

# Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association  
A Memorial To The American Experience In Vietnam



All Included - None Excluded

Vol 6, No 9

September - October 2004

## Reunion ~ July 2004 Bourbonnais, Illinois





# Small Gathering ~ But A HUGE Success

It may not have been a huge reunion, number wise, but thanks to member Dean Gard and his significant other, Debbie Olesinski, the 2004 reunion was a HUGE success.

From the arrival of many members on Thursday, July 21st, to the final informal breakfast on Sunday, July 25th, members and their guests had the opportunity of getting reacquainted with old friends, and making new ones.

As is usually the case, Bill and Mary Carlson and Bill Coup from Florida came the farthest. Bill and Mary drove all the way from their home in Oregon. They are known as the "Traveling Carlson's", so while most would have been exhausted having driven that far, it was just another trip for Bill and Mary.

Bill Coup flew into O'Hara from his home in Florida. He rented a car at O'Hara, and when asked how he managed the Chicago traffic, replied, "Oh it was fine." No one believed him!

## Thursday - July 22:

Dean had arranged a tour of Manteno, Illinois Veteran's Home. What a great tour we had! The Veteran's Home is clean, well organized, with a staff of dedicated men and women. There are over 300 residents in the Home.

During the tour we had the pleasure of meeting one of the residents, Lt. Colonel Harold Morrison, USAF (Retired). Harold is a member of the TSNA. We found him to be a fantastic individual.

## Friday - July 23:

We toured the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery outside of Elwood, IL, about 26 miles northwest of Bourbonnais, IL. The cemetery spreads over 982 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds.

Friday night the group attended a steak dinner at the South Side Country Club. Harold Morrison from the Veteran's Home joined us.

## Saturday - July 24:

Chanute Air Force Base (Rantoul, IL) is now the home of the Octave Chanute Aerospace Museum. The group enjoyed a tour of the facility which included several aircraft in a hanger as well as on the ramp in front of the hanger.

## Saturday night banquet:

The group gathered at the Kankakee VFW Hall and enjoyed a wonderful banquet dinner. During dinner we enjoyed a visual Power Point presentation from Bob Laymon. The beginning of the presentation were photos of the various aircraft that were involved in the Vietnam War. Following this, Bob gave an in-depth presentation of the T-39 Scatback Courier operation that was conducted at Tan Son Nhut. Bob was a flying crew chief with the operation.

We were honored to have, as special guests, two members of the Illinois Hall of Fame: Lt. Col Lock, USAF, Retired and Maj. Arnold J. McGraw, USA, Retired. Lt. Col Harold Morrison, another Hall of Fame member, was unable to attend. We were honored by their presence. (See page 6)

