

# Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

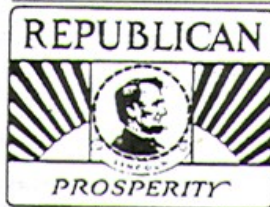


"All Included - Non Excluded"

Volume 3, Number 2

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

November, 2000



*Just  
walk around the  
corner on November 7<sup>th</sup> and*



## *Vote!*



*... and remember on November 11<sup>th</sup> that for over 200 years,  
our Veterans have voted for Liberty with their lives.*



## Distant Voices

by  
Ira Cooperman



### The Vietnam Veterans Memorial ... 18 years later

Along with thousands of others, I will observe Veterans Day this year at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial ("The Wall") in Washington, D.C.

I will stand, as I have so often since it was first dedicated on November 13, 1982, and touch the polished black granite wall that bears the names of more than 58,000 members of the United States armed forces who died or remain missing in the Vietnam War.

I will recollect the memory of those with whom I served in 1966, and especially those still listed as "missing in action," whose final resting place is in a foreign land. And I will remember that there, but for the grace of God, go I.

The years that have passed since our nation ended its involvement in the wars of Southeast Asia have been marked by tremendous variations in the mood of our countrymen. Many Americans today still have a difficult time dealing with that war, its affects on our society and the legacy of those of us sent to fight it.

A quarter-century later, the wounds inflicted by what was the longest and most divisive conflict since the Civil War still have not been completely healed. But The Wall in Washington has done a great deal to bring us together, to assist in the reconciliation of the nation with its Vietnam veterans.

In the words of the architectural jury who selected May Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, it is "a place of quiet reflection, and a tribute to those who served their nation in difficult times. All who come here can find it a place of healing."

Washington is a city of monuments, landmarks of stone and statues that testify to the deeds and acts of those who have shaped the nation we have become.

But the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is unique, vastly different from the monuments to independence and emancipation that flank it. Even the stone statues that stand nearby in tribute to the veterans of the Korean War are unlike The Wall, with its row upon row of names "in the order they were taken from us."

No one can doubt that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is an eternal touchstone

for the conscience of our nation. It also has generated hope and pride to thousands of veterans, their families and friends.

It tells us, as no words can, of the awesome responsibility we have as members of a free and democratic society.

Above all, it declares that America should never be allowed to forget the millions of brave men and women who served. That's a message for all to recall this Veterans Day.

\* \* \*

(Ira Cooperman served as an Air Force intelligence officer in Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. He can be reached via e-mail: [ibcooperman@aol.com](mailto:ibcooperman@aol.com))

### Special Election Day Comment:

## You Have No Right to Vote ...

### you have an Obligation

I carefully read through the Constitution of the United States, and its Amendments, a few weeks ago. I was looking for something I never could, and still can't find ... the specific "right" of citizens to vote.

The Constitution sets forth how and when public elections will fill the seats in Congress, and who will assume the Presidency. The 15<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Amendments don't urge anybody to vote, and are merely restrictions on the government from "denying" the right to vote by virtue of race, sex and age. But nowhere do the framers of the Constitution establish an "inalienable" right to vote. They clearly spell out the rights of free speech, possession of weapons, property, and other rightful guarantees, but no right to vote.

It appears that those who composed and adopted the Constitution felt that providing a specific "right" to vote would merely be a waste of rhetoric and demeaning to what they hoped and prayed would be an intelligent, proud and supportive citizenry.

Having written the most balanced, logical and protective declaration of personal freedom in history, and "having brought forth in this land a new nation under God," the founders expected the citizenry to respond with gratitude for the guarantees of their personal liberty.

Therefore, when individuals acknowledged, and as the country grew, immigrants accepted citizenship under an oath to the Constitution, it was assumed that individuals would find within themselves an obligation to perpetuate the government as prescribed in that Constitution.

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Then why isn't this "obligation" spelled out and made mandatory?

Because that would nullify the whole concept of individual freedom established by the Constitution. Although, if you want proper representation in government you have to accept and exercise the "obligations" implied. You join a church, a club, an association, there are obligations stipulated that you must exercise. Of course, there are some, who due to age, physical liabilities, religion or imprisonment, cannot exercise their "obligations" and still remain citizens of our free society.

But for many decades, a majority of Americans have stopped respecting their obligations. And, as this majority grows, minorities have stepped into the vacuum and are restructuring society in conformity to narrow agendas. Therefore, as the obligated citizens decline in their support of the Constitution, conversely the "rights" proclaimed therein are tarnished and diminished. Presidents are elected by sorry pluralities of barely twenty-five percent.

