

July 2006



A Memorial to the American Experience  
In Vietnam

# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

*Reunion*  
*May 3-6 2007*  
*Dayton, Ohio*



*Holiday Inn—Dayton North*

## Finding A Friend From The Past (From An Email)

You and I emailed each other several times but until tonight I did not recognize your name. I remember you well, and how much I and everyone respected you.

TSgt Arthur Garcia, Charlie Sector NCOIC, Charlie Flight. You were my boss for several months.

I was at Tan Son Nhut from October 1967 to July 1968. At first I was assigned to Charlie Sector, Charlie Flight. On the night of January 31, 1968, Tet Offensive, I was at a special machine gun post adjacent to Central Security Control (that was almost dead center of the installation). I was an A2C and had a Sgt with me at that Charlie special post.

I remember they would not let any of us go back to the barracks for several days. They put us in an Army general purpose tent at the east end of the runway. I remember our tent being blown down twice when the jet fighters taking off went into afterburner. Those in the tent were allowed to return to

the barracks to shower and sleep.

Shortly after Tet 1968, Foxtrot Sector needed some beefing up and I volunteered to go over there. I remember that I wanted to see the perimeter and work there. I was in Foxtrot Sector for about two months when my two sentry dogs became available to me: REBEL A531 and SMOKEY M707. I stayed in K-9 for the rest of my two tours.

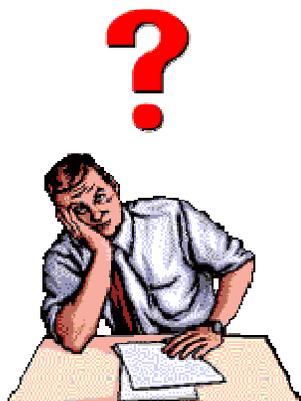
I am glad my dense brain finally realized who you are. You kept us all straight and professional. "STRAC," is what we used to say.

I got out of the USAF in September 1970 and went to college. I went back into the military in May 1976, this time into the US Army. I retired as a SFC (E-7) in August 1992.

I am going to the Tan Son Nhut Association 2007 Reunion, in Dayton, Ohio. If you are able to attend, I certainly am going to buy you and your wife dinner.

Your friend,

Charles Penley  
TSNA Life Member and Web Master



I can't remember!.....who, at the Gettysburg reunion, gave me this picture (among others) that were rolled up? (Please forgive my forgetfulness). W.S.



**Founded 1995**

**By**

**President Emeritus Don Parker  
and  
President Emeritus John Peele**

**Revetments is an official publication of  
the Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc.  
2413 Brambleton Avenue, Roanoke,  
Virginia 24015. The Association is a  
non-profit fraternal organization  
chartered under the appropriate statutes and law.**

**President, Wayne Salisbury  
Vice President, Larry Fry  
Treasurer, Jerry Norville  
Secretary Pro Tem, Jerry Norville  
Director of Communications, Charles Penley  
Johnnie Jernigan, Director-At-Large  
Dale Bryan, Director-At-Large**

**TSNA Chaplain  
Rev. Dr. James M. Warrington  
Rev. Dr. Billy T. Lowe**

**Revetments is published monthly at the Office  
of Public Affairs, 2413 Brambleton Avenue,  
Roanoke, VA 24015. Telephone: (540) 772-1025  
Email: TanSonNhut@aol.com.  
Revetments Publisher and Editor, Wayne Salisbury  
Web Site: www.tsna.org  
Webmaster, Charles Penley**

**Membership Information  
Annual Membership: \$20.00  
Five Year Membership: \$80.00  
Life Membership: \$180.00  
Contact the Public Affairs Office**

# Dayton Reunion 2007

## *Tentative Schedule of Events*

### *Thursday, May 3rd*

Arrival and check in at the Holiday Inn - Dayton North

Hospitality Suite Open—Meet and Greet

### *Friday, May 4th*

Breakfast Buffet

Air Force Museum Tour

Hospitality Suite Open

### *Saturday, May 5th*

Air Force Museum Tour

Optional trip to Waynesville, OH

Hospitality Suite Open

Cocktails

Banquet Dinner

### *Sunday, May 6th*

Farewell Breakfast buffet

Membership Meeting - Election of New Officers

Checkout

---

There will be much more to tell you about the forthcoming reunion in Dayton, Ohio. But for now I want everyone to please **mark your calendar**.

It's going to be a great gathering. If you haven't seen the Air Force Museum, now is your chance! If you haven't been there the past couple years, you're in for a surprise—much as been added and improved.