## Sunday - July 25:

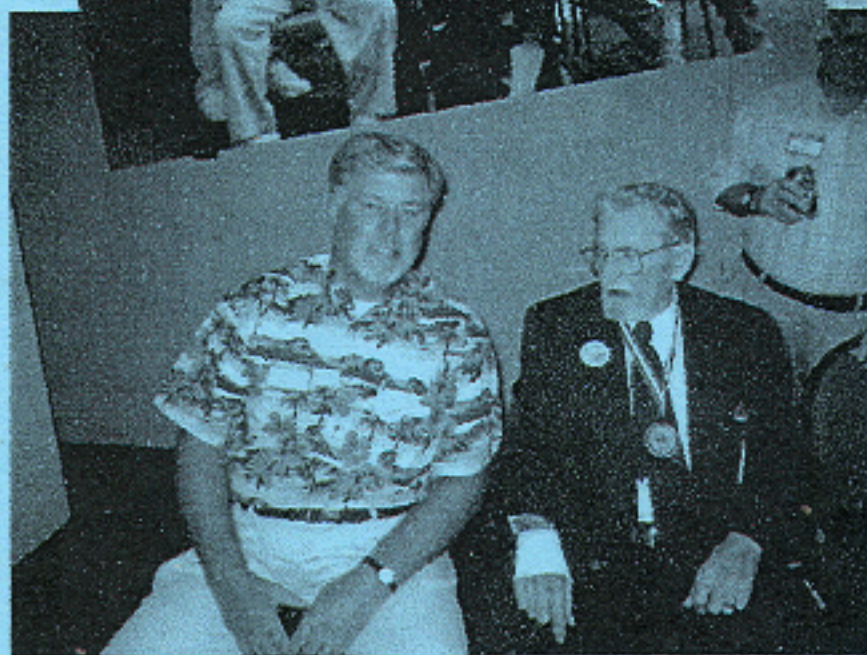
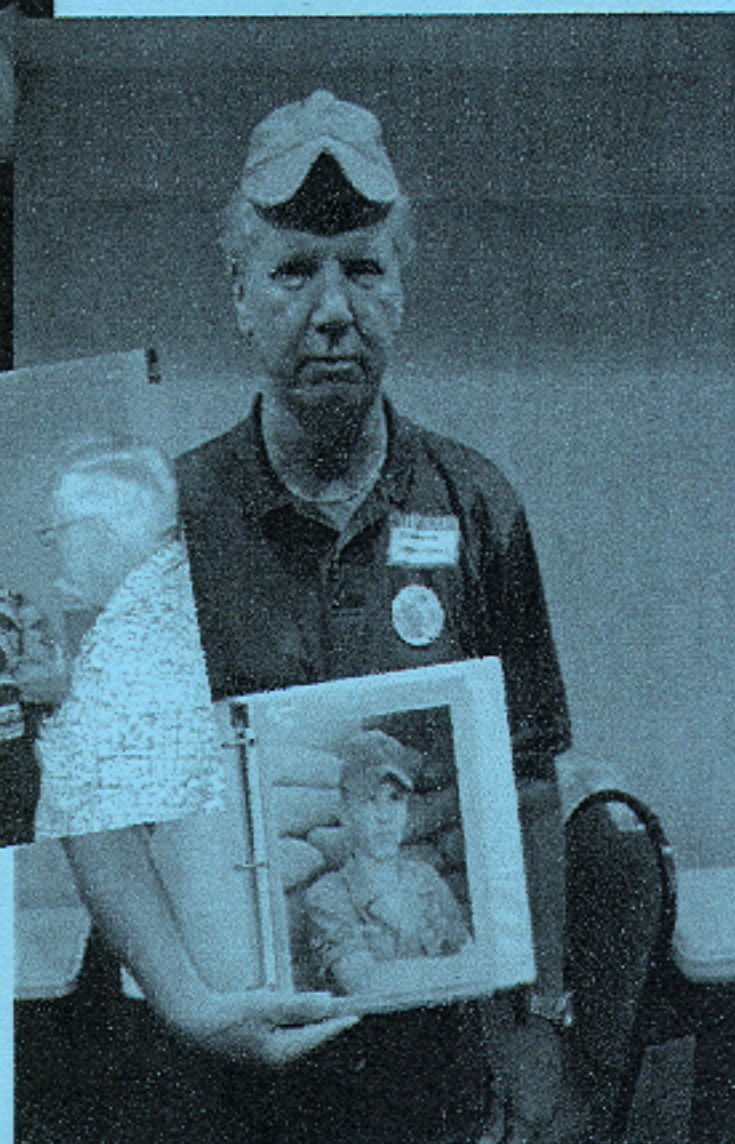
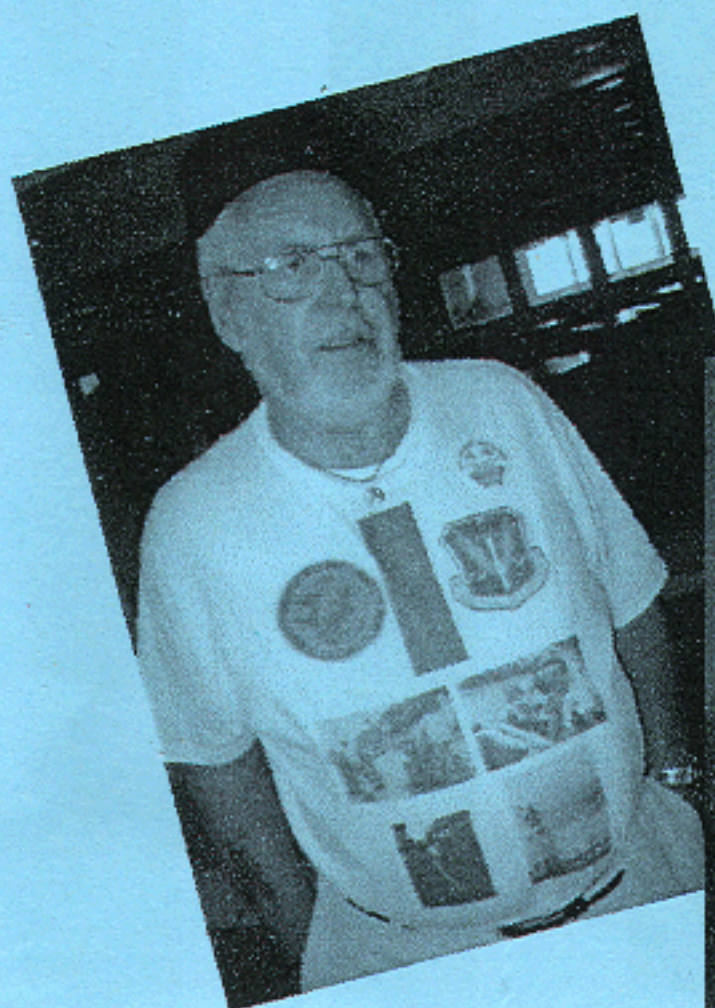
All good things come to an end, and the reunion was no exception. Members and their guests gathered for an informal breakfast at the motel. Following breakfast, with firm handshakes and hugs, members departed for their homes.

