

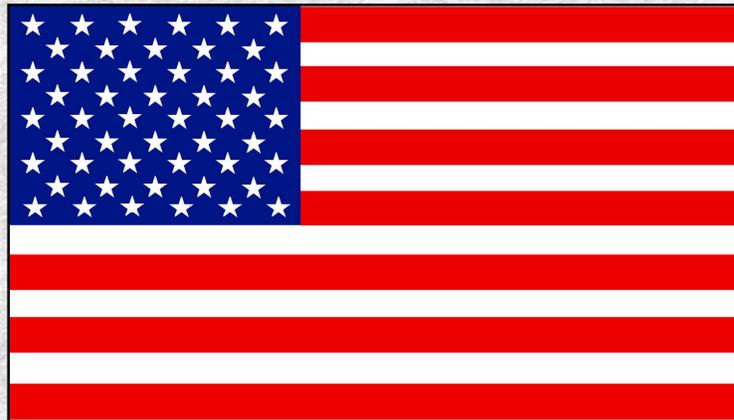
October 2005



A Memorial to the American Experience  
In  
Vietnam  
"All Included-None Excluded"

# Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



## Vietnam Last Flag Out

## A Tribute to Colonel David Odell

**By Harold Boone  
460<sup>th</sup> TRW**

I had been home from Tan Son Nhut three or four months when I bumped in to my friend from high school, Larry Mc Mahan. Larry was a Staff Sergeant in the Air Force home on leave from Viet Nam as he chose to extend his tour an extra five or six months so he would complete his enlistment there.

Larry was one of those persons in life who never got to smell the roses because he was always too busy removing the thorns for others as they smelled the roses. We grew up together as teenagers, entered the Air Force, (on different dates), and we both served in Viet Nam. There the similarities end. I come home on a passenger plane but sadly, Larry came home in the back of a cargo plane



packed away in one of those shipping containers used to ferry the dead. I lost a friend; society lost a good man.

After word was received of his death, I called on the family to offer my condolences and whatever support I could muster. His mother knew me and also knew I had just returned from Viet Nam . While talking with her, she asked if I would read something.

We went to her bedroom and while sitting together on the edge of her bed, she handed me a envelope and ask if Larry's death could have happened as the letter described. The letter was from his commanding officer who spoke highly of Larry as an Airman and he extended condolences on his death. More importantly, the letter gave graphic detail of how he died.

The enemy attacked under the cover of darkness. Larry made an attempt to move from one bunker to another. While running, a member of his unit shot him thinking he was the enemy. The letter



went on to describe how he was shot in the chest and later died during surgery.

I told her that the events as described in the letter were probably true and it was just one of those tragic accidents that happen. Beyond saying that and extending my arms for a consoling hug, I did not know what to say

or what to do. I simply had no words for a grieving mother.

None.



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**Founded 1995  
By  
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and  
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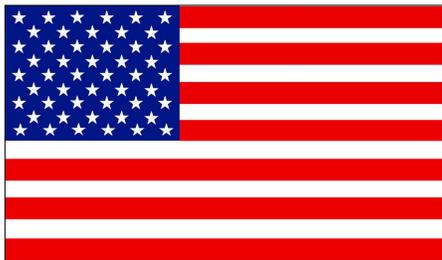
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## Vietnam ~ Last Flag Out

### A Tribute to Colonel David Odell

By Laura Williams  
May 27, 2005

The flag looks dirty, stained with red dust, encased in an ordinary flag display case, sitting among mementos of a life well lived. But this is no ordinary flag. It hung proudly over Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon, South Viet Nam. It signified Americas' presence as the last hope for the South Vietnamese people against the communist forces of North Vietnam. When it came down the flag pole for the last time it symbolized the real end of the American presence in Vietnam.

To most Americans the fall of The American Embassy in Saigon in 1975 represented the end of the war. We saw TV coverage of people hanging from helicopters and Amer-Asian babies quickly loaded on airplanes. This was the evacuation of the diplomatic and press core lagging behind.

In reality, the war ended two years earlier, on March 29, 1973.



