, ask the membership to convey to their nearest family member the need to forward to the association a notice of death and the the name and address of the funeral home. As an individual I would love to read an obituary (if one exist) and have the opportunity to send a note of condolences. Of course some members and families may not want any intrusions at such a difficult time and that's understandable

Harold Boone
Sept 67 - Aug 68
460th TRW HQ Section

*"Thanksgiving is a day when we
pause to give thanks for the things we have.*

*Memorial Day is a day when we pause to give thanks to the people
who fought for the things we have."*



MEMORIAL DAY
MAY 27, 2024
LET US NOT FORGET

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?

Chaplain's Corner-We Have Met the Enemy

By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

The following true story is actually a first rate example of "We have met the enemy and he is us". In 1788 the armies of Austria were the only thing that stood between Europe and the Ottoman Empire.** The Austrians made it to Karansebes in what is now Romania before the Turks arrived. Holding Karansebes could control the Danube River and the Austrians knew they had to stop the Turks before they were able to control the Danube.

The Austrians sent out scouts and they did not find any Turks, but did happen upon a band of Gypsies. While inspecting the Gypsy wagons they found a large quantity of Schnapps which of course became available for sale at cut rate prices. As you can expect it did not take long for the scouts to become seriously drunk.

As the carousing increased it attracted a column of infantry who wanted to share in the libations. The Scouts refused and the infantry threatened to seize the booze by force. That started a fight and someone then fired off a shot which resulted in chaos. Half-drunk scouts and spooked infantry began shooting each other.

Then someone yelled, "The Turks are attacking!" That broke up the fight and they retreated to Karansebes. So it was a crazy day, but unfortunately the day would become even crazier. You see the Austrian Army was made up of mercenaries from different nations. When the sentries at Karansebes yelled "Halt, Halt!" in German many thought it was Allah! Allah!

In the resulting confusion soldiers began to shout "The Turks are upon us!" An officer ordered the artillery to fire. The rounds hit no Turks but decimated the Austrians. Then panic set in as soldiers shot at imaginary Turks and anything else that moved. The result was 10,000 Austrians being killed or wounded that terrible day by their own men. Two days later the Ottoman Turks arrived expecting a battle, all they found was carnage. They easily seized the city of Karansebes. The Austrians had defeated themselves.



So how does that episode relate to our life? As past military members we cannot believe something like the above encounter could happen, but we know when discipline breaks down anything is possible.

Do we do the same thing if we fight among our families? Families have destroyed each other without any outside help. Are we at war with our loved ones? What does the scripture say to us in this area?

Ephesians 6:12 tells us, ***"We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers of the dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."***

We, particularly the men, are to treat our spouses and children as Christ treats us. ***Ephesians 4:32*** tells us, ***"Instead, be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."*** That means provide a safe haven in the home, and even with friends and coworkers. Of course everyone has bad days and things will make us boil over, but remember not to kill (figuratively) or wound our own as the Austrians did in Karansebes.

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

**** Many thanks to Robert Peterson and his *Book of Amazing Stories***

EDITOR'S NOTE: On the next page is an article that was first published in 2012. The "Introductory" part of it actually follows the story itself - it just worked out better that way, especially since when I copied it from the 2012 Revetments, the program I use for Revetments, called "Publisher", would not let me change anything. So, as usual, "blame it on the computer."



The following submitted by our late TSNA Member Benny Goodman, from Revetments, May 2012.

Hannah Giffune
Team 81

What Memorial Day Means to Me

People have given so many speeches about Memorial Day that by now, it may have lost its meaning. It's not about getting free candy that's thrown at you by a passing parade. It's not even about the games we play, or the songs we sing. It's for the people that the parade was marched for. It's for the people these games were played for, or these songs were sung for.

I'm not afraid of forgetting the meaning of Memorial Day. I have come to realize that people have forgotten the meaning because of the numbers. We hear of the deaths as in, "40 men died that day" or "Only 7 today, no bad losses". But have you ever heard someone say, "John Dear died today, leaving behind a wife and two sons" in the news report? I believe we can all say, no. We can hear the names of individuals in a report, or maybe in a speech, but those names are forgotten by the end of the day, just as are the families they left behind. Only once you come to understand the difference between numbers and people will you fully understand what Memorial Day means.

The feeling of a fist closing around my insides as name after name is called, that is what I feel when I hear of casualties. These men and women were just like me, so many years ago. A fourteen year old, attending school, no clear idea of what lay ahead in their future. They had hopes, dreams, and wishes too. The fist inside me opens when I read of stories of people who with their last breath saved a fallen comrade, or delivered a final blow that helped with the ongoing fight. These people shouldn't die in vain, so we must repay the service.