Our sincere gratitude and thanks to Dean Gard and Debbie Olesinski for their hard work in seeing that the reunion was successful. Our thanks also to George Guild for providing bus transportation. This is the second reunion that George has provided transportation for a very "reasonable rate."





# 2004 Reunion Photos





## Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot



James M. Warrington  
Chaplain TSNA

### Children and God Thoughts From A Mother

A few years ago I received a very interesting letter. This particular letter had to do with children and God. The writer was a mother who, as a home schooler, was familiar with recurring questions such as these: "What does God look like? Where does he live? How tall is he? Would I know Him if I saw Him?"

This mother's plea was that we, all of us, develop a way of answering these questions that will have meaning for those who ask them. "Nobody gives children a shining pocketful of special words or ideas to form mental pictures of God. She further wrote, "And so people grow into parents without being able to put their deepest feelings and convictions into words. God remains a beloved abstraction."

She suggested that we talk to young children like this: "What does God look like? Well, like a Christmas tree, for one thing. Or like your own bed when you are very tired. Like a bowl of hot soup and a peanut butter sandwich when you're hungry and cold. Like your grandmother's face when she comes for a visit.

"God is very beautiful. And when you see Him you'll know Him - because you will feel inside like you do when you see one of the things I've just mentioned.



"God is goodness and kindness and love. He is in all people who love you. The place to look is in the people around you - even in yourself sometimes."

"God is another child when he shares a toy with you. God is in your daddy when he picks you up and plays with you when he comes home at night. God is in your grandfather when he says that children should be seen and not heard (for God feels strongly that all people ought to behave themselves). God is in your uncle when he takes you out for a hot fudge sundae."

"You see and hear and feel and touch God every day."

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(Ed. Chaplain Warrington wrote this article for Mother's Day this past May. Because of illness, Bob Need was unable to publish the May edition of Revetments.)

The TSNA chaplains are available for counseling. Call Public Affairs.



# 10th Year Anniversary !

The Tan Son Nhut Association Is 10 Years Old



The First Revetments  
July 1996

## How did it all begin?

Two former residents of Tan Son Nhut, Don Parker and John Peele, got together, in 1994, and with a lot of hard, difficult work, put together the Association. Here are their stories.

**By: John Peele:** I was asked that I give a little background on myself and how Don Parker and I founded the Tan Son Nhut Association.

