

# Revetments

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A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



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## In Memory of MSgt. Robert Stanley Need, USAF, (Retired) October 11, 1929 ~ July 24 2004



Our Colleague, Our Friend, Our Master Sergeant



**Rev. Dr. James M. Warrington**

**Tan Son Nhut Association Chaplain**

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**“Nothing I could say”**

Rupert Brooke, the brilliant young English poet, died as a naval officer on the Isle of Skyros in the Aegean Sea during World War I. He was one of the costly casualties of that madness. On hearing the news of his death, Edward Marsh, one of Brooke's closest friends, went to visit the poet's mother, who took him upstairs and there showed him the pathetic boxes of her son's belongings which had now been shipped home.

She broke down as she looked on them again. Recalling the scene later, Marsh wrote: “I have never seen such suffering. It was very terrible, as of course there was nothing I could say.”

“Nothing I could say.” These words suggest a tragedy greater than that of the death of the brilliant young poet. Here was the heir of nineteen centuries of Christian history who had nothing to say to a mother in such a strait.

Christians are people who have something to say in the midst of the world's tragedy, suffering and death. We may not have all the answers we would like to have, but we have a message that enables us to go forward with victory and assurance despite the limits of our understanding. This we could say to the broken-hearted mother:

“We are not promised that we shall escape tragedy, but we are promised that God is with us and will be always with us. ‘If God be for us who can be against us?’ We are promised that nothing can separate us from the love of God. We know that divine love is stronger than death. We know that God and the Spirit are eternal. We have experienced the Holy Spirit in our souls and in our mortal lives. We know that the God who formed us and loves us and who sent the Christ Jesus to redeem us, takes us at last to Himself. With these great convictions we are lifted above fear and doubt, to faith and hope and trust - and we say: “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory.”

I Corinthians 15:57.





"Now, men, we've got to have a little more imagination in these hometown mug shots."



"You can come out from under the desk now, sir, that was just a truck backfiring."



# **Robert Stanley Need**

**By: Wayne Salisbury**

I said, "Bob, that was the best Revetments you ever put out!" He'd reply: "You always say that!"

I guess we averaged four phone calls a week. We both had caller ID so we both knew if the other was calling.

"Seaman First Class, this is Colonel Salisbury." "Yeah, what does the Colonel need today", would be his reply. The next day I'd get a call from him: "This is Admiral Need, I need to speak with Private Salisbury." Whether it was a serious matter involving the Tan Son Nhut Association, or just a call to see what was going on, we always looked forward to talking.

And then one day, Bob told me he had been to the Navy Hospital and he was diagnosed with cancer. I paused to catch my breath. We discussed the matter candidly. We both spoke of hope, and modern technology – he'd fight this disease, and I'd fight along side him – all the way.

I first met Bob at the 2002 reunion in Washington, D.C. He hardly knew my name, but greeted me cordially and warmly. "How you doing Wayne, so glad you could make it!" I knew right then there was something special about this Master Sergeant.

Our friendship grew. I learned about his background. I learned he was an accomplished musician – classical music at that. He wrote classical music. He started a symphony orchestra while stationed with SHAPE in Paris, France. I couldn't whistle a tune, and here I had a friend that could write classical music.

It didn't take long (reading one issue of Revetments) that I learned he had other talents. He was an extraordinary writer. He was gifted. In the Air Force, among other things, he was a reporter, editor, and after retiring he started a newspaper in Oregon. He was the publisher, reporter, editor – he did everything, and he did it extremely well. This talent poured into publishing the Revetments.

I visited Bob several times when he was hospitalized. During one visit, the subject of the TSNA office came up. I told him I'd assume his duties. I'd move the office to my home in Roanoke, Virginia, some 5 hours away from him. I told him I'd do my best. I told him I'd never be able to publish the Revetments like he did. He told me, "Oh shut up, you'll do fine." I knew a big part of his life was being removed. He loved working for the Association, he loved the members and he dearly loved publishing Revetments. But he knew there was no choice. He had to let go.



As I departed his hospital room the last time, I turned, snapped a salute, and told him, "Goodbye, my Master Sergeant friend." He had lost the control of his right arm, but, with his left hand he returned the salute and in a weak voice said, "Goodbye, my Master Sergeant friend."

At the reunion in Illinois on July 24th, I made a last minute phone call to his wife, Lois, before I boarded the bus with other members for the drive to the Saturday night banquet. I wanted to know how he was doing. She told me Bob passed away. I had known it was a matter of days, if not hours, but it hit me like a ton of bricks. I went to the bus and announced to the members that Bob was gone. I think they forgave me for my lack of composure.

I had lost my Master Sergeant Friend.

On August the 10<sup>th</sup> I drove to Norfolk and received his cremations. It was a solemn event. I walked to my car, and placed the container on the front seat, stepped back, and saluted. His earthly remains are now in the Tan Son Nhut Association office, covered by an American flag he loved so much.

At a date and place yet to be determined, a group of members will scatter his ashes over a body of water – exactly as he wished.







the Association, he loved the members and he loved publishing the newsletter. But he knew there was no choice. He had to let go.



# Robert Stanley Need

By: David Bolton

Memorials are not for those who have left us. They are for those of us who remain behind. The beauty of a "Wake" is the chance for friends to gather and remember the departed. With laughter and tears. And, in the case of Robert Stanley Need, Master Sergeant USAF some ice cold beer. That is, if the gathering is before seven. After seven the libation of choice is rum and coke.

For over 50 years Bob was the devoted husband of Lois. He was one of the first enlistee's in the "new" USAF. The veteran of two wars and countless overseas postings.

An accomplished musician and composer he had his debut in Cleveland's Severance Hall at the age of eight. He was the owner and publisher of two respected small newspapers and the comptroller of a large cooperation. Active in many civic groups, he was a prime mover in the growth of the Tan Son Nhut Association. He was a respected journalist and editor and a very fine chef.

But that tells you nothing about the man I called my best friend and surrogate Father.

We once worked on a major political campaign together. I was not surprised that our candidate lost. I was surprised that we did not kill each other. Bob would shrug off our shouting matches and crack: "When two egos this large collide there is bound to be an explosion."

We would sit on his balcony and drink prodigious amounts of beer and argue. UFO's, the relative merits of Bella Bartok over Ravel or comparisons of Fats Waller to Rubenstein. The subject didn't matter. Good conversation and good argument mattered.

We played an idiot game on one of our snobbish friends called "word of the day". Try using the word "Telautograph" in casual conversation and you will get the idea. We would laugh like loons over the blank stares we would get from our hapless victim.

But most of all Bob loved America. And the men and women who wear, or who have worn its uniform. He believed in this country. No Pollyanna or gad fly, he was willing to fight for the principles he believed in. When asked by one of our associates why he had volunteered to go to Viet Nam when he had a perfectly safe position with Headquarters Air Force he replied simply "It was where I was needed."

Where he was needed. That is where Bob Need always tried to be. I guess that is why he left us.





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