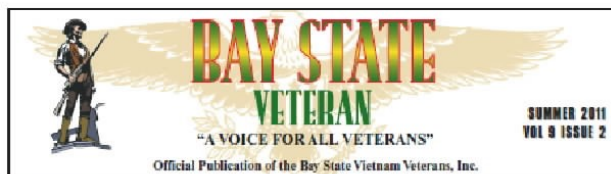
Memorial Day means repaying a service by doing a service. I repay the services of all the men and women who died by marching in the parade. I repay the service by playing the games and singing the songs. I repay the service by donating money and going to veterans' homes and listening to their stories. I've heard stories of pain and sorrow, but the visit always ends on a happy note. They survived and got to go home. Sometimes, however, going home also meant putting flowers on a friend's grave.

I'll never forget the meaning of Memorial Day. This is because I've forgotten the numbers and remembered the names. Not only the names, but also the people and memories that go with them. Someday, I hope everyone can be like this, remembering people and not numbers. 7 may not be a large number, but if you group 7 people together who are all 21 years old, that's 21 years of memories and love. Make sure it's not diminished by saying "only 7". Memorial Day should be about the people, not the numbers. This is what Memorial Day means to me.

Editors Note: Following is the email I received from Benny with the above.

Larry,

I've been sitting here reading past issues of Revetments (not too far past) when I suddenly realized that I have a story that you may of interest to you and might be useful in a future copy of revetments, especially around Memorial Day. Every year for the last twenty years or so our Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter has sponsored an essay contest in the two local Middle Schools as a part of the city wide activities associated with Memorial Day. The only restriction is that the subject of the essay must be appropriate to the true meaning of Memorial Day. One winner from each school, and each grade level (6th, 7th, 8th) is selected by a team of school staff members, and submitted to our Chapter for further recognition. All of the essays selected have been in the excellent category. However, without question, there are times that we receive one that is outstanding and memorable. The attached essay was written and submitted by Westfield North Middle School 8th grade student Hannah Giffune. I realize that this has absolutely no relationship to Vietnam or Tan Son Nhut. As a group of Vietnam veterans, we are extremely proud to be a part of helping keep alive the remembrances of all who have made the supreme sacrifice so that we can remain a free and proud nation and share the thoughts and beliefs of the future of our country.



VVA Chapter 219, Westfield, MA
North Middle Schools 8th grade winning essay
by Hannah Giffune



What Memorial Day Means to Me

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More on page 16

DALE BRYAN MEMORIAL SERVICE

On Friday, April 12, a Memorial Service was held at the Texas State Veteran's Cemetery in Killeen, Texas.

Gary Fields, TSNA Director of Communications, represented TSNA at the service.

Gary's note for the TSNA website and Revetments read: "Represented Board of Directors at Dale Bryans service on Friday. Pictures of Judy and kids Vicky, Nancy, David. Very dignified celebration of life with many of his retired military friends. Thanked them for all he had done for TSNA. Weather was perfect. My trip was an extension of a visit to my son in McKinney TX about 3 hours west."



IN MEMORIAM

Johnny A. Martin, Spencer NC, Dec 67 - Dec 68 377th Security Police

Johnny Austin "John" Martin, 79, of Salisbury, passed away March 28, 2024.

Born January 5, 1945 in Rowan County, he was the son of the late Austin Martin and Virginia Burch. He was a graduate of North Rowan High School. He was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and served with the Air Force Police in Saigon during the 1968 TET Offense and participated in the defense of Tan Son Nhut Air Base and Urban Street fighting during the TET attacks on Saigon.

Morton M. Rumberg, Roseville CA Jun 66 - Jun 67

Hq. 7th AF, 377th Combat Supp. Grp. TACC

Morton Myron Rumberg
October 28, 1936 - May 24, 2023

Mort was a proud veteran who served 20 years in the U.S. Air Force, with assignments in Vietnam and the Pentagon on the National Military Command Center team supporting the Joint Chiefs of Staff. For eight years he taught aircrews rescue and survival skills and also served as a swimming coach and Boy Scout leader. After retiring from the Air Force, Mort worked for a management consulting firm and then joined the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association in Washington, D.C. where he was a manager in its information technology department. Simultaneously, he was a dedicated educator who earned a doctorate in education from The Catholic University of America. Mort taught IT systems development as an adjunct professor at George Washington University, University of Maryland, and Marymount University. He was also a member of Kappa Delta Pi, an educational honor society.

EDITOR'S NOTE: On the next page is an article Rumberg wrote, and it was first published in Revetments in July 2008.

It is so good and interesting that I decided to publish it here, along with his "In Memoriam"

ON THE GROUND AT TAN SON NHUT

By Morton M. Rumberg
Hq. 7th AF, 377th Combat Supp. Grp.
Jun 66 - Jun 67

Since I was a support troop, the closest I got to battle was in December 1966, when TSN came under attack by VC. The Air Police and their wonderful guard dogs foiled it, and I remember one dog and his handler were heroes.

I worked in the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) and had been working a very long shift when the base came under attack. The TACC was constructed out of reinforced concrete and was windowless. I was concentrating on setting up databases and reporting procedures and didn't realize we were under attack. Taking a much needed break, I pushed open the rear door and stepped outside for a breath of fresh air. Two Air Policemen were behind sandbags, their weapons loaded and ready, not a particularly unusual sight, but I was taken up short being so close to them.