I was stationed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base from 24 Nov 1969, Thanksgiving Day, to 24th November 1970. I was assigned to the 460th Field Maintenance. My job was maintaining survival equipment for pilots and crew. After four months I was asked to learn things that were not in my job description, for an example replacing or repairing control surfaces on C-47's. I love that airplane, it has a great history and beautiful lines, but rotting canvas control surfaces had to be replaced with fiberglass cloth, all hand sewn to the frame with seven layers of buterated dope (glue).

The new job also required some small field work for wear, cuts or just holes from small arms fire. Being sent out on a mission with a 50 cal ammo box filled with fiberglass cloth, a 2 inch needle, a can of glue, paint brush and a pair of scissors is not something you write books about as an Air Force Warrior.

I was awarded the Air Force Commendation medal by the base commander in the air conditioned movie theater standing next to real heroes of the Air Force who were receiving the Silver Star, Air Force Cross, etc. It was truly a humbling experience.

I came home to my beautiful and wonderful wife, Michelle, and started a family. We had two daughters, Jennifer and Jessica. In the mid 70's I started a construction company in the Washington DC area.

I had been back in the world about 10 years and never seemed to meet another Vietnam vet except for the few I knew from Vietnam. The "Rambo" movie came out and it seemed everyone I met was now a "Special Forces" Vietnam vet! The news articles about vets always seemed to be about drugs, crime and homelessness.

I contract a lot of work to the federal government. I've been everywhere from the White House on down. One morning I picked up the Washington Post and on the front page was a big article about a vet - "Billy The Kid Offutt." According to the Post it seems "Billy" did an amphibious landing in Vietnam in 1975 with the Special Forces! ALL BULL! The kid used to work for me as a helper who I eventually fired. He was caught burglarizing the Crystal City Mall in Arlington Virginia.

I knew his story about Vietnam was B.S. He was to young and had never been in the service and nobody did an amphibious landing in Vietnam in 1975. WE WEREN'T THERE! The writer knew that, the Post knew that, but they printed the story on page one anyway.



I tried to call the writer of the story, but no one at the Post would talk to me. I was determined that the press was not going to label us with this phony veterans crime. Finally someone from NBC, local Channel 4 agreed to talk with me so we did a TV interview.

To make it a short story I got to tell everyone who would listen that this guy was not a Vietnam vet. The next day I received a call from the CIA in Langley, Virginia. Billy the kid was down at the police station bragging "Rambo" style that they couldn't hold him because with his training he could escape from anywhere. He proceeded to tell them he broke into such secure places as the CIA Headquarters at Langley!

The guys from Langley were told about his boasts and went to interview him. It seems that Billy could detail the inside of Langley, like the names on doors, the inside of desks, etc. They were not amused and wanted to know if security had been breached. I agreed to meet with them. I explained that he was a helper at the CIA on the same floor he was describing. The CIA was not satisfied with that and told me they had discovered ropes on the roof tied to equipment and vent pipes. I explained we had been on the roof and used the ropes to tie each other off so we didn't fall over the edge while working and that the ropes were old so we left them up there.

We talked for hours until everything he said was proven to be a lie. Then I realized if this phony SOB could have the CIA going then every BS artist out there could tell lies like this and anybody would print it without checking the facts!

I wanted to find my friends from Vietnam. I kept looking for a reunion of anything I was connected with. Nothing. Well, if you're not invited to a party, start your own. I started to advertise for a reunion of the 460th TRW, then it happened. I got a call from Don Parker and his wife Sue Ellen.

Don was also wondering if anybody else was out there, and he was organizing a reunion for the 360th TEWS. We had a great conversation and agreed to make it a joint reunion.

Don and Sue made all the arrangements for a reunion in Evansville, Indiana, and we finally had our reunion. It was GREAT. It was great meeting our military friends again, but then we knew we didn't want this to be the only one. Don and I agreed to do it again the following year, but we wanted to invite everybody who was at Tan Son Nhut. Sue came up with the motto: "All included, none excluded", and the Tan Son Nhut Association was started.