People like to say there are "wasted" votes. That is not true, the only "wasted" vote is the one an obligated voter does not cast. Please vote on November 7.

by

Robert Stanley Need, Editor

\* \* \*

## Photo Quality in Revetments

Recently, in a message on the Tan Son Nhut Website, a member complained that he was sorry to say the pictures in the newsletter looked crummy. We're sorry too.

The Public Affairs Office has very fine equipment, and even scanning the color photography sent us often turns out very well. But the copy machine that produces the finished *Revetments* does do a "crummy" job ... and it makes us sick.

At present, there is no money for commercial reproduction of the newsletter, or for the purchase of a state-of-the-art printer.

But the Association is working on this problem and hopes to have a more presentable graphics product as soon as possible.

In the mean time, *Revetments* has the decision to make as to whether to try and get pictorial material out to the members or just let it gather dust in the office. These pictures are precious to us and we feel, even crummy, they have to be shared with the readers. Sorry!



# The Mekons Delta Grunt

(Editor's Note: The following profound and intellectual article was forwarded to *Revetments* by Member Joseph Herrman, of Coon Rapids, Minnesota. He thought it was "amusing and timely," and so do we. It was originally published in the VVA June Bulletin, Chapter 470, Anoka, Minnesota. The author is unknown.)

Recently I was perusing the stacks at the Princeton University Library, (actually I was going through old issues of *National Geographic* looking for pictures with a little T&A, when I came across the following bit of scholarly research. To this point in time I had no idea that, as a group, we might actually qualify as an endangered species! Please read the following and then I offer you each an opportunity to add to mankind's scientific knowledge. At the end of the piece I have suggested several reasons for the disappearance of the Delta Grunt. Since we are each capable of primary research on the subject, why not share any ideas you might have in the vein with the group! I look forward to hearing your theories.

## *Concerning the Endangered Delta Grunt and its Habits*

The Delta Grunt is a form of wildlife best known for his unlikely combination of drab clothing and colorful language. When first observed during the 1960s and early 1970s its natural environment was among the nippa palm and mangrove swamps of the Mekong Delta. Its name was derived from his home habitat and the sound it makes when humping heavy loads in high heat and humidity.

The Delta Grunt has been long thought to have evolved spontaneously from the muck bordering Vietnam's southern river system. However recent research - referencing the semi-upright posture and the idiot savant-like skills with mechanical implements such as P-38 can openers, zippo cigarette lighters and automatic weaponry - has tentatively identified the Delta Grunt as a member of at least the primate, if not Homo Sapiens, family.



By far the most interesting sub-species is the "Recondo Godevilus," known in the vernacular as the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Mud Puppy. This fast moving, some might say skittish, variant on the basic Grunt prototype is known for its unusual combination of transportation modes. Whether flying through the air, cruising up a river or simply trucking down the highway, it seems equally and marvelously ill at ease. In each case the nervous darting eyes and "head on a swivel" posturing are common manifestations. In groups, as when packed on the back of deuce-and-a-half trucks, they resemble nothing so much as a display of souvenir "NFL Bobble Head Dolls." Researchers are unsure why but, curiously, when walking in single file, the lead Grunt (aka. "Point man," "N.F.G.," or "target") foregoes and displays a stiff necked and bug-eyed concentration on the few square meters of real estate directly in its path.

Perhaps it is the Mud Puppy's highly-strung nature that makes it so ferocious when aroused. Observers have noted that after nesting in a flooded rice paddy for as few as two or three nights entire flocks of the beast can be brought to instant fever pitch by simply firing a rocket round in their general vicinity.

## *Some of my thoughts on why the Delta Grunts are disappearing*

- When fully mature their stomachs prevent them from getting close to the ground for safety.
- Illumination from parachute flares now reflect off the tops of their heads thus identifying their nesting sites.
- Can no longer remember if it's "Clear the chamber then remove the magazine" or "Remove the magazine then clear the chamber."
- Require the support of a respirator and/or can of beer when humping for any distance longer than that to the mailbox and back.
- Spend a lot of their waking hours trying to recall where they put their keys and/or their glasses.
- Original habitat turned into golf courses, soccer fields or Nike sneaker factories.
- Current on-going research (and drawing on some former knowledge), lead me to believe the lead Grunt (aka. "point man," "N.F.G.," or "target") can no longer see the few meters in front of him.
- Also, most Delta Grunts now require additional audible implants in order to carry on even minimal usage of aforementioned "colorful" language.







"All Included - None Excluded"

Revetments is an official publication of the Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc. 6203 57th Avenue, Riverdale, Maryland 20737. The Association is a non-profit fraternal organization charter under appropriate statute and law.