I remember being glued to the television set in Feb of 1973 as our POW's were released. Bands played, wives ran into the arms of crippled soldiers in uni-

form, a nation cried with mixed emotion. The Paris Peace Talks had worked out the details of Nixon's promise to get America out of Vietnam. My uncle, Col. David Odell, was the point man on the other side of the world with the assignment to bring the troops home. On March 29th, 1973 the final group was preparing to leave. It was the last group of soldiers leaving on the last plane out of the last American base. A small ceremony of the flag lowering made little public attention in the US, but many North Vietnamese officers and NVA soldiers waited in the background for the plane to leave so they could take over the base.

I look at the picture taken by the Associated Press of my uncle on that day as he walked to the waiting plane. He had his arm around Col. Son, his counterpart in the South Vietnamese Air Force. They served together for more than 2 years at Tan Son Nhut. My uncle had as many as 60,000 troops under him. Col. Son had the responsibility of overseeing all International troops. My uncles' 6' 6" frame was bent.

As a West Point Graduate and career office in the Air Force, he normally had perfect posture. He literally was carrying the fate of a county on his shoulders. My mind scanned US history of war. Win, win, win, win, etc., draw. I wondered if my uncle thought of this aspect of loss, but knowing him, he was burdened for his friend he that he was leaving behind. His mind must have been fearful of what was ahead for Col. Sons' family and the war-torn nation that so many had desired to save.

When my Uncle Dave got on the plane that day, flag in tow, he became the last official US serviceman and with his leaving, the war was over.

At his memorial service in 1995 a buddy of his told me that when he landed in San Francisco he was pelted with eggs and

called a baby-killer. Nothing could have been more unfair. He sent for Col. Sons' family. It became his private battle. He got Mrs. Son out with their 3 children,

right away. 2 years later, with an amazing tale of his own, Col. Son escaped a death camp and found his way to American soil. Dave housed this family for several years in his La Jolla, California home helping them acclimate to a new life.

He even paid for the children's' college education.

When I look at this flag I am overwhelmed by its place in history. It is a remembrance of the only war our country ever lost, carried by one of the finest men I have ever known. The weight of that moment in history was carried with dignity, honor and a broken heart.

I want to take this opportunity to remember all Americans who have served our country, who took an oath to defend this flag. Those of us who have not donned a uniform will never understand what you have been through.

But it is because of you and unsung



heroes like my Uncle Dave that flags like this can proudly wave.

Colonel David A. Odell, commander of the 377th ABW addresses the 360th TEWS at TSN on Monday, 6 Nov 1972 (Scatback T-39A in background) *Photo Credit: Buzz Lowe, EC-47 flight mechanic, 360th TEWS, 1972*

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*Editor's Note: Thanks to Laura Williams for her permission to publish this article. It is a powerful testament to the sadness of leaving Vietnam in the manner in which we did.*

*Thanks also to member Bob Laymon for his contribution.*

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## Sgt. Bob Ver Merris US Army

I was an Army MP assigned to the 69th Signal Bn.; many of you will remember it was located close to the main gate. I was actually a sentry dog handler, but at Camp Alpha I was told the Army no longer had dog units and I was going to pull security sans dog.

I was at TSN the very last year of the war; May 1972 to March 1973. It was all winding down quite rapidly; the last Army infantry unit stood down late 1972 with no more U.S. ground operations. The total U.S. military personnel level was about where it was in the very early 1960's.

My duty was boring beyond belief, except one of our posts was inside the Presidential Palace which I worked at 3-4 times a week. It is memorable that we were not under MP command and there was a ridiculous regulation that we could not have a magazine in our weapon during duty; it was just like Barney Fife. Charlie on the other hand was still lock & loading, and once a month rocketed TSN runway; always at 0800 when the base siren went off for testing each morning.

All the war did reach an end as Henry Kissinger was busy with negotiations in Paris. The Peace accords were assigned with all hostilities to end I believe 30 January 1973. I spent the first day of peace in the 69th Signal bunkers as Charlie rocketed the base once more for old times sake.

March 30 was the day all U.S. personnel were to be out of Vietnam. I was on the second to the last civilian plane taking us away. At the bottom of the stairway to the plane were members of the ICCS commission formed to observe the peace, and also at the stairway was a fully uniformed delegation of the Vietcong.