I've contacted many members, and have every reason to believe this will be a well attended reunion. I look forward to seeing you there—to shake your hand, and welcome you home.

Wayne Salisbury  
President

**Steve Carter**  
**TSNA Member**

**TSN**  
**Mar 1967—Mar 1968**  
**Nov 1969—Oct 1970**

**377th Civil Engineering Sq.**

For most of 1967 I was assigned to the 377 CES as a water processing specialist. Not all of the base had a well or was connected to the central supply system. For those areas we ran a daily delivery route with one of our 2000 gallon tanker trucks.

Most of those locations were on or near the perimeter. One of our stops was at the Thai barracks. I thought it was common knowledge that the Royal Thai Air Force had a detachment of troops billeted at TSN but I've learned that not everyone was aware of this.

The Thai troops were extremely friendly. Hospitality was job 1 for them. Each day when we arrived to fill the water tower they would offer to help and always wanted us to come inside and have something cool to drink. If we accepted anything it was usually iced tea. They were on ration cards the same as us. We developed a real good relationship with the Thais. After just a few daily deliveries we were on a first name basis. I didn't then, and don't know now anything about the politics and government of Thailand. That just wasn't a topic of conversation for us.

I don't remember the name or birthday of their king from that time. I do know, from experience, that his birthday was a national holiday similar to our Fourth of July. If memory serves his birthday was in the late summer or early fall. A few weeks before the occasion the Thais invited my fellow driver, Ernie, and I to the upcoming celebration. We hesitated to accept until we got the okay from our superiors. We advised our NCOIC of the invitation and asked his advice. He didn't get his stripes by okaying everything that came across his desk. He said he would run it

by squadron.

A few days later word came down that we were okayed to go. We were reminded to be respectful, cordial, cooperative, and to observe the proper protocols. Any sign of disrespect on our part could be construed as an insult or affront to one of our closest allies. When we made our delivery that day we informed our Thai friends that we be honored to participate in their celebration.

On the appointed day we wrapped up as early as possible. We made a quick run to the barracks for a needed shower and deodorizing session. Then we were out of the barracks area and hailing a p-cab for the short trip to the Thai compound. The patio area of their compound was decorated with streamers, hanging lanterns, bunting and a long banquet table. We were roundly welcomed with handshakes and traditional greetings. Chairs were set up around the wall of the patio area and the banquet table was arranged for a buffet meal. At the head of the table was a portrait sized photo of His Highness The King. He would be gazing down on all the night's activities from his lofty perch of honor. I don't know if the affair was catered or if they had their own chef and kitchen staff. The table was filled with exotic foods we didn't recognize for the most part.

There were several hostesses in attendance who served and helped keep the table supplied. When we arrived everyone seemed to be engaged in greetings, introductions, and light conversation. At the designated time our host asked for everyone's attention. He made a speech praising the attributes and accomplishments of His Highness The King. One of the Thai troopers we had become friends with interpreted and explained what was being said. At the end of the speech everyone cheered and applauded and refreshments were served by the hostesses. There was a large variety of offerings available.

Our friend explained what each of the offerings was and what his personal favorites were. I didn't even know that Thai whiskey existed up until that night. Later

on I considered that to be blissful ignorance. After everyone had been served their custom was to raise your glass for a toast to the king. After the toast everyone could help themselves to the buffet. As we ate the wait staff would come by to refill our glasses with whatever we wished. After everyone had a refill then there would be another round of toasting and eating. Ernie and I decided that it would only be good manners to honor the host country by trying their whiskey.

Bad decision.

That stuff had a golden amber honey like hue and tasted like a sweetened tea concoction. You have to remember that all this was occurring during our "bullet proof stage. I can't begin to remember all the foods on the buffet. Most of them were unknown to us anyway but after going thru the toast and eat process a few times everything tasted good. Ernie's favorite was the shrimp. The chef was preparing the shrimp by battering and frying them whole. The hostess would fill the container on the buffet and Ernie would help himself.

At first he would peel and remove all the appendages, the tail, the head, etc. The shrimp weren't very large and they had some pretty tough spiny parts that were hard to remove. Ernie was shucking and peeling for very little reward. I was sticking to something I felt safe with, the mystery meatballs and the chicken lips. After the fourth or fifth toast to the King Ernie came to the conclusion that he was working way too hard so he began to gradually remove fewer and fewer of the unwanted items from the shrimp. By the sixth or seventh toast the shrimp were being consumed whole. Nothing was being removed. Ernie was going thru the shrimp like they were peanuts.