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### Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot

by  
Chaplain  
James M. Warrington

### Whose Business is it?

A while back I was talking with a young man who was planning to quit school without completing his college education. After I had tried to explain to him why I thought this would be a mistake, he shot this question at me: "Whose business is it what I do with my life?" I have thought about this question many times, so I pass on some of my answers.

My first answer is that it is my business. I have to live with myself; and the decisions I make today will affect my life tomorrow. It is a divine law that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. I am free to choose, but I am not free from the consequences of my choices.



*The First Veterans gave us a Nation ...  
Millions would follow who would preserve it*

My second answer is that it is the business of my family and my friends. I cannot escape a responsibility to those who have loved me and believed in me.

It is within my power to bring them joy or sorrow, pride or disappointment. Many times, when we are tempted to do some foolish thing, it is the memory of our friends and loved ones which holds us to our best. I remember men in combat who kept in their pocket, wallet or helmet a picture of those dearest to them, so that in moments of confusion they could remember those who expected their best.

My third answer is that it is the business of society what I do with my life. I live in a world where much has been done for me: I live under a government which organizes services such as water, sewer, schools, courts of law, and public recreational and meeting places. I have been entrusted with the privileges of a politically free nation. All such trust puts me under a heavy responsibility to prove worthy of that trust.

My fourth answer is most

important of all, it is God's business. God created me; God gave me many blessing so far in my life and some day I shall stand before Him to give account. The Bible is to me a revelation of how much Almighty God, the El Shoddie, cares for me and how far He has gone to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah to bring even me to Himself.

\* \* \*

(Chaplain Warrington is available for consultation and pastoral services. Call Public Affairs, (757) 627-7746)

### Washington Area TSNA Veterans Day Meet Planned

As published in last month's *Revetments*, Vice President John Peele invited all those members who can make it, to join in Veterans Day activities at The Wall. It is hoped we can have a Friday (Nov.10) evening get-together, and then have a wreath-laying on Saturday. If you are planning to attend, please call either John Peele (301) 277-7474, or Bob Need, Public Affairs, (757) 627-7746 as soon as you can. You will be notified of the meeting location immediately thereafter.



An Exclusive Special Report for the Readers of *Revetments***Korea 2000*****The Relationship Changes – But For The Better?***

by

**Rick Fulton**, Member, Tan Son Nhut Association

*(Rick Fulton enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1962 and his first hitch was spent as a sentry dog handler. He re-enlisted to become a military journalist and served in that capacity in Korea during 1966 and 1967. He then volunteered and was assigned to Vietnam in October 1967, serving as a member of the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force DXI Combat News Branch throughout 1968. In 1969, after extending for a second tour in-country, he served as NCOIC of the Tan Son Nhut Office of Information, returning for Honorable Discharge in September. After the war, he earned a bachelor's degree and then acquired a graduate degree in History. He went to work for the U.S. Army as a GS-12 in Public Affairs in 1977, retiring from a 25 year full-time career that was cut short in 1995 by the military downsizing program President George Bush started in 1990. During the 1980s, he served as speech writer for four U.S. Army Generals during their respective tenures as CINC of the United Nations Command, ROK/US Combined Force Command, United States Forces Korea and the 8<sup>th</sup> United States Army. In Korea in the 1980s he also served for a time as a United States Army Reserve captain in a civil affairs assignment. Other reserve and national guard duties over the years, beginning in 1972, mostly in enlisted status, were in Infantry, Combat Engineer, Public Affairs and PSYOP units. The opinions he expresses in this article are his own, and are based on open source media accounts and government news releases.)*

It was the early morning hours of a typical June day in 1950, half a century ago, when Soviet built and supplied T-34/85 medium tanks nosed across the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel on the Korean Peninsula and rumbled south towards Seoul. What followed was a bitter and tragic war that in the next 37 months took two million lives. The cease-fire hammered out in talks at Panmunjom ended the shooting but not the war. There was, after all, no peace treaty between nations; just an armistice agreement signed by battlefield commanders. The heavy artillery stopped, and most of the exchanges of fire sputtered out, but the war didn't end as both sides continued to glare at each other along rifle battle sights as they manned fortified positions along the demilitarized zone.

