

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



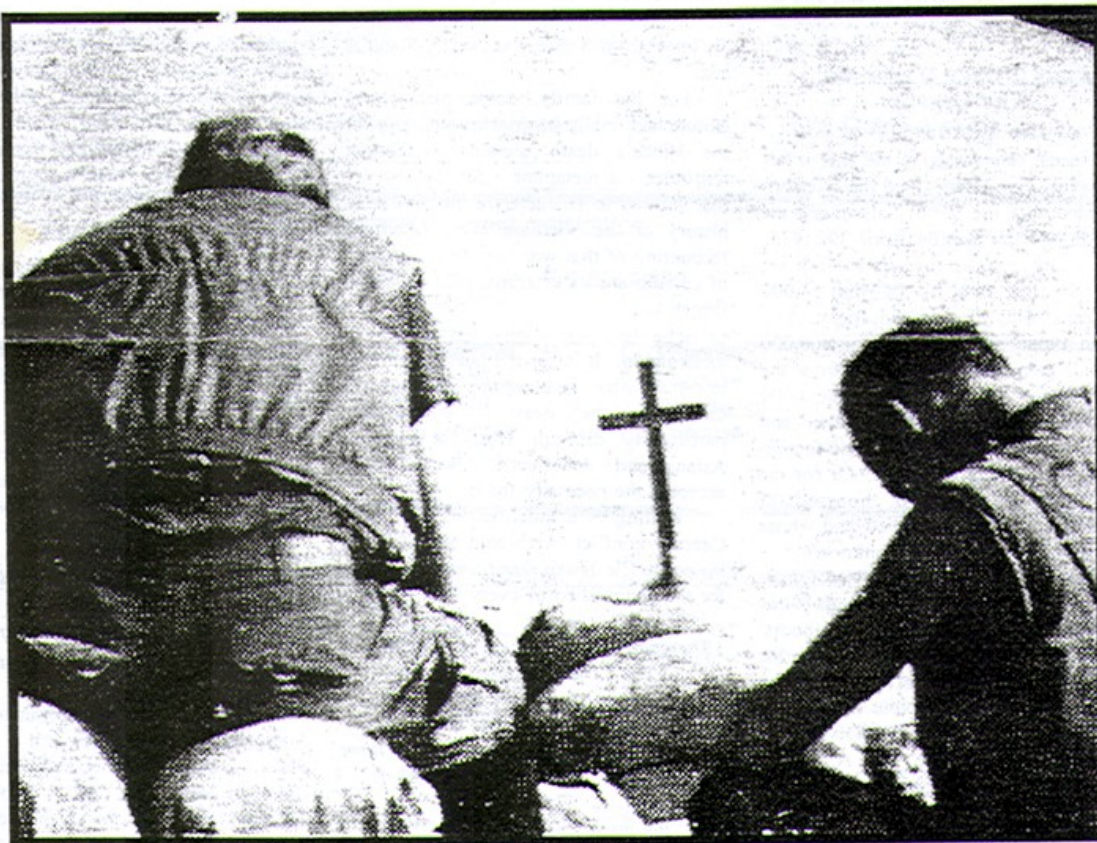
"All Included - Non Excluded"

Volume 2, Number 8

The Tan Son Nhut Association, Washington, D.C.

May, 2000

MEMORIAL DAY 2000



"I invite all members, and non-members, from Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia, and from wherever else, to join me on Memorial Day at The Vietnam Memorial, "The Wall," as we lay a wreath in commemoration of those friends and comrades who gave the supreme sacrifice in defense of their families, their fellow citizens, their beloved country and for God. And, all across our great nation I call the membership to form or attend ceremonies, proudly in the name of The Tan Son Nhut Association."

John Peele, Vice President, TSNA



(Editor's Note: This month we are pleased to introduce a new regular columnist to the pages of *Revetments*. Member Ira Cooperman was a captain in Intelligence, 7th Air Force, 1965-1966. He has been a reporter on the *Los Angeles Times*, and on other papers. He resides in Rochester, New York.)