Over the last 10 years many people have helped to make the Association possible. First, without that call from Don it would not have happened. Don Parker, thank you. I also must give credit to the tremendous contribution of Bob Need, the Vice President and editor of our monthly newsletter. Without his tireless work on our newsletter, and historical documents the Association would not have grown. He is missed very much. Charles Penley, our webmaster, who updates and manages our web site, thank you. To my wife, Michelle, and all the other wives who come with you guys or let you come to the reunions to see old friends and make new ones, thank you.

**By: Don Parker:** It must have been fate that caused me to see John Peele's notice in one of the service magazines about a reunion of the 460th – but I don't believe in fate.

Fate would have meant I would not be going to Vietnam because my father was dead and I was the only son. Fate would have meant having a 360th TEWS reunion without ever hearing from John.

Whatever the reason though, I'm glad John and I found each other at the same time. We both were trying to plan a reunion for our outfits and it just worked out that together, we had a real good group of people that enjoyed coming together in Evansville, IN that first time.

I've said many times that I'm glad I served in Vietnam for the experience and for the friendships that were literally forged under fire; but I've also said that I wouldn't want to do it again.

I was a flight mechanic at Tan Son Nhut, working the night shift. It was a "regular" job – until the Tet Offensive began. We worked our shift, filled sand bags for a shift then tried to sleep before our regular shift started again.

During a rocket attack one day during Tet, a 10 or 12 year old Vietnamese boy was killed. His dad was in the VNA and the family lived on base. Another day's attack found our squadron's Chief had a heart attack and died, just days before he was to ship out for home.

There were other times, though, that caused me to smile. Like the all night card games we played when our shift was over. The pet monkey in the compound that was fun for all of us.

When the Squadron Commander called me in to his office, I was really sweating, wondering what I could have done wrong. It turned out that he had been stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB and he just wanted to know where Beaver, Ohio—where I lived at the time I enlisted—was located.

A lot of water has gone under the bridge since those days. Fortunately, like most of us, I have "selective forgetting." I try to remember mostly the good times. Our reunions help us to remember those good times together. I'm looking forward to seeing you all there.



# DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN!

By Dale Bryan

As I read the newspaper each morning and watch the TV news each evening, I feel as though I've fallen into a time warp. Why does it take a glance at my daily planner or the newspaper date line to convince me that it's 2004 and not 1971? Now, as in 1971, the "talking heads" on my TV are devoting many precious allocated broadcast minutes to exposing "atrocities" committed by the honorable men and women of our military who have sworn to uphold the honor of the United States of America and preserve the freedom of the citizens. Thus far, the "talking heads" have usually tacked on a condescending phrase to state they are supportive of those who have volunteered to wear the uniform. But, how much longer will they continue to do so?

Turn back your clock, tap your memory, and look at events you remember; then compare them to events today. In 1964, the president requested congress authorize and fund punitive action against North Vietnam; in 2003, the president requested congress authorize and fund punitive action against Iraq. By 1965, there were protests against military efforts in Vietnam; by 2004, there are protests against military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. After 1964, members of the Senate who had voted with the president then stated they wished they had not; after 2003, members of the Senate who had voted with the president then stated they wished they had not. In 1968, there was a major protest against the Vietnam War at the political convention of the party of the incumbent president. Will the same thing happen in 2004? We may soon find out. By 1969, veterans returning from Vietnam were being spit upon. Will this type of "welcome home" soon be the fate of veterans returning from Iraq or Afghanistan? By 1971, disgruntled Vietnam veterans were throwing away their medals and

accusing their former comrades of war crimes and atrocities with media focus upon those people and any failures in Vietnam. Seldom, if ever, did we see a story about humanitarian efforts by our military or successes in Vietnam. How much longer until we have reruns related to Iraq or Afghanistan?

We, the members of TSNA, experienced humiliation at the hands of the anti-war activists and their enablers, the media, upon returning home from an honorable tour of duty in Vietnam. We do not want to see that happen to our younger brothers and sisters when they return from Iraq or Afghanistan. Therefore, I have a charge for my fellow members: Actively monitor the news to make sure it is news and not editorializing. If you detect editorializing, send letters to the editor or the news director even though there are no guarantees they will ever be published or even acknowledged.