Actually there was nothing demilitarized about it. The Korean DMZ was, and is, the most heavily fortified international border in the world today. It is a place which in four decades and seven years since the war began has witnessed many, many skirmishes. Combat death along that line has always been an accepted fact of daily life, with troops on both sides testing the limits of the armistice agreement words. From the very earliest days of the war, overall command of the

international military forces protecting South Korea has been a responsibility of the United States Army. And for most of the time since the signing of the armistice, the United States of America had Infantry soldiers actually holding an ever decreasing chunk of that 151-mile-long line and doing all of the things required to deter enemy assaults against their fortified positions. That ended about 10 years ago. The U.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division remains in Korea, doing intensive training; yet not in situations where soldiers must routinely lock and load their weapons.

There has been an ever growing feeling of anti-Americanism in the Republic of Korea. The present year has been an especially bitter time in the ROK/US relationship, with a lot of incidents, physical assaults, even a murder; yet the U.S. government outside of the military and the American media have failed to adequately inform the public about this painful slippage in Korean and American friendship. There is drastic change underway on the Korean Peninsula; truly emphasized by the hugs the Presidents of the north and south gave each other at a meeting this June in Pyongyang. The warm and growing



relationship between Kim Dae Jung, president of the ROK, and Kim Jung Il, son and heir apparent of Kim Il-Sung, emphasizes an important dynamic on the peninsula today; namely that more than 70 percent of the people in South Korea have no personal memories of the atrocities committed by the communists during the war.

Playing to cultural attributes and the traditional Korean dislike of "foreigners" (in spite of all our Nation has done for the Korean people), those who seek a near term unification are quick to use the sophisticated media apparatus in the south today to paint American forces in no-win portraits and in the poorest possible light. Our (TSNA) association newsletter doesn't have the space for a full explanation. Therefore, permit me to simply mention some of the highlights of what has been happening, and encourage you to use the Internet to check out these reports for yourself. You can do this by going to the United States Force Korea Public Affairs Office website and reading the command's news releases. You can also reach the Pacific Stars and Stripes in the news link portion of that page, as well as the English language Korea Times and Korea Herald. All these newspapers have reported the following:

***The murder of a Korean prostitute ...***

... by a U.S. Soldier, who then received a sentence of eight years for the crime; a very light sentence, indeed, for such a heinous crime, leading to speculation by some Americans who have served in Korea that giving the killer a "slap on the wrist" kind of sentence was an act deliberately intended to build anger among the Korean people, rather than to properly punish a killer.

***No-Gun-Ri***

***and all the other unproven allegations ...***

...of wartime atrocities were reported in Korea in such a way as to deliberately enflame anti-American opinion, rather than to properly investigate and then report. Incidentally, No-Gun-Ri is in the southwest corner of the Korean Peninsula, a place which from 1945 on was a hotbed of leftist guerrilla activity. When 8<sup>th</sup> Army made the breakout from the Pusan perimeter in September 1950, north Korean soldiers on the left flank had no way to retreat north of the 38<sup>th</sup>

parallel and many of those who did not surrender filtered in the mountains of this region and were said to have, at least to some extent, been absorbed by the existing population. Guerrilla attacks against U.N. military facilities in the area were commonplace events even into the early 1960s. It is to be noted that No-Gun-Ri is not far from Kwang-ju and that the current president of the ROK is from this city, and is said to have played a significant role in the uprising there against the Seoul government which took place in the late 1970s and early '80s.

***An American Air Force F-16 ...***

... experiencing an in-flight emergency had to jettison a load of practice bombs into a mud flat, with no injury to anyone, and yet the resulting reaction was similar to and actually quite greater than that experienced by the U.S. Navy at the occupied gunnery range in Puerto Rico.

***A U.S. civilian employee ...***

... who worked in the morgue at the 121<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital on Yongsan in Seoul (the joint and combined command's headquarters garrison) stupidly ordered a Korean civilian subordinate to pour about 20 gallons of embalming fluid down the drain, instead of following the requirements of the Army's environmental protection regulation and program. The Korean employee did so and then ran as fast as possible to the radicals with this tale and a major uproar ensued, which included demonstrations and even penetrations of the compound by unauthorized personnel. Most observers believe the uproar was manufactured. The uproar by the so-called "environmentalists" was such that the U.S. government was forced to deliver a formal apology to the Seoul City Hall, and radicals have called for the arrest and resignation of the current American four star commander of the joint and combined forces protecting the south.

***A growing call by South Korean street thugs and radicals***

***for the Status of Forces Agreement ...***

... presently in effect to be changed in such a way as to deny U.S. service members with the legal protections they are guaranteed by the United



States Constitution. Most in danger by a change to SOFA would be the legal protections of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, specifically equal protection and due process aspects, for Americans directed abroad by their government to serve the national interest. The SOFA matter will soon result in demonstrations carried out by South Koreans inside the United States, in front of the White House, at the Democratic Convention and other prominent locations, according to an article in *Korea Times* newspaper. Most recently, Korean gangs let it be known they were planning to kidnap one or more American service members and hold them as political hostages. The U.S. Embassy and the U.S. State Department investigated and decided the report had enough credibility that they have now issued a formal travel advisory to U.S. citizens, suggesting they avoid including the Republic of Korea in their travel plans.