Well, the last plane left, and I'm told almost within minutes the local population ransacked TSN for everything not nailed down; and maybe even that. So it went.

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## 377th Combat Support Group May 67—May 68 Gary K. Rockett New Member

There was no place for me to stay on base in May 1967. I stayed the first night in a transient tent close to the flight line. I moved to quarters off base at 459 Vo Di Nguy for three days, and then stayed a

week with a friend from Charleston AFB a few days until I found my own apartment in Saigon. I roomed with Alan Johnson (7AF Munitions) in an apartment about a mile from the main gate. I was able to get a 90cc Honda for transportation.

The morning of Tet I called the bomb dump, where I worked, by radio and was told to stand fast, which I did for 24 hours. Then I headed to the office where I stayed for a week before returning to my apartment.

Bunker 051 where the Security Police were killed was out by the office. The mass grave for the VC was also out by the office. I was present for the funeral, "so to speak."

I have some interesting pictures and super 8 film converted to VHS. I'll get it to you for review sometime this year.

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## TNS Mortuary Location By Jim Camp

Thanks so much for all you and everyone does for us. I just finished reading my revetments. I hope you could get the following to Stephan Acai. He has a column this month and I have some information to share with him.

Stephan, I remember exactly where the mortuary and snack bar was that you talk about. I can see them to this day. They were at the end of the Base Hospital building and across the street from a large supply facility. I passed them almost everyday going from the 800 area to 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force Headquarters.

Let me back up. I arrived at TSN on July 20<sup>th</sup> 1967. I was assigned to the Tac Air Control Center. The center was located in a building just next to the base hospital close to the street going toward the flight line. The base hospital was a white, long one story building. At the end closest to the main gait was the mortuary and at the other end of the hospital towards the flight line was The TACC Communications Center. The hospital itself was in the middle. If you went out the front door of the hospital, made a left up to the corner and then a right, about 50 paces across the street you would run into the Nurses hooch's.

As part of our indoctrination the first day of in processing we were shown the mortuary to help us get it through our heads that we were in a combat zone. Things were pretty good where we were at the time and it did sober us up to see such a place.

We were only in our hospital building

about 30 days when we moved to the top floor of 7<sup>th</sup> AF Headquarters. But I will never forget the mortuary. There was an alley way or more like a path way beside it and we would go by there every day or night as we walked to work. It smelled of diesel exhaust from the large generators parked in front and it smelled of formaldehyde and blood. As we turned the corner of the building and walked down the alley way or path, immediately on the right and immediately behind the building was a large concrete patio. On the patio were often the remains of our guys some on stretchers, or the aluminum bottoms of caskets, being bathed or prepared. My hat is off to you and those of you who took on such a difficult task. Many a time I didn't want to look but I always did.

Immediately past the patio was your snack bar. It was run by Vietnamese locals. I would see mortuary personnel in there medical garb eating there. I never could bring my self to eat there. It was just too much for me to handle.

The tent city was gone before I arrived. Thank goodness. I know exactly where the golf course was, but never played. I hope this brief note finds you well.

Welcome home

*(Editor's Note: In 1968 the mortuary was moved to an area across the runway—away from public view.)*



**Don and Sue Ellen Parker**  
The most patriotic dressed couple at the  
Gettysburg Reunion



## Monday, 28 August 1972: Linebacker I

By Bob Laymon

Capt Steve Ritchie scored his 5<sup>th</sup> MiG kill flying over the DRV, becoming the Air Force's only pilot ACE of the Vietnam War. Ritchie's WSO, Capt Chuck DeBellevue logged his 4<sup>th</sup> MiG kill on this sortie (and would go on to become the all-time leading ACE of the Vietnam War with six total MiG kills).

Flying with the 555<sup>th</sup> "Triple Nickel" of the 432<sup>nd</sup> TRW, Udorn RTAFB, the team of Ritchie/DeBellevue were assigned the call sign "Buick 01" as leader of Buick Flight, four F-4 *Phantoms* performing Mig CAP (Combat Air Patrol) north of Hanoi. It was Ritchie & DeBellevue's task to protect the approaching US Strike Force from air-to-air threats as the Strike Force attacked the infamous Thai-Nguyen steel plant, some 50 miles north of Hanoi in Route Pack Six.