Our Hallowed Ground - 25 years later

The Legacy of the Vietnam War

It seems impossible to me that it has been twenty-five years since the Vietnam War ended with the fall of Saigon and the cessation of hostilities on April 30, 1975.

In a larger sense, the war has not yet ended for the families of the 58,000 Americans who died in Southeast Asia between 1960 - 1975. Or for the 300,000 who still carry serious wounds from the war. Or for the families of the 1,500 American soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines whose remains are in some foreign fields - the *missing in action*. Or for the families of the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese soldiers who died and whose final resting places are also unknown.

There is hallowed ground that former enemies alike share in the modern-day nations of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. I know, for like you and millions of other servicemen and women, I was there - stationed first at Tan Son Nhut (attached to the USAF's former 2nd Air Division in 1965 and then to the 7th Air Force Indications Center where I was a briefing officer in 1966), then later at 7th/13th Air Force at Udorn, Thailand, with occasional temporary duty visits to Vientiane, Laos.

Was it "destiny" or just pure luck that I returned home instead of my partner, Vincent A. Chiarello? For on a hot July day in 1966, the combination USAF-CAS intelligence mission for which we both volunteered - but had room only for one us - ended in tragedy.

Like me, Vince was a young college

graduate and was a native New Yorker. Like me, he was an Air Force first lieutenant and was counting down his 365 days of duty in Southeast Asia until he would be rotated home. But *unlike* me, he was aboard "Dogpatch 2," an unarmed C-47 that was shot out of the sky near the border of Laos and North Vietnam on July 29, 1966, resulting in the deaths of all aboard.

For twenty-two long years, he was one of the American airmen whom the Pentagon continued to list as "missing in action." Finally, in June 1988, his remains were recovered, positively identified, and flown home for burial. In the words on his tombstone, Vince was "safely home at last."

For his family, some measure of closure had finally been achieved. But for me Vince's death remains a constant reminder - a metaphor - for the insanity that seemed to characterize the protracted history of the Vietnam War. And the recounting of that war has absorbed many of us who are its veterans, who can never forget.

The toll war - any war - takes is incalculable. It is for the poets to attempt to explain what meaning there might be in the horror of these deaths. Vietnam was a particularly difficult war, for many - Asians and Americans alike - never accepted the necessity for it.

Writing of a much earlier Twentieth Century conflict, Archibald MacLeish, in his poem *The Young Dead Soldiers*, speaks for the vanquished of every war:

*The young dead soldiers do not speak.
Nevertheless,
they are heard in the still houses:
who has not heard them?*

*They have a silence that speaks for them
at night and when the clock counts.*

*They say:
We were young. We have died.
Remember us.*

*They say:
We have done what we could but until it
is finished it is not done.*

*They say:
We have given our lives but until it is
finished no one can know what our lives
gave.
They say:*

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*Our deaths are not ours;
they are yours;
they will mean what you make of them.*

*They say:
Whether our lives and our deaths
were for peace and a new hope
or for nothing we cannot say;
it is you who must say this.*

*They say:
We leave you our deaths.
Give them their meaning.
We were young, they say.
We have died. Remember us.*

I will never forget - on this anniversary or any day - the men and women proudly known as "Vietnam Vets," who served with distinction during difficult times - those who were fortunate to come home and those who didn't. Bless them all.

(For those who would like to correspond with Ira Cooperman, you are invited to use his e-mail address:

icooperman@ccrochester.org

Michigan TSNA Group Meets

(Editor's Note: Publications like to present "late breaking news," such is not the case here, this report is just "late." But, we're glad we finally found out about it.)

The Michigan contingent of the Tan Son Nhut Association met for lunch on July 31, 1999 at the Greenery Restaurant in Clio, Michigan.

Ralph Fischer (834th Air Div., 733rd TAS 67-68), Herb Mills (377th SPS., K-9, 68-69), Jim Pageau (377th SPS, 67-68) Paul Smith (360th TEWS, 72-73), Jim Stewart (377th SPS, K-9, 67-68, and some family members.