*The day of the ceremony marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Korean war ...*

... a U.S. Army major, who had been in country less than two weeks decided he needed to do some shopping in the business district just outside of Yongsan – a place called Itaewon. The officer, a medical doctor, a pediatrician from Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, father of four with a fifth child on the way, was walking with two other officers – doctors – and was going along the sidewalk in front of a tennis shoe store. Suddenly, in an unprovoked attack, a Korean man in his mid 30's rushed up with two knives and stabbed the doctor in the chest. One of the other two doctors was a surgeon and he did his best to save his friend's life, while the other officer apprehended the killer. Nevertheless, the major died the next day. Some say the attack made the same day as the 50<sup>th</sup> observance of the start of the war was coincidence. (It is an ancient rule of warfare that there is no such thing as "coincidence" in a combat zone.)

The South Korean police (not quite up to the competence and caliber of the Vietnamese "white mice" who most of you will remember with clarity, especially with regard to their involvement with the corrupt operation of the Tan Son Nhut

VNAF Officers' Club (all U.S. ranks, casino and steam and cream) claim that the killer was responding to the major allegedly calling him "a bastard" and said he did the killing because he was mentally deranged. An investigation by the United States Forces Korea reportedly proves there was no exchange of words before the attack, that the assault was unprovoked, that the doctor was apparently targeted because he was an American, and that the act was clearly an incident of anti-Americanism.

This is proven by the rash of physical assaults which then took place during the next week, some quite serious, against U.S. personnel, including a dependent wife. The two English language newspapers in Seoul reported the killing in such a way as to indicate the American soldier was at fault for it even happening and was a person who deserved what came his way. This leads to the thought that professionalism and objectivity in Korean journalism – just like most stories about Korean professionalism, competence and valor on the battlefields of the Korean War – is very much a myth. Facts based on historical record prove otherwise.

\* \* \*

The common denominator of all these incidents is how quickly they were falsely reported by the Korean media, and how the words selected for use in those reports were deliberately intended to stir up feelings of racial and cultural hatred. To long time observers of events on the Korean Peninsula, it has quickly become quite apparent that there well may be a single command and control element doing its thing behind the scene; an element powerful enough to demand that the media over there follow a kind of party line. Strangely, the American press has mostly been silent about the turmoil.

All of this points to the fact that it is now time for Americans to rethink the military relationship we presently have with the South Koreans and to give serious consideration to redeployment of our forces off the peninsula.

If we do so now, then it is a time that anti-Americanism is more manageable, at least somewhat, then we will as a nation be able to



retain some influence in Korean affairs. But if we wait until the north and south unification, then we may in fact be looking at another much more hostile, even Bataan-like sort of situation.

In the world today, the top eight nations in terms of military manpower are (1) China, 2.2 million; (2) India, 980,000; (3) North Korea, 923,000; (4) South Korea, 548,000; (5) Turkey, 525,000; (6) Pakistan, 520,000; (7) Vietnam, 500,000 – and (8) the United States with 485,000 service members. When the Korean War started, in June 1950, we had four Army divisions in Japan and a host of support facilities within flying distance of the war. Today, there are no divisions, and facilities around the western Pacific are very limited.

We have a Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of Korea, but let me ask you an important question. Do we really need to keep that agreement in force forever? Given that the ROK President Kim Dae Jung, as his first official act in office went to Hanoi to apologize to the Vietnamese for his nation's participation in what was sneeringly referred to as the "American" war. In the present kind of political climate in South Korea, do we as a nation need to be willing to send our sons to another war in Korea? It is a legitimate question, and one we should be asking our U.S. senators, the people who ratify treaties.

Also, do we need to keep 30,000 plus U.S. service members as well as many civilian employees and dependents in Korea as a sign of our good faith/speedbump (take your pick) that we will come to the south's rescue in the highly unlikely event of a North Korean renewal of the war?

Could not one U.S. Infantry squad do the same thing? As one who was a proud leg (yes, airborne types, those two words do go together) Army National Guard PMOS 11-Bang-Bang during college years, I personally believe it could.