*FYI, Same target: On 10 March 1967, Captain Merlyn H. Dethlefsen flew his F-105 Thunderchief on a mission against the steel works at Thai-Nguyen and was subsequently awarded the Medal of Honor. Dethlefsen died in 1987.*

*Also, Captain Max C. Brestel, an F-105D pilot on mission #71, call sign Kangaroo 03, with the 354 TFS becomes the first Air Force pilot to down two MiGs (MiG-17s) during a single session, on this same 1967 strike against the Thai-Nguyen steel mill.*

### Scatback Combat Courier:

#### *A Front Row Seat to the Air War In Vietnam*

*This is the title of my PowerPoint briefing with the Randolph Speaker's Bureau. The briefing title is meant to portray our unique perspective of flying daily to the air bases throughout SEA and our frequent good-fortune to be in the right place, at the right time to be "eyewitnesses to military history" ...as it was unfolding. The following story is an example of a coincidence in the flying schedule that placed us in "the front row seat" to observe Vietnam air war history.*

*I don't recall every detail after 33 years; therefore, I've used 'poetic license' for continuity to generally reconstruct events as best I remember them. Some details come from Scatback squadron SOP. For many years, I thought this event happened during one of our afternoon Scatback "Bravo" courier missions; however, according to my Form 5, the flight time, sortie count and aircraft serial number just don't add up to a "Bravo" mission, so I've used the VIP call sign of Scatback "Echo".*

TACAN: channel 70 selected, Udorn RTAFB.

UHF radio: 228.5 MHz tuned to Brigham  
(Det 4, 621st Tactical Control Squadron, radar air traffic control)

'Brigham, Scatback Echo, 100 DME off your 150<sup>0</sup> radial.'

'Scatback Echo, Brigham, descend and maintain 10K.'

'Scatback Echo, Brigham. Contact Udorn approach control. Good day.'

'Udorn approach, Scatback Echo.'

'Scatback Echo, Udorn approach...say type approach?'

*Our radio transmission is "stepped-on" by a loud, bold UHF transmission (with a southern accent):*

"BRIGHAM, BUICK ...FLIGHT-OF-FOUR."

'Buick Flight – Welcome home and congratulations!'

'Scatback Echo, Brigham. Plan to extend your approach and be prepared to hold southeast of Udorn.'

'BRIGHAM, BUICK FLIGHT. REQUESTING HIGH SPEED, LOW APPROACH TO UDORN, APPROACHING FROM THE NORTHEAST.'

'Buick Flight, cleared high speed, low approach to Udorn. Contact Tower on 355.4. The field is yours Steve. Well done.'

*What's this all about? My memory is not clear enough to remember all these approach details, but I do have a vague memory of the initial Buick Flight radio call, though not all the exact wording of this complete exchange. If we had only understood what was developing off our nose, I'm sure we would have paid closer attention and retained clearer memories of this early sequence-of-events. However, information would soon come to our flight deck that did focus our attention and burned memories in our brain's hard drive for the rest of our lives!*

*Although Scatback had air traffic control priority over almost all other missions in SEA, we were occasionally delayed by combat scrambles, IFEs and SAR efforts. We probably "assumed" this event was just one of the dozens of "100-mission, end-of-tour Finé Flights" that we got to witness at the fighter bases we traveled to. These were always fun to watch and lifted our spirits, knowing our tour would be ending at the completion of our own one-year tour-of-duty in SEA.*

FYI: Later information would confirm that Buick Flight put on a most spectacular air show over Udorn, as they "beat-up" the airfield.



Udorn AB

(Continued on page 6)

*I suspect that Buick Flight had contacted "Stagerider" the Udorn Command Post on 370.5 UHF with advanced word about their morning MiG-21 victory over the DRV.*

'Buick Flight, Udorn Tower cleared visual approach to landing, runway 30 at Udorn. Winds X at YYY knots. Check gear down-&-locked.'

'BUICK, FLIGHT-OF-FOUR, CLEARED TO LAND 30.'