TSNA Michigan Coordinator, Jim Stewart reports that they had "a good meal and extended conversation about our Tan Son Nhut days. Photo books were brought out and the memories were renewed even though the photos had faded."

Invitation to "The Wall"

Vice President, John Peele wanted *Revetments* to announce that all those in the area who are planning to attend the Memorial Day ceremonies at The Wall, to please call him. Ph: (301) 277-7474.

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION
REUNION 2000 ** JUNE 15 THRU JUNE 18, 2000
MENGHER HOTEL, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
REGISTRATION FORM

IMPORTANT NOTES:

MAY 10, 2000. ALL REUNION PRE-REGISTRATIONS must be received or postmarked prior to this date.

MAY 15, 2000. ALL HOTEL RESERVATIONS must be made by this date for special rate.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS for rooms and hospitality rooms should be made directly with the Menger Hotel, San Antonio, Texas. Call 800-345-9285 or 210-223-4361 and identify yourself as a TSNA member or Reunion/Convention Registration Code # 5498. Rooms rates start at \$85.00 + tax. See Hotel Reservation requirements and Reunion information in *Revetments*.

Early Pre-Registration (Postmarked by/on May 10, 2000) # Tickets _____ Total Cost _____
@ \$135.00/person \$ _____

Late Registration (after May 10, 2000) _____ @ \$175.00/person \$ _____

Check here if a vegetarian/dietary plate is desired. ☐ Total Costs Tickets \$ _____
Meal Comments: _____

Please check all that apply to your registration:**Travel Information****Events** (Included in package)**Attending****Not Attending**

Friday Lackland AFB Tour

☐ Member☐ Spouse

Saturday Breakfast

☐ Member☐ Spouse

Saturday Banquet

☐ Member☐ Spouse

Sunday Breakfast

☐ Member☐ Spouse

San Antonio Tour (Separate cost)

Interested☐ Member**Not Interested**☐ Spouse**Arriving SA by**☐ Car Date _____☐ Plane Time _____**Leaving SA by**☐ Car Date _____☐ Plane Time _____

All Reservations must be accompanied by check or money order made payable to:

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION

.. and ..

MAIL TO:

JOSEPH L. MONTAG
TSNA REUNION COORDINATOR
1512 NORTHLAND ST.
CARROLLTON, TX 75006-1421

B: 972-245-0845

H: 972-245-6254

E-mail: montag@flash.net

Names: Member: _____ Spouse/Guest: _____

Address: _____ City/ST/Zip: _____

Phone #: () _____ E-mail: _____

Member # _____ TSN Unit: _____ Years at TSN: _____

Signature: _____

All tickets will be available at the registration desk Thursday, June 15, 2000

Date Postmarked _____ Amount Rec'D _____ Check # _____



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(Editor's Note: The following poem was sent to us from new member, Bob Nelson, who lives in Anchorage, Alaska. We are very grateful for it and feel it is absolutely appropriate for this May, Memorial Day issue.)

The Final Inspection

The soldier stood and faced his God
Which must always come to pass
He hoped his shoes were shining
Just as brightly as his brass.

"Step forward now, you soldier,
How shall I deal with you?
Have you always turned the other cheek?
To My Church have you been true?"

The soldier squared his shoulders
and said,
"No Lord, I guess I ain't
Because those of us who carry guns
Can't always be a saint.
I've had to work most Sundays
And at times my talk was tough.

And sometimes I've been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny
That wasn't mine to keep ..
Though I worked a lot of

overtime
When the bills got just too steep.
And I never passed a cry for help.
Though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes, God forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place
Among the people here,
They never wanted me around
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here,
Lord,
It needn't be so grand,
I never expected or had too much.
But if you don't,
I'll understand.

There was silence all around the throne
Where the saints had often trod
As the soldier waited quietly,
For the judgment of his God.

"Step forward now, you soldier,
You've borne your burdens

well,
Walk peacefully
on Heaven's
streets.
You've done your
time in Hell."