Final point. North Korea has major problems feeding its people. The south has industries and farm land, but – like the north – not much in terms of raw materials to feed its industrialization. Russian Siberia has a lot of untapped oil and a lot of minerals, and it is just up the road. China is, of

course, a regional player – a heavyweight, in fact – but what about the possibility of a China looking south and a Korean "ally" looking north? Remember this.

A combined north and south on the Korean Peninsula has just one thing going for it and that has a large, sophisticated air, land and blue water sea military capability. Japan is already thinking about the implications of unification, remembering what a long memory the Koreans have, and reportedly has started to enhance its degree of military rebuilding.

Would we not be wise to remember that Alaska, like Siberia, has a wide range of resources, and that Alaska, like Siberia, and like China, Japan and the nations of Korea, is as much a part of the north Pacific community as it is a part of the North American community.

Personally, I think we would be wise to remember this.

As you will deduce from the way I have laid out the facts of this bitter summer, I have my own opinion; albeit a sad one because I spent more than eight years in Korea, and have a great deal of appreciation for the passing Korean tapestry. Yet, as an American, I believe the time is at hand to change the way things are between us, and I urge all of you to begin your own investigations. I suspect you will be shocked, and that too, like our slipping friendly relations, is both a tragedy and a reality.

Remember this: As much as we would have it to be otherwise, the truth is that no Nation has friends. Nations have only national interests.

Also remember that good soldiers do not make predictions – but they do measure capabilities. We, as a nation, would do well to remember that, and even more, to make sure it is the philosophy we follow as we think about international affairs and contemplate a future course of action to follow.

The Land of the Morning Calm – for Americans, in fact for all westerners – no longer is calm. There is a typhoon stirring and it is time for all of us to wake up and feel the raindrops, before a massive storm surge hits.

\* \* \*





# WANTED!



The Tan Son Nhut Association has been growing steadily and has reached the point where it needs better structuring, organization and individual participation.

Among the many areas that need assistance are:

**National Public Relations:** We need experienced individuals who can design and implement public relations programs. Get these programs into the media. Devise advertisements and other material for public consumption.

**Membership:** We need individuals who can design and promote membership drives, and can maintain and manage membership files.

**Chapter Executives:** We need individuals who can target areas for chapters and assist organizing them.

**National Programs:** We need individuals capable of setting up a National TSNA Speakers Bureau, a TSNA Library/Museum Program; and the coordination of nationwide TSNA reunions.

\* \* \*

Please give this serious thought. Preliminary steps are being taken in an attempt to secure a permanent location in or near Washington, D. C. as the official headquarters of the Association. Steps are being taken to initiate a search for foundational funding.

To be successful, we have to be efficiently organized. We are proposing the convening of an informal conference on these issues after the first of the year, probably in a one-day meeting in Washington. If you would like to support and participate, please let us know.

\* \* \*

*Write or Call:*

*John Peele (301) 277-7474*

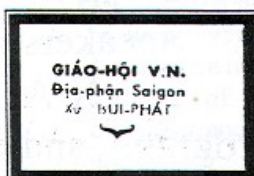
*or*

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Virginia, 23520  
(757) 627-0878*





## Day Eight



Starting this chapter, I reminded myself to ask the readers if they have ever reflected upon something that was an immediate surprise to me, and that is, why do the Viets write their language in Roman letters as we westerners do, and not in the ideograms one would expect to be used in a country which is essentially southern China? In fact, they did before the French arrived back in the 1800s.



A French priest developed a method of "romanization" of the Vietnamese language, for the simple reason that they could then read the Bible - and for more commercial reasons. It surely made the job of colonization easier because once they started using Roman letters it was snap to teach them French.

Over on the Cholon side of Saigon you probably noticed that all you saw was Chinese writing on the store fronts. That was where all the Chinese lived.

### A man named - Verne

But back to my story. In my last chapter (*Revetments*, July 2000) I talked about my temporary duty (TDY) to Bangkok, Thailand, where I talked about mean old Chief Crawford.

The next name in my story I am going to hide, except for his first name, because he died a tragic death along with his crew, and was the bravest man I ever knew.

Members of the 4<sup>th</sup> Air Commando Squadron will remember the incident. I had returned to Tan Son Nhut and found a new unit had arrived from the States. The 4<sup>th</sup> ACS flew old C-47 aircraft fitted with side-firing 30 calibre miniguns which fired at 4,000 rounds per minute. These airplanes, derived from the

1935 vintage DC-3 (Douglas Commercial No. 3) had been manufactured before 1945 but had been run through the McClellan depot and were like new. They had been ferried all the way from California using long range fuel tanks which practically filled the fuselage.

The maintenance officer for the unit was a former classmate of mine while I was attending AMOC (maintenance officers school) at Chanute Air Force Base. His name was - Verne.