'Scatback Echo, Udorn Approach Control, cleared ILS approach, runway 30 behind Buick Flight, four Fox 4's landing runway 30. Contact Udorn Tower on 355.4. Good day, sir.'

'Udorn Tower, Scatback Echo.'

'Scatback Echo, Tower, report the outer marker.'

'Udorn Tower, Scatback Echo reporting the outer marker.'

'Scatback Echo, roger, check gear down-&-locked, winds X at YYY knots, cleared to land runway 30.'

'GROUND, BUICK FLIGHT, CLEAR RUNWAY 30 IN THE DEARM AREA.'

*The F-4s jettisoned their drag chutes in the dearm area, off the southwest side of the departure end of runway 30.*

'Buick Flight, Ground Control cleared to taxi-back. Scatback Echo, cleared to taxi-back, behind the four Fox 4's in front of you.'

*We were back-taxiing on the two-mile long parallel taxiway at Udorn. I unbuckled from my Flight Mechanic's seat (a.k.a. aircraft potty seat) and came forward to the flight deck, with my elbows positioned on the pilot/copilot seat-backs to be a third set of eyes, looking for potential ground hazards.*

*I don't remember who the pilot and copilot were that day, but I do seem to recall the aircraft commander being in the copilot's seat, indicating we probably had one our 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt recent UPT graduates in the pilot's seat. FYI: If the Scatback pilot/copilot remember this story, then please SQUAWK IDENT.*

*We continued to back-taxi and observed Buick Flight rapidly back-taxiing in front of us and then Buick 01 making a hard right turn off the taxiway, onto the adjusted flight line ramp. I think Buick 01 pulled onto the ramp in front of Udorn Base Ops...though I'm a little unsure on that detail.*

*What was obvious was the crowd gathering on the Udorn flight line to greet Buick 01. The crowd was growing exponentially as we saw people running down the flight line to take part in what must surely be a historic event?*

*We were taxiing abreast of the F-4 revetment north blast-wall, when the UHF radio crackled:*

*"Scatback Echo, Ground. Sir, do you understand what's going on off your starboard wingtip?" I distinctly remember this radio call and the A/C's reply from the right seat.*

*Scatback Echo A/C on UHF Ground Control: "Negative, sir."*

*"That's Captain's Steve Ritchie and Chuck DeBellevue. Steve just shot down his fifth MiG. He's an ACE!"*

*That radio call hit us like a brick! The pilot slammed on the brakes and locked-up (screeched) the T-39's tires (throwing me forward). The nose of the aircraft bounced up & down on the nose strut, reacting to the rapid brake application.*

*The A/C turned to me (as I collected myself) and said we were stopping on the taxiway to watch the show. This was history!*

*We sat there on the Ubon parallel taxiway observing the celebration from our "front-row seats" in Scatback Echo. The jubilation went on for perhaps 15 – 20 minutes. We actually saw Capt Steve Ritchie and Capt Chuck DeBellevue unstrapped from their Martin-Baker ejection seats and watched as DeBellevue walked forward on the Phantom's left vari-ramp to shake Capt Steve Ritchie's hand. Ritchie used a white towel to wipe the sweat from his soaked face and neck, then climbed down the cockpit-boarding ladder as the crowd pushed forward. Colonel Scott G. Smith, 432<sup>nd</sup> TRW commander stepped forward to congratulate the victorious crew of Buick 01. Someone in the crowd produced a stencil along with a can of red spray paint. The crew chief of F-4D s.n. 67-7463, Sgt Reginald Taylor, held the stencil as Steve Ritchie sprayed red paint, recording the fifth red star MiG Kill icon on the Phantom's left vari-ramp.*

*Some days, it's better to be lucky...than good!*



F-4D 67-7463



Capt Steve Ritchie was awarded the Air Force Cross for his fifth Mig kill. He was also awarded four Silver Stars, 10 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 25 Air Medals during his two SEA tours. He received the 1972 "Mackay Trophy" for the most significant Air Force mission of the year (along with Capts. Chuck DeBellevue and Jeff Feinstein) the Air Force Academy's 1972 Colonel James Jabara Award for Airmanship, and the 1972 Armed Forces Award, presented by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In 1973 he was selected as one of the "Outstanding Young Men of America," and in 1974 he received the Eugene Zuckert Award from the Civil Air Patrol.