At that point Ernie had to ask for help from a hostess to refill his plate. He said he was afraid he might stagger if he stood up and that could be a bad protocol. As if he could have stood up. He needn't have worried about staggering - heck he couldn't even walk. From that point on my memory is a bit fuzzy. I do remember riding in a Thai truck in the company of our good friends. I remember being helped into the barracks. I also

## My Answers

By David Koopman  
TSNA Life Member

**Wayne:** I thought your readers might be interested in placing this in *Revelments*. It was my answer to an email I received from a high school student who wanted to interview me for his social studies class.

Thanks for taking an interest in the Vietnam War. It's not often that I am asked about my experiences in Vietnam. And I feel the time is right to share them with you before my generation is no longer able to. Many of my experiences are on my web page at URL: <http://www.qsl.net/wbOydi/enter.html> My answers to your questions are below.

1. Where and when were you born?

Answer: I was born in 1947 to a farming family living near Madison South Dakota.

2. How, what circumstances were you involved, did you end up in the military in Vietnam?

Answer: It was anticipating the draft that brought me to Vietnam. I had no desire to fight and maybe die in a country I had previously never heard of but at the same time I felt if I avoided the draft I would be letting down my country and my ancestors who had fought and died for it in previous wars. I grew up with my mothers stories about the exploits of her brothers in WWII. My Uncle Don was a Naval Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd class on a PB4Y-1 ( B-24 ) bomber during WWII. His bomber crashed into sixty feet of water off Faro Portugal after returning from an anti-U-boat patrol. He and four of his crew mates died in the crash. All of my uncles on my mothers side of the family had served their country so it only seemed natural for me to serve also.

3. What branch of service were you in? Did you enlist or were you drafted?

Answer: I had just graduated from High

School and was still living with my parents in 1965 when I decided to enlist. I joined the Air Force early in 1966.

4. What outfit were you with?

Answer: I was assigned to the 67th FMS (Field Maintenance Squadron) at Mt. Home AFB in Idaho, a TAC (Tactical Air Command ) base. The 67th flew RF-4C aircraft and conducted photographic, visual, radar, and thermal reconnaissance operations. From there I went to the 460th TRW - FMS (Tactical Reconnaissance Wing - Field Maintenance Squadron) at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon Vietnam.

5. What rank were you?

Answer: I was a Sergeant (Pay Grade E-4).

6. What was your main job or responsibility in the service? Please explain.

Answer: I helped maintain the GE J79 jet engines on RF-4C Phantom II aircraft and I analyzed engine oil in the S.O.A.P. lab to predict engine wear.

7. Why do you think this war was being fought?

Answer: To prevent the spread of Communism.

8. Do you think the war was justified?

Answer: Yes. The Communists were a serious threat to democracy and freedom world wide.

9. What did you think of President Kennedy, President Johnson, and President Nixon's leadership during the war? Please explain.

Answer: Kennedy, at that time, could do no wrong. In hind site he almost started an atomic war between the United States and the U.S.S.R. over the Cuban missile crises. And he got us involved in the Vietnam war. It worked out well in the end though because we beat the Soviets economically during the Cold War. Johnson, in my opinion, was one of the worst Presidents we ever had. He

micro managed the Vietnam war when he should have left it to the Generals in charge. You can't win a war on the other side of the world when every decision has to go through Washington first. Nixon, in my opinion, was the worst president we ever had. His "Peace with Honor" program was nothing but turning around and running off with our tails between our legs like a beaten dog. Only cowards do that.

10. What leaders/generals do you remember as being very good?

Answer: General Westmoreland was fairly good. But not "very good".

11. What do you remember about the Tet Offensive of 1968? (even if you weren't there just express your views)

Answer: My tour in Vietnam was from September 1967 through September 1968. Tet started January 31st 1968. Tet was a major turning point for U.S. presence in the Vietnam conflict. Even though the VC made a valiant effort to take Tan Son Nhut Air Base and other strategic areas in the South. After Tet the VC were almost completely wiped out and North Vietnamese regulars had to take over the war effort. We had won the battle but Tet cost us the war. On Feb. 27 1968, back home in the United States, Walter Cronkite made a broadcast saying the war was "mired in stalemate" and "the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as honorable people". LBJ said to himself "If I've lost Cronkite I've lost the support of the American people" and decided not to run for re-election. Lack of American support is what cost us Vietnam. Remember that when The United States is faced with its next war.