Author Unknown



Bucky's Article

(Editor's Note: Member Alan Strauss of Azle, Texas, has been a frequent contributor of fine material. This one, simply entitled "Bucky's Article," we feel is worth sharing.)

by L. H. Burruss

Twenty-five years ago the Vietnam War finally reached the conclusion that had become inevitable years earlier. The Vietnamese communists invaded and quickly overwhelmed the Republic of Vietnam, blatantly violating the "Peace with Honor" agreement they had signed in Paris, just as they had violated the truce during Tet of 1968.

Their victory came as no surprise, for the will of this country to stop them was long

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since gone, and with a national shrug of the shoulders, it was all over. The sacrifice of more than fifty thousand of America's finest young men seemed to have been for naught.

I was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, just back from a three year tour in Germany after a couple of tours to Vietnam. The Soviet Union was the threat then, and our martial energies were directed toward defending Western Europe against them, at the same time implementing the permissiveness intended to make an all-voluntary military appealing to America's new generation of youth - a generation that had spent its adolescence watching many of the baby boomers who preceded them cast aside their parents' values for ones that would provide instant gratification.

"Vietnam" was all but a prohibited word in the army, as if there was nothing to be learned, military, from a political defeat - and the defeat "was" political, for we had ~~not~~ lost on the battlefield, thanks to the courage and sacrifice of so many gallant soldiers. It is a sad fact that gallantry goes largely unrecognized in defeat, for as JFK once declared, "Victory has a thousand fathers, but defeat is a bastard."

How many of today's students, I wonder, are taught that the 7th Cavalry, in their desperate fight in the Ia Drang Valley in 1966 - America's first big battle against the North Vietnamese - lost more men, and killed more of the enemy, than any regiment on either side in the Battle of Gettysburg? Many students learn of the despicable aberration of the My Lai murders, but is it balanced by also teaching them of the thousands of civilians executed by the communists during their occupation of Hue in 1968, or of the Viet Cong massacre of some two hundred women and children with flame throwers at Song Be?

Fortunately, many of our then-young officers "did" learn valuable lessons in Vietnam, and those hard-learned lessons stuck (Continued, See Bucky, Page 5)

(Bucky, Continued from Page 4) with them, translated by Vietnam veterans such as Colin Powell, Norman Schwarzkopf, Barry McCaffery, Wayne Downing, and Gary Luck into the stunning military victory of Desert Storm.

And for every one of those mentioned above, there are hundreds of thousands of other Vietnam veterans who went back to productive civilian lives. Only a few of them are well known: Roger Stauback, John McCain, Al Gore, Pat Sajak, Chuck Robb, Rocky Bleier, both U.S. Senators, Kerry, for example.

But we all know some of them. Among my own Vietnam vet friends are successful writers, a stockbroker, a college president, and businessmen who employ hundreds of other men and women. There are physicians, welders, photographers, nurses, airline pilots, college professors, a ferry operator. I don't know any who are homeless. I've encountered a few on the streets who purported to be, but in every instance that I was able to stop and question them, their stories just didn't flush.

As Burkett and Whitley, authors of the excellent and important work *Stolen Valor* documented so thoroughly in their book, many if not most of the scruffy panhandlers in camouflaged fatigues not only never served in combat, but are not even military veterans. So don't be fooled by phony and criminal wannabe "vets," nor by the twisted image that often the entertainment industry and even some educators give of America's Vietnam veterans. Just think for a moment of the men and women you know, or know of who actually "are" veterans of the Vietnam War. They may be neighbors or uncles or co-workers, or the father of a friend, or even your employer.

Ask yourself where this nation or this world would be if only those who really wanted to go off

Earn This

(Editor's Note: That's the only title furnished by the senders. It was sent to us by member Thomas Joyce, Major, USAF (Ret.), an ROTC Instructor in North Carolina. He received it from his friend, Msgt. Eric Holman, AFSFC/SFOR, who had received the letter from his friend. You will find it well worth reading.)