He was highly p.o.'d when he learned that he had to turn all of his support troops over to the 33<sup>rd</sup> CAMRON, that had by that time become the 377<sup>th</sup> CAM Squadron. But, our commander allowed him to remain in the 4<sup>th</sup> ACS since he flew combat missions like the other pilots.

### Asking for a favor

One day he came to me and said, "Mac, I am a maintenance officer just like you, and I want a favor."

I said, "Sure," and asked the nature of the favor. He explained that his operational procedures required him to fly combat missions at exactly 3,000 ft. agl. Agl (above ground level) is only used on instrument approaches and msl. (mean sea level) altitudes are used for cruising below 18,000 ft. and pressure altitudes with the altimeter window set at 29.92 inches of mercury (standard pressure) used in positive control areas above 18,000 ft.

He had a theory that if he could fire from only 1,500 feet agl., that he could become twice as effective. The 3,000 ft. figure was a conservative one for the protection of the crews since small arms ground fire was ineffective above that altitude.

I replied, "Well, Verne, you are the maintenance officer for the 4<sup>th</sup>, so what do you want from me?"

He replied that "firing from the lower altitude would require adjusting the depression angle of the gun mounts to a lesser angle of depression." He said, "You damned PACAF pirates have stolen all my maintenance troops and I need to borrow back a welder and a machinist to accomplish the modification."

I replied, "Okay, major, you got 'em."

### King of the mountain

During the next several weeks Verne was the king of the mountain and became sort of a hero around the bar at the club. No one had ever seen so many wrecked trucks and dead Viet Cong as well as NVA.

It has to end somewhere, as he became more and more famous, he became more and more aggressive. People like him could have won the war if there had been enough of them and they had lived long enough. But there were so many of the enemy, and as we had learned in Korea, you have to be willing to lose people:

### Revetments, November, 2000

the enemy was willing to lose thousands to our hundreds.

One night, he did not return from a mission to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. A C-130 crew reported having seen a "flash in the sky" in the general position where Verne and his crew would have been.

I still think about Verne more often than I would like. I wonder if I should have refused to give him the help in modifying the gun mounts?

### Asia as postscript

Speaking of Asia, a tech sergeant I worked for one time, told me that during the Chinese entry into the Korean War, his unit was overrun and he finally just took off running. After about a mile he became so tired that he had to stop. At the ditch where he stopped, he found three Air Force men who he knew. Their hands were wired behind their backs and shot in the head. He said that he got his breath back real quick and that his ability to run, no doubt had saved his life.


In one infantry unit, the field hospital back in the rear kept receiving these wounded boys with frost bitten genitals. They discovered that the troops had not been able to keep the rations sanitary during the fighting and had gotten dysentery.

The Chinese were coming in mass, blowing bugles. The waves of women arrived first firing weapons, and after our soldiers mowed them down, the male forces would follow picking up the weapons of the dead women, continuing to fire. The Americans, unable to cease firing, had slit the backs of their fatigue trousers so that they could continue firing at the waves of Chinese and relieve themselves as necessary and their lower extremities froze.

Historians are the only people who remember that three German divisions (finest soldiers or the war man for man) got decimated in the mountains of Yugoslavia where we are screwing around right now.

I think it was the philosopher Santayana who said, "Any man who ignores history is doomed to repeat it."

Good night, all you old vets out there, your pals love you!



**Where in  
the world  
are you? When you move  
without telling us, we spend \$  
trying to find you ...  
Please let us have your  
change of address!**



# The Communications Center

**Member Seeks Info ...** I am trying to find Sergeant Owens and Sergeant Carlos William Raines, or other airmen and sergeants who served in the 8<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, between September 1970 and September 1971.

Information is needed to verify a Veterans Administration claim. Thank you for your help.

Eugene T. Tucker  
326 Hampton Avenue  
Calhoun Falls, S. C. 29628  
Phone: (864) 447-9219

**World War II Inquiry ...** Are there any veterans who were in Staleg Luft 3, from October 14, 1943 to September 22, 1944? I am looking for anyone that may have known a Staff Sergeant Robert W. Fisher, USAAF. Thank you.

Robert W. Fisher  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Curriculum in Toxicology  
[rwfiser@mindspring.com](mailto:rwfiser@mindspring.com)

## Tree Growing Out of Aircraft?

... This is regarding a C-123 Provider aircraft that left Tan Son Nhut Air Base flying fuel oil to a small U.S. Army Special Forces camp southwest of Saigon. I believe it was June 3, 1966, or thereabouts.