Captain Chuck DeBellevue

### Postscript:

Now, fast-forward ~ 24 years: My wife Gayle and I are hav-

ing dinner in an Oriental restaurant on Pat Booker road in Universal City, TX. At the next table is a Brigadier General, in his Air Force uniform. I lean over to discreetly read his nametag:

### RITCHIE

Hum? I had never personally met Steve Ritchie. Could there be more than one BG Ritchie in the USAFR? I decided to approach the general at the end of our meal. Yes, he replied with his North Carolina accent, he is 'Steve' Ritchie. I reply: "Boy, do I have a story to tell you!" We exchanged business cards.

Over the years, I've encounter Steve Ritchie at numerous Air Force Association and airshow events. On Saturday, 26 April 1997 the Air Force celebrated its 50th Golden Anniversary at Nellis AFB, NV. Steve flew a mocked-up F-4E from Holloman AFB, NM during the airshow and greeted literally thousands of airshow fans at his post-flight static display. He even waived my uncle (former F-86 fighter pilot) *then*-Capt Harvey Brown and my cousin Harvey, Jr. to the front of the line for pictures and an autograph.

Steve invited Gayle and I to his retirement from the USAFR as mobilization assistant to the commander of AF Recruiting Service. On Friday evening, 29 January 1999 we attend Steve's retirement dinner and PowerPoint life-story at Leon Springs Dancehall & Bar-B-Q. Gen Mike Ryan, CSAF (who flew as an F-4 Fighter Weapons School student with instructor Steve at Nellis) and Gen Lloyd "Fig" Newton (Steve's F-4 GIB during his first SEA tour with the 366<sup>th</sup> Gunfighters at Da Nang) offered humorous comments and anecdotes.

Saturday, 30 Jan 1999: Steve flew an AT-38B "Smurf Jet" in a fly-by / low show and retirement ceremony at Randolph AFB.

Small world?

### **Fellow TSN Vets By Jim Baker**

Wow, I didn't expect a reply at all, but most assuredly I didn't expect a reply so quickly. You are commended! *(Editor's Note: He had written Charles Penley, and as usual Charles immediately replied to the email.)*

I Worked the swing shift/night shift while assigned to the 12th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron and used to talk with the Security Guards almost nightly. We respected what they did for us and I think they respected what we did as well. Yes, I met some of the K9's, what a great privilege I felt it must be to work with such professionals as the K9's, I think you were very fortunate. I deployed out of Tan Son Nhut, during the

Pueblo Crisis and wound up at Kunsan, then Taegu, Korea. I arrived in country Sept of 1967 and deployed July 1968.

I admit at being more than a little disturbed by what happened to the K9 once their part in the Conflict was over.

Anyway, it is late here and need to press toward the sheets and get some rest. I continue in the aviation industry today as a Field Service Representative, (Tech Rep in the old days,) for The Boeing Company on the F/A-22 Raptor here at Tyndall AFB, Florida. However, I will return to the Seattle area around the April time frame for health purposes. It seems that some us old vets are starting to deteriorate in health.

Again, thank you for your expedient reply, it was most kind of you.

## My F-100 Combat Flying Experience By Jim Camp

Ramrod 51/52 May 30, 1968. An F-100D and a F100F model attacked a VC concentration in the Mekong Delta. Two Structures Destroyed, one sampan sunk, four structures damaged. Each aircraft carried four 750lb bombs and 20mm cannon. Ramrod 51 could not fire his cannons because they jammed. The aircraft were piloted by Major Dave Bolger, Capt. M. McBride and Sgt. Jim Camp. Sgt. Jim Camp, there were no Sergeants flying in F-100's in the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing. Well I did. Here is the story.

I arrived at TSN on the July 20th 1967. I was an A2C assigned to the 1876th Communications Squadron. My duty station was the Tactical Air Control Center, TACC. As teletype and crypto operators we also manned the communications gear in the battle cab of 7th AF headquarters. During the Tet offensive and the battle of Saigon in January and February 1968, I spent three days continuous duty in the battle cab with General's Bolt, Blood and Ryan. It was a very trying time to say the least.