I am a doctor specializing in Emergency Medicine in the Emergency Departments of the only two military Level One trauma centers. They are both in San Antonio, Texas and they care for civilian emergencies as well as

to war for America did so. And remember that those who served in Vietnam, whether you agreed with the war or not, went because they were born by chance in the Forties, and because their nation said she needed them to go - just as their fathers had done before coming home, victorious, to conceive them. You will see that they are the same caliber of man and woman as those who served at Normandy, and Gettysburg, at the Frozen Chosin and Bunker Hill, at Cantigny and Iwo Jima. And if the mood strikes you, give the ones you know a call today, and tell them you appreciate their service.

They're dying by the tens of thousands each year now, and some of them have never been told, personally, that their service was appreciated. It won't cause any horrible, phony flashbacks or crazed-vet massacres. I promise it won't. But don't be surprised if it brings a tear or two. And if you're a vet yourself, thanks.

My greatest honor is to have served with men and women like you in the not-always-successful defense of freedom.

God bless.



military personnel. San Antonio has the largest military retiree population in the world living here because of the location of these two large military medical centers.

As a military doctor in training for my specialty, I work long hours and the pay is less than glamorous. One tends to become jaded by the long hours, lack of sleep, food, family contact and endless parade of human suffering passing before you. The arrival of another ambulance does not mean more pay, only more work. Most often it is a victim from a motor vehicle crash. Often it is a person of dubious character who has been shot or stabbed. With our large military retiree population it is often a nursing home patient.

Even with my enlisted service and minimal combat experience in Panama, prior to medical school, I have caught myself groaning when the ambulance brought in yet another sick, elderly person from one of the local retirement centers that cater to military retirees. I had not stopped to think of what citizens of this age group represented.

I saw *Saving Private Ryan*. I was touched deeply. Not so much by the carnage in the first thirty minutes, but by the sacrifices of so many. I was touched most by the scene of the elderly survivor at the grave side, asking his wife if he'd been a good man. I realized that I had seen these same men and women coming through my Emergency Department and had not realized what magnificent sacrifices they had made. The things they did for me and everyone else who has lived on this planet since the end of that conflict are priceless.

Situation permitting, I now try to ask my patients about their experiences. They would never bring up the subject without the inquiry. I have been privileged to an amazing array of experiences recounted in the brief minutes allowed in an Emergency Department encounter. The experiences have revealed the

incredible individuals I have had the honor of serving in a medical capacity, many on their last admission to the hospital.

There was a frail, elderly woman who reassured my young enlisted medic trying to start an IV line in her arm. She remained calm and poised despite her illness and the multiple needle-sticks into her fragile veins. She was what we call a "hard stick." As the medic made another attempt I noticed a number tattooed across her forearm. I touched it with one finger and looked into her eyes. She simply said, "Auschwitz." Many, of later generations, would have loudly and openly berated the young medic in his many attempts. How different was the response from this person who'd seen unspeakable suffering.

A long retired colonel, who as a young United States Navy officer had parachuted from his burning plane over a Pacific island held by the Japanese. Now an octogenarian, his head cut in a fall at home where he lived alone. His CT scan and suturing had been delayed until after midnight by the usual parade of high priority ambulance patients. Still spry for his age, he asked to use the phone to call a taxi to take him home, then realized his ambulance had brought him without his wallet. He asked if he could use the phone to make a long distance call to his daughter who lived seventy miles away.

With great pride we told him that he could not, as he had done enough for his country and the least we could do was get him a taxi home, even if we had to pay for it ourselves. My only regret was that my shift wouldn't end for several hours and I couldn't drive him home myself.

I was there the night Master Sergeant Roy Benavidez came through the Emergency Department for the last time. He was very sick. I was not the doctor taking care of him but I walked to his bedside and took his (Contn'd. See Earn This Page 6)

(Earn This, from Page 5)
hand. I said nothing. He was so sick he didn't know I was there. I'd read his Congressional Medal of Honor citation and wanted to shake his hand. He died a few days later.

The gentleman who served with Merlin's Marauders, the survivor of the Baatan Death March, the survivor of Omaha Beach, the 101 year old World War I veteran, the former POW held in frozen North Korea, the former Special Forces medic now with non-operable liver cancer, the former Viet Nam Corps Commander.