The light spilling from the open door behind me told them I was there. Soon as they saw me I was ordered back inside. I could see them shaking their heads at the idiot Lieutenant wandering around, not knowing what the hell was going on. Under those conditions I felt they did a good job of apprising me of the situation in no uncertain terms.

The next morning, the body bags of the VC attackers were lined up prior to being taken away. Later that day, I went to the officers barbershop for a haircut, only to find it closed. Strange, until I found out why: Several of the barbers had been in on the attack and were now in body bags. I sure was proud of base security and their dogs.

You would think I'd become familiar with B-52 aircraft during the course of my Air force service, but when you ride a desk and a computer, well, B-52's are not what you get to intimately know. However, I did get to feel some of the devastating power B-52's can unleash. Working in TACC, I could look at the large Plexiglas and see where combat was taking place. There was a B-52 bomb drop about 15 miles away and when I stepped outside, I could feel the vibration and wind concussion as it beat against my legs. I've never forgotten that awesome power.

I was on the roof of a five story building one evening in Saigon with some buddies from work. We were celebrating either an arrival, departure, or promotion, when another part of the war was unveiled. We could see a Gooney Bird, the incredible AC-47 with Gatling guns, strafing the countryside to the south of Saigon. The enormous firepower could easily churn up every square foot of turf on a football field. I watched as it poured out it's lethal rain. It looked like a red ribbon was trailing from the aircraft due to the phosphorous verifying where the ammo hit. Suddenly, the party atmosphere dimmed and our eyes were wide and respectful. No wonder the gunships were called "Puff the Magic Dragon."

Before I left South Vietnam for my next assignment, as the only officer in my unit, I signed a month's supply of blank in-country combat reporting forms in advance, since my replacement had not yet arrived. For some reason, the forms required an officer's signature. A week later, I arrived at the Pentagon (as punishment, I imagine), assigned to the very desk where the signed-in-advance reporting forms arrived. I had to explain, repeatedly, why my name appeared in the Approved box and the Received box. Some Generals didn't take kindly to this break in protocol. I came to understand that such concerns were important to paper pushers in the Pentagon. After three weeks the ass chewing eased as my replacements signature began showing up.

**IT'S TIME TO REGISTER
FOR THE
TSNA 2024 REUNION**

CHECK THE NEXT 2 PAGES



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**

Here's your reservation link you can use to make reservations:

[Book your group rate for Tan Son Nhut Association](#)

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 is going to Have Fun in Huntsville

We Hope to see you at the reunion

Room Rates:

Standard King \$139.00

Double Queen \$149.00

256-772-9661

(Tell them you are with the TSN or Tan Son Nhut Association for group rates)



Possible tour of the U.S. Space and Rocket Center and plenty of free time to tour on your own, or enjoy the company of fellow Tan Son Nhut vets in our hospitality suite

2024 Tan Son Nhut Reunion

Huntsville Alabama

Four Points by Sheraton (Huntsville Airport)

1000 Glen Hearn Blvd, Huntsville, AL 35824

256-772-9661

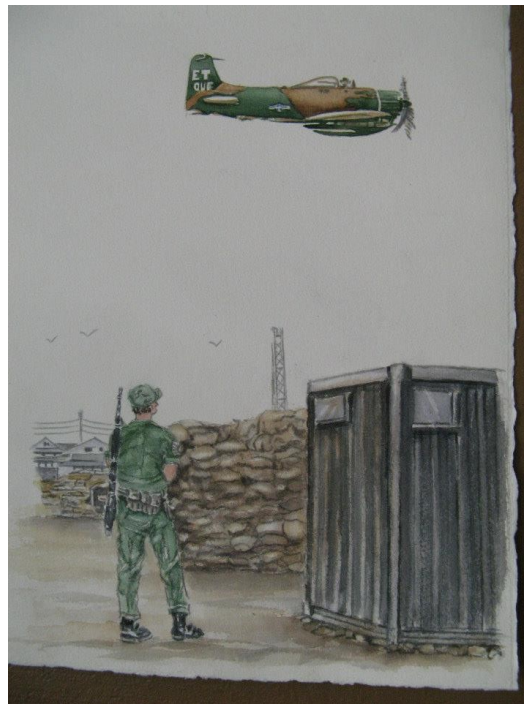
September 18 September 20, 2024

Huntsville is a great place to visit, You have many options including Museums, The U.S. Space and Rocket Center, Redstone Arsenal, Outdoor adventures, and great places for dining, music, and entertainment.

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



Painting by TSNA Member John Bowen

T + S + N + A = FAMILY!

Family isn't always blood.

**It's the people in your life
who**

**want you in theirs; the ones
who**

**accept you for who you are.
The ones**

**who would do anything to
see you smile**

**and who love you no matter
what.**

("Family" taken from Facebook. Author unknown)



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