During the battle for Tan Son Nhut, F-



100's out of Bien Hoa attacked the petrochemical facility just outside the base perimeter. I was outside with Gen. Ryan as we watched the Hun's do their work. It was inspiring to say the least. I remember I made the comment that I would give my left you know what to fly an F-100 and have a crack at the bad guys. Gen. Ryan asked me why I thought I could fly like that. I told him I realized I would not be good at it, but it was a dream. I then told him I had a pilot's license and a couple hundred hours and

that when I returned I would go back to college at Ohio State, graduate and go to Air Force pilot training.

A few months later during a day of duty in the battle cab, Gen. Ryan asked me if I would still give anything to fly in the F-100. Of course I told him yes. He said he had arranged for me to fly up to Bien Hoa in a O-1 Bird Dog. I would ride up with Andy Fac, and I would be assigned to fly with the 531st Tactical Fighter Squadron, The Ramrods.

I arrived at Bien Hoa in the morning and spent the day learning about the ejection seat, personal equipment, radio, survival tactics and gear in preparation for my mission the next day. I spent the night in quest quarters and the next morning was driven to the flight line by a sergeant. I was met by the squadron commander and introduced to Maj. Bolger and Capt. McBride. Maj. Bolger briefed the mission, we went to the equipment room gathered up our gear and away we went. To say I was thrilled was an understatement. I took my 8mm movie camera and filmed as much as possible.

We took off, after the longest takeoff run I had ever experienced. It was hot and we were heavy with fuel, bombs and 20mm cannon ammo. We flew south at 13,000 ft under the guidance of Paris Control. Orbited to burn off wing tank fuel and met up on the radio with our FAC. He briefed us on the target, how he wanted the target attacked, (from the Northeast to the Southwest with left breaks, the bail out area, location of friendly troops and bad guys to the best of his knowledge. Once the fuel was burned in the wing tanks it was time to strike the target.

We gained separation by slowing and allowing Maj. Bolger to get out in front in the orbit. The FAC called ready to mark the target, Maj. Bolger confirmed and suddenly there was a white plume of smoke on the ground. The FAC described where he wanted the first bombs from guidance from the smoke.

The call came from Maj. Bolger that he was dry in the wings, and Capt. McBride confirmed we were dry and the fight was on. I will never forget the thrill of seeing Maj. Bolger roll inverted and streak down. He looked like a giant hawk headed straight down. I heard the FAC say Ramrod 51 you are cleared wet with a bomb.

At about the same time we were rolling upside down throttle up to 100% and then suddenly a huge black cloud appeared

right by the white plume. I saw the Major start up and left and we were roaring down. When we got to the straight down vertical position Capt. McBride leveled our wings headed straight for the target and at the same time the FAC said Ramrod 52 you are cleared wet with a bomb. The Hun gave a little shudder as the bomb came off and then I was more than a little surprised when we started pulling up. I had experienced G's before by not 6 G's. Suddenly we were going straight up and banking left. Again I saw Major Bolger starting down and again the FAC gave instructions on where he wanted the bomb and cleared the Major.

We repeated this 7 or 8 times having to pass through dry a few times while the FAC studied where he wanted the ordnance. I remember Maj. Bolger made three dry passes when he couldn't get his guns to work. He was really disappointed they didn't work. Fortunately our two cannons worked and it was a thrill to hear the whirring sound they made as the fired.

Finally we were dry and off the target. As we rejoined with lead, as briefed, I took control of the aircraft and was allowed to attempt to fly in formation on Maj. Bolger's wing. The operative word here is attempt. They said I did excellent, but they were just being nice.

We landed at Bien Hoa and I was congratulated for participating in Aerial Combat, pictures were taken and a good laugh was had by all. About 3 hours lat-



ter I learned that one of the pilots that launched about the same time we did was shot down and killed. It sure put a damper on the day.

I returned to Tan Son Nhut. Finished my tour, returned to college and attended pilot training at Webb AFB, Texas. I later flew with the Flying Tigers, and was a Captain on the DC-8, B-727, and the MD-11.

**Tan Son Nhut Association  
Public Affairs Office  
2413 Brambleton Avenue  
Roanoke, VA 24015**