I remember these citizens. I may still groan when yet another ambulance comes in but now I am much more aware of what an honor it is to serve these particular men and women. I am angered at the cut backs, implemented and proposed that will continue to decay their meager retirement benefits.

I see the President and Congress who would turn their backs on these individuals who've sacrificed so much to protect our liberty. I see later generations that seem to be totally engrossed in abusing these same liberties won with such sacrifice. It has become my personal endeavor to make the nurses and young enlisted medics aware of these amazing individuals when I encounter them in our Emergency Department. Their response to these particular citizens has made me think that perhaps all is not lost in the next generation.

My experiences have solidified my belief that we are losing an incredible generation and this nation knows not what it is losing. Our uncaring government and ungrateful civilian populace should all take note. We should all remember that we must "Earn this."

Rangers. Lead the way!
Captain Steven R. Ellison, M.D.



Last of the big spenders ...

(Editor's Note: When we opened the envelope, we gasped in shock when the most authentic looking \$1,000 bill fell out. Now, that's paying your dues in the grand manner. Alas, it is only the member's note paper, and on the back he wrote ...



Gentlemen. Sorry that my dues are late - saw my name on the "AWOL" list in *Revetments*, or I might not have remembered at all!

The newsletter is great and sometimes gets read cover to cover at one sitting!

Anyway, better late than never. Also, do you still sell the patch or have other "Tan Son Nhut" gear (caps, T-shirts, etc.) I'd like to buy some stuff with the logo on it. Anyway, Best Ever.

Tom McClellan
Lindenhurst, New York
(E.N. Yes, Tom, VP John Peele has some projects in the works. And even for a fake \$1,000, we sent Tom a patch.)

Philadelphia jive talk ...

YO - that's Philly talk for "hi." We like to be different. I was wondering if the TSNA will be at The Wall this Memorial Day because I'm pretty darn sure I will be there. Be great to see you's guys (Philly slang again).

At last year's ceremonies I was lucky to find the TSNA group and a good friend of mine was having his VFW Chapter laying a wreath also. That really made the trip a rewarding experience.

I will not be able to attend the reunion in San Antonio this year, whereas we are having our second reunion for the 1st Signal Brigade in November 2000 in

Washington, D. C. and I am helping to organize our reunion.

So I wish you TSNA vets the very best of a successful reunion. I will be thinking of all of you while you are attending the reunion.

I am constantly checking the TSNA web site for new names, stories and the monthly photos. I will check the attic to see if I can find some pictures to place in our web site. I have approximately 12 *Stars & Stripes* newspapers from the Tet 1968 era which I think are priceless. I don't know if Charles Penley can use those or not, but if he could I would LEND them to him if he could copy some of the information.

Time to di-di-mau. Until later, take care, GOD bless, and keep sending the *Revetments* newsletter.

Dennis Byrnes
Royersford, Pennsylvania

More dews news ...

Here's my check which should keep me current for 2 years. Only problem is you never said in the last issue of *Revetments* where to mail the renewal dues. So here you are, please post me up to date and keep up the good work. Also it was great to see my old squadron patch in the last issue. I was a First Lieutenant in 1966-67 in the 360th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron. A lot of great memories and great people. See you soon.

Geoffrey Hickman
Mendota Heights, Montana

A letter from a deservedly proud man ...

I've been following your web site for the past few months, and was surprised to find the church bulletin I sent. I was on that list of new arrivals to Tan Son Nhut in June of 1971 ... so I told myself I'd better get those dues in the

mail ASAP.

I was Sergeant Joseph R. Galvan, with the 377th Civil Engineering Squadron from May 1971 to 1972. I was the only electrician working with a special group that were assigned to maintain the Base Water Supply. We worked separately from the rest of the CES.

I never knew how important our job was to keep that supply going until things went wrong. We were a close group. During my last days there I found myself teaching a kid with less than a year in the military my job.

It was hard to leave everyone hanging with him. In fact, I was still working on that day I left. My buddies had to pull me away and take me to my hootch so I could change, and catch that freedom bird.