We, like those who wish to humiliate those in uniform, must be vigilant and activist. Expose lies and attempt to trumpet the truth!

(Ed. Bryan lives in Washington, DC, in view of the Pentagon, and works in The District. He served at TSN 1967-68, as a Weather Officer and Aerial Recon Weather Officer with Detachment 3, 30th Weather Sq., which supported the 460th TRW. You can expect to see more writings from Dale in the future.)







A highlight of the recent reunion was meeting three distinguished former military pilots. All three have been inducted in the Illinois Aviators Hall of Fame.



Lt. Col. Viv Lock  
USAF (Retired)

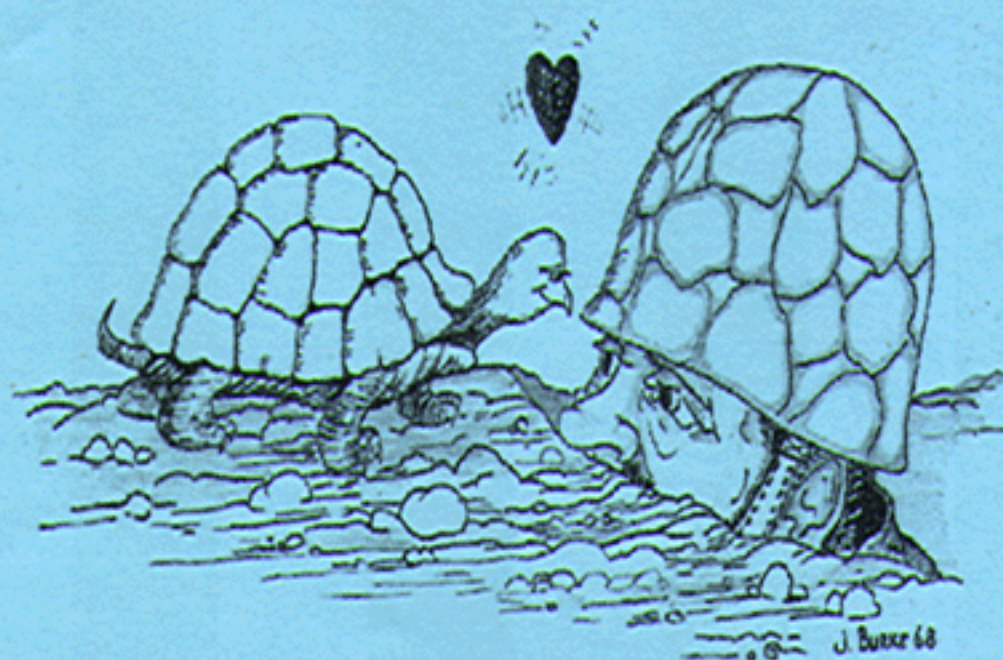


Maj. Jim McGraw  
USA (Retired)



Lt. Col. Harold C. Morrison  
USAF (Retired)

## John Burke's Days at Tan Son Nhut



*Founded 1995*

*By*

*Don Parker & John Peele*

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**Membership Information**

**Annual Membership: \$20.00**

**Five Year Membership: \$80.00**

**Life Membership: \$180.00**

**Contact the Public Affairs Office**

*I am begging you to be patient as I struggle to develop a respectable newsletter for the Tan Son Nhut Association. This is a new area for me, and I've quickly learned how much I don't know about publishing a newsletter. Bob Need was a Master - I am but a novice, but I will try my very best to give you a publication you can be proud of.*

*I encourage, no, I am yelling at the top of my voice for you to send me anything you want to see in *Revetments*. Of course I must maintain Editorial selection ~ please, no swiftboat stories. We've all seen quite enough of those.*

**Wayne Salisbury**





# The Communication Center

Miss LAN

Log 11. 2495

SUBJECT: Grazing Cows on the Tan Son Nhut Air Base

It is respectfully reported to you that:

At present Tan Son Nhut Air Base is expanding to the maximum. Runways are being extended, many additional installations and aircraft parking areas are being set-up, so the problem cows grazing on the Tan Son Nhut Air Base cannot continue. In recent days, two flocks of cows of the Office of Social Services being raised on the Tan Son Nhut Air Base by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ba, 52<sup>nd</sup> Regiment and Huang Thon Then Base caused problems. They crossed the runways, hit and damaged planes, as follows:

On 26 February 1965 they crossed the runway when jet planes were landing, almost causing aircraft accidents. On 16 March 1965, a herd of cows lay on the runway, guards had to chase them away. Early in April 1965, cows hit an armed helicopter and were shot (killed) on the very spot, (otherwise the helicopter might have exploded and serious accident might have happened). On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1965, cows hit the guard fence and detonated a flare and 2 anti-personnel mines. On 18 April 1965, they broke 2 antennas of the transmitter station, and in many other circumstances they went on the roads and hampered the circulation, they came close to the radar station, the generator house, etc.

In order to protect the aircrew and the planes from accidents, 33<sup>rd</sup> Wing respectfully requests you to immediately remove the above two herds of cows from the Air Base within a maximum delay of a month. After the above mentioned deadline, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Wing will order the shooting of any cow seen on the runways, close to the minefields, the important installations, the radar station, the aircraft parking areas etc. In addition, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Wing will not be held responsible for the plane accidents or killing of cows.

Submitted by: Larry Kiepke

**A Member Is Looking:** I was in the Air Force from June 1962 to June 1966. After training I was stationed at Wheelus, AB as a teletype/crypto operator. In June 1964 I was assigned to Key West with the 671st Radar Sq. In 1965 I volunteered and was sent to Tan Son Nhut where I was assigned with a number of from around the world airman working in comm. In January of 1966 I was wounded and returned to Key West where I was released in June 1966.

I wasn't there long and don't remember many names of the airmen I served with. In 1971 I entered the Marine Corps, was commissioned a Second Lieutenant and went back to Nam in early 1972. I retired in June of 1994 as a Lieutenant Colonel. While at Tan Son Nhut I was Airman First Class Kenneth M. Tolbert from Charleston, West Virginia.

**A Special Moment:** The other day I received an email from the widow of Sgt. Charles Hebron. She wrote wondering if she could purchase a Pictorial CD. I quickly responded that she'd receive a complimentary copy.

At the time I received her email I was working on the Tet Offensive portion of the CD. Wayne Salisbury

## The Tan Son Nhut Association ~ A Pictorial Remembrance



The Tan Son Nhut Association Pictorial Remembrance CD-ROM has been completed. Orders are being taken now. Shipping is the same day I receive the order.

I've had very good comments about the CD. There is approximately 1500 pictures on it. One member wrote that he sat down with his wife and reviewed the entire CD. He also stated he was going to review them again that night.

I'm told the CD has historical significance. Get yours now by sending a check or money order for \$12.95 (includes shipping) to:

Tan Son Nhut Association  
2413 Brambleton Ave.  
Roanoke, VA 24015





## Strength Is In Numbers

Nothing is more important to a fraternal, non-profit organization, such as The Tan Son Nhut Association, then to have a viable, growing, pro-active membership. As of 8-28-04 we had 327 members. Surprised? Perhaps you thought it was much more, or maybe you thought we were only a grassroots organization.

We are well beyond the grassroots stage. We are 10 years old. We had a membership of 1200 or more at one time. For one reason or another we lose members. Why is it we frequently gain one member, but lose two? Reasons are many I suppose. But we need to get a grasp of the situation. We need to stop paying lip service to the problem and fix it.

John Peele and John Burke volunteered to help. They were given a list of members that have been dropped from the roll call in the last year or so. They will be contacting former members by email, phone or by letter. We need them back!

Someone told me not long ago that the TSNA cannot be everything to everybody, and that we may end up with less members than we have now. Someone else mentioned that since we've decided to publish Revetments on a bimonthly basis that some members will leave on that account. Are these assumptions correct?

What can we do differently to keep members aboard? What can you do to help? We need to do something and it needs to be done quickly.

More about this in the next issue of Revetments.



Roanoke, Virginia 24015