12. What do you remember about the fall of Saigon? How did you feel about this?

Answer: I wasn't there. But seeing it unfold on my TV screen left me with a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. And a hatred for President Nixon who initiated that fiasco.

13. What did you think about the ARVN

forces? The enemy (NVA)?

Answer: I didn't completely trust the ARVN. Many were communist sympathizers or VC plants. I never saw any NVA but the VC were fanatics. They were like the suicide bombers of today. They would cheerfully blow themselves up to kill you.

14. How do you feel about the media's portrayal of the war?

Answer: Much of the media's portrayal of the war wasn't very accurate. Same as today. I think the media is necessary to report any atrocities that are committed. But if the only reason they are there is to criticize the war effort, then they aren't doing their jobs.

15. Did you have any encounters with anti-war protesters when you came home? If so please explain.

Answer: No, I avoided them. But when I came home some of my friends thought I'd gone off to school. And when I told them I'd been in Vietnam, some of them called me a baby killer. I never received so much as a welcome home.

16. How or what should the US have done differently in Vietnam?

Answer: We should have been a lot more aggressive with the enemy. You can't win a war with one hand tied behind your back. You must make the war so deadly for the enemy that he sues for peace.

17. Please discuss your activities during the war. Explain briefly what you did from start to finish.

Answer: I was a Jet Engine mechanic. I helped maintain the GE J79 jet engines on RF-4C Phantom II Air Craft and I analyzed engine oil in the S.O.A.P. lab to predict engine wear. SOAP was an acronym for Spectrometric Oil Analysis Program. Engine oil was burned in the S.O.A.P. machine to create a spectrum of colors which corresponded to different varieties and amounts of metal content. The purpose of this was to predict engine wear.

18. Would you do it all over again if you had to? Please explain.

Answer: Yes, I would. My tour in Vietnam, consisted of twelve months of long days, some of them filled with minutes of sheer terror. I don't remember ever feeling more alive but at the same time feeling closer to death. But Vietnam matured me beyond my 21 years. And I was proud to be serving my country. That pride has stayed with me all these years. I feel privileged to be counted among that exclusive group that put fear aside and risked their lives to defend their country.

David E. Koopman  
Sergeant U.S. Air Force  
Tan Son Nhut Air Base RVN

**360<sup>th</sup> TEWS**  
**Tan Son Nhut Air Base**  
**January 1970 - January 1971**

**By SMSgt. Eduardo Noriega**  
**NCOIC Squadron Air Operations**

While at Tan Son Nhut I was the NCOIC of the squadron air operations. The workers including myself were Lieutenants James Chalaire, Quentin Smith, Robert Johnson, Thomas Virhill, Eaves West. Paul later became a member pilot for the Samfox Wing – Presidential support at Andrews AFB, MD, which I also belonged 1974 to 1982.

My commander was Lt. Col. Raymond Brown and Lt. Col. McDonald. Also, Lt. Col. Tully. Other members were Lt. Col. Yahle, Lt. Col. Cameron, Lt. Col. Ringert, Lt. Col. Navarro, Lt. Col. Nova, Major Cadena, Major Bennett. George White, TSgt. Tom Long. I'd like to hear from any of them.

While there we lost Lt. Col. Troit Freeland. I have a copy of his mass bulletin that I would like to forward to any member of his family. He and I always played tricks on one another, an example was putting frogs in each others desk, paper clips with rubber bands, etc.

How many Lieutenants ran off the web runway in 1970? One that I know of, Lt. Chalaire. How many aircraft came home with bullet holes? I know of one that did. The aircraft commander was Lt. Col. Yahle. I hope most of the 1970 members are still with us.

One of my many memories was a policy that no correspondence goes to the Headquarters 460th TRW without going through the chain of command. A Major (I cannot remember his last name) sent a letter to Colonel Hodnette. Somehow Lt. Col. Brown got a call to visit the commander. In return, Lt. Col. Brown, smoking a Camel cigarette, wrote a memo to Lt. Col. Tully, Cameron and Pickett, stating that the policy said, "For all the greats, or near greats, let it be known that I am the Chief and no one has the authority to go forward without my approval." I still have the letter.

Lt. Col. Brown was a very unique, sharp commander. He would weigh problems before making a decision. His right hand man was Lt. Col. Tully.

Please remember all our departed comrades, especially Troit Freeland. He was a great leader, and a great example to the other officers and enlisted that served under him.

This is a picture taken at TSN. The dog is "Sux", our famous mascot. On the left is perhaps Lt. Hotaling.

I am active in community service: The Knights of Columbus, Elks Lodge and the VFW.