Forty eight hours later I landed at Travis AFB where I started one year before.

I finished my last year at Hill AFB, and went back to college for a while. Then, later started working as an electrical journeyman. For the past 23 years I've been working with a large power company in California.

I've met a lot of ex-VN vets while working and I find we worked harder than some who never served in the military. That sense of "Can Do" pride tends to come out every time.

My only regrets now is that I lost my memory of those faces and names I worked with while in the USAF and the 'Nam. My sting went from 1969-1973. Lackland, Sheppard, George, to Tan Son Nhut, ending at Hill. Those were all great assignments.

Respectfully with Pride,

Sergeant Joseph R. Galvan
Riverside, California
(E.N. These letters call for a thank you and a very special salute to Webmaster Charles Penley.)



Communications Center



Day Six

Those of you who have had the dubious pleasure of having read my columns Day One through Day Five, will realize that these so-called "days" actually represent time periods of about twenty-five days to a month. So, I will have written about at least twelve time periods. All of these will become chapters in a modest book I intend to put together for the benefit of my offspring, in the event they ever wonder what "daddy" did in the war.

Beautiful "gooks"

In this issue I would like to discuss our allies, the Vietnamese just a little, as well as our relationships with them.

Way back in the nineteen thirties, when I was in grammar school, there was a comic strip called, "Terry and The Pirates." There were scenes staged in China, with Terry and his buddies forever being pursued by the marauding bands of so-called "gooks."

When the Korean War broke out, right away our soldiers began referring to the unstoppable hordes of Chinese by the millions falling upon McArthur's forces as "gooks."

I don't know whether the author of "Terry" had ever heard the term before, or merely made it up. I am sure that the Marines who fought in the Boxer Rebellion in China had to have heard the term and probably brought it back to the States.

It would be difficult not to have heard it in the Orient because the Chinese word for country or kingdom is "gook." And, to them we are "Mi Gooks" when they refer to America. As Mi (pronounced "mee") and Gook (pronounced with almost a "kook" sound), Mi Gook is "Beautiful Kingdom" in English; and, a Mi Gook Jin is a "beautiful kingdom person," an American.

The Japanese use that same word when they write the Chinese characters, but they pronounce it "Koku." Chinese are Chung Gook Jin; and Koreans are Han Kook In (the Koreans crop the "j").

Naturally, troops who had fought in Korea and not yet retired from active duty brought Japanese and Korean terms to Viet Nam with them, such as "hooch" stemming from the Japanese word "uchi" for house.

In one of the past issues of *Revetments*, a reader referred to the washer women on our posts in Viet Nam as "mama-sans" from the Japanese words "oba-san" or "honorable mother."

I had heard the term "gook" used in Korea to describe the enemy, and in fact had used it myself. I had not heard it used to describe the allies on the friendly side.

In Viet Nam this was the rule rather than the exception. Our people used it even when our allies were within earshot and most of them had learned English at the language school at Lackland prior to technical school training.

I witnessed many hurt feelings on the part of Vietnamese officers who understood that the American using the term meant for it to be pejorative.

To me, it demonstrated the ambivalence of the Americans to whom everyone looked like the enemy and a good portion of them were, at night.

Cobras and Bearcats

The Vietnamese Air Force had a crack squadron of Douglas A-H Skyraiders on the field at Tan Son Nhut. The reason I say "crack" is that they were very highly experienced aviators and some had begun flying combat missions as members of the French Air Force in the nineteen forties.

The operations officer of the squadron told me over a beer one night that he had started flying P-63 King Cobras (the Bell Aircraft Company successor to the P-39 Air Cobra). Then the tricky little pilot killer called the Grumman Bearcat F-8F the fastest piston engined operational fighter ever built. I saw one during a visit to the Viet side of the base.

He told me that the American advisor to his squadron was critical of him since he was the most highly experienced pilot in the unit, and yet he only flew a combat mission perhaps once a week. He remarked that the American could leave after twelve months, but he, who had been flying combat sorties for over twenty years could never rotate back to the Z.I. (zone of the interior). In fact, I think he did "rotate" after Saigon fell.