After landing at the small airstrip, Viet Cong came out of the woods firing at the aircraft. The aircraft succeeded, just barely, in taking off again, but didn't quite clear the tree line and landed back at Tan Son Nhut (?), with a ten foot palm tree still wedged in the leading edge of a wing.

I have a piece of a clipping telling this story, with a "grainy" photo of the wing and palm tree, etc., with the rest of the article "continued on Page 4 (?)."

It says "U.S. Air Force Photo," under the picture, and I might guess the article was in (Pacific) Stars & Stripes (?).

Could you steer me in the

right direction to get a readable copy of this article with a better photo? I would greatly appreciate it.

I believe the pilot was Major James R. McCarthy, Major Vernon Rood was navigator, Captain Ronald Weeden was copilot, and Airman Steve Bailey was loadmaster, as per the article. Thanks.

Ray Halloran  
Durham, New Hampshire  
[wblekd@arri.net](mailto:wblekd@arri.net)

## Agency Needs Help Locating Two Army Officers ...

I am writing to ask for your help concerning a search of two former servicemen who served at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. I hope you can put this in your newsletter so someone who knew them or served in the unit can contact me.

Both officers served in the 69<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion at Phi Long Gate, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon.

Both are from New York State, and both were assigned to radio communications activities.

**Philip** (first name only), African-American, captain, tour at TSN, 1968-1971.

**Parker** (last name only), African-American, major, tour at TSN, 1970.

They were both good friends. Please contact me either at the following address or e-mail.

Amerasian Relief Agency  
Brian Hjort  
Blankavej 21 st.tv  
2500 Valby  
Dk Denmark  
[brihi@danbbs.dk](mailto:brihi@danbbs.dk)

## Member Sends Tribute To The USS Cole Message ...

Forwarded with pride and hearty salute to sailors everywhere. I thought you might want to reflect on the following which was sent by way of a retired Naval Admiral.

*The Men and Women  
of the USS Cole*

(From a naval aviator flying the SH-60B from the USS Hawe.)

"It wasn't until a few days ago though, that we started doing something that I feel may be the first thing I've seen in my short naval career that has truly made a difference. Right now, we're supporting the USS Cole and her crew in Aden. When the attack occurred we were a day away. Just by luck we happened to be on our way out of the Gulf and headed towards the Suez and could get here in a relatively short amount of time. I know what you all have seen on CNN, because we have seen it too.

"I just want you all to know that what you see doesn't even scratch the surface. I'm not going to get into it for obvious reasons. But I will tell you that right now there are 250+ sailors just a few miles away living in hell on earth. I'm sitting in a nice air conditioned state room, they're sleeping out on the decks at night. You can't even imagine the conditions they're living in, and yet they are still fighting 24 hours a day to save their ship and free the bodies of those still trapped and send them home.

"As bad as it is, they're doing an incredible job. The very fact that these people are still functioning is beyond my comprehension. Whatever you imagine as the worst, multiply it by ten and you might get there. Today I was tasked to photo rig the ship and surrounding area. It looked so much worse than I had imagined, unbelievable really, with debris and disarray everywhere, the ship listing, the hole in her side.

"I wish I had the power to relay to you all of what I have seen, but words just won't do it. I do want to tell you the first thing that jumped out at me ... the Stars and Stripes flying. I can't tell you how that made me feel ... even in this god-forsaken hell hole, our flag was more beautiful than

words can describe.

"Then I started to notice the mass of activity going on below, scores of people working non-stop in 90 plus degree weather to save this ship. They're doing it with almost no electrical power and they're sleeping, when they can sleep, outside on the decks because they can't stand the smell or the heat or the darkness inside. They only want to eat what we bring them because they're all scared of eating something brought by the local vendors.

"Even with all that the USS Cole and her crew are sending a message, guys, and it's that even acts of cowardice and hate can do nothing to the spirit and pride of the United States. I have never been so proud of what I do, or of the men and women that I serve with, as I was today.

"There are sixteen confirmed dead sailors who put it on the line for all of us, and some of them are still trapped here.

"Please take a minute to pray for their families and say a word of thanks for their sacrifice ... one made so that we can live the lives that we do.

"All of you that serve with me, thank you. All of you that have loved ones that serve, thank you."

(Please feel free to pass this on to those you think will appreciate it. V/R Lt.Landry)

Robert Nelson  
Anchorage, Alaska  
[csmrjn@alaska.net](mailto:csmrjn@alaska.net)

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And remember Santa's coming, and a TSNA Gift Membership (\$20) would be a great stocking stuffer, gift card sent in the name of donor!

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