But some of the Viet pilots were very low time, with little more experience than a typical new American private pilot.

A Hero At Tan Son Nhut

One day in August 1965 I heard the magnificent roar of a mighty 3,000 horsepower R-3350 engine and just had to watch the A-H finish his take-off. I became apprehensive as I watched the pilot slowly begin to veer to the left side of the runway as the torque from the right revolving 14 ft. Propeller pulled the aircraft to the left. On a propeller driven airplane the pilot must keep a straight right knee and a stiff leg during take-off and climb in order to counteract this torque, except in the case of English made airplanes where the engines rotate to the counter clock-wise direction requiring a left leg lock on take-off and climb. The direction is noted from the vantage point of the pilot sitting in the cockpit, not standing in front of the airplane.

To my horror, I realized that the aircraft was armed for a combat mission and was loaded with

500 pound bombs. In many cases, the aircraft provided to the Viet had cockpits which were too large for the bodies of the Asian pilots. This was the case here, the pilot's legs were not long enough to fully deflect the right rudder pedal.

The airplane left the runway at full power and began to strew its bombs all around it and left pieces of itself as it went.

Fortunately I was on my Harley 45 and I immediately headed toward the wreckage which was sitting there smoking. I parked the Harley on the tarmac and began to run toward the airplane with the slumped over pilot in the cockpit.

When I was about fifty feet from the airplane I realized that the area around me contained no less than eight 500 pound bombs, all of them armed since the arming wires had been pulled when they were torn from the bomb racks. And, the arming propellers had rotated due to the bombs bouncing through the grass.

And what did I do? Realizing that my life might end at the next instant, I froze into a veritable statue. Well so much for heroism, but that was only me.

Major Al Kosko came ripping past me and pulled the diminutive pilot from the cockpit, after first shutting off the magnetos and master switch of the Skyraider, with little help from me.

But ... don't rile majors

I didn't particularly like Major Kosko since he was the Maintenance Control Officer, and could chew a lieutenant alive, which he did to me once. I had forgotten to report as duty officer one night and arrived late after remembering about it. This had cost him an hour of "happy hour" at the club. He had the commander punish me by having me serve as duty officer for seven days straight, as well as performing my regular day duties. Man, I was one tired lieutenant after that week.

I was so impressed by his valor, and perhaps embarrassed by my cowardice, that I wrote him up for a decoration.

I wonder if he ever got it?

Colonel Blasts TSNA Membership Office!

(The headline was only to get your attention.) Lt. Col. Ruth Sidisin, a nurse at TSN, from Sumter, S.C. has recently kindly requested that *Revetments* include the membership rates each month. We are grateful for her suggestion and shall do so.

Annual Dues: \$20.00

Life Membership: \$180.00

Convention Speakers To Be Our Own



B. G. Burkett

The speakers at the San Antonio Saturday evening, June 17th, TSNA Reunion 2000 Banquet, will be either active or associate members of the Association.

B.G. Burkett was a platoon leader in Vietnam, with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade.

He is the author (with co-author, Glenda Whitley) of the best selling and widely discussed *Stolen Valor*.

Burkett was the object of the award-winning segment on ABS's 20/20.



Ray Bows, U.S.A. (Ret.)

He is a military researcher and was co-chairman of the Texas Vietnam Memorial with President George Bush.

Ray Bows is a U.S. Army retired MSgt., and is the author of the incredibly well researched *Vietnam Military Lore, Legends, Shadows and Heros*.

He served with the 3rd Movements Region and the 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam. He is a recognized expert on military currency of the war, and works with the Museum and Archives Section of the National Park Service in conjunction with i.d. of items left at "The Wall."

Thomas Joyce, retired Major, USAF, was still a child when the war ended.

But he's the man who built the Base Protection Force Lab at Lackland based on his incredible



**Thomas Joyce,
USAF (Ret.)**

knowledge of Tan Son Nhut and the Tet '68 defense of the base.

This young man believes that Tan Son Nhut set many examples that taught Americans many vital lessons that will influence modern military operations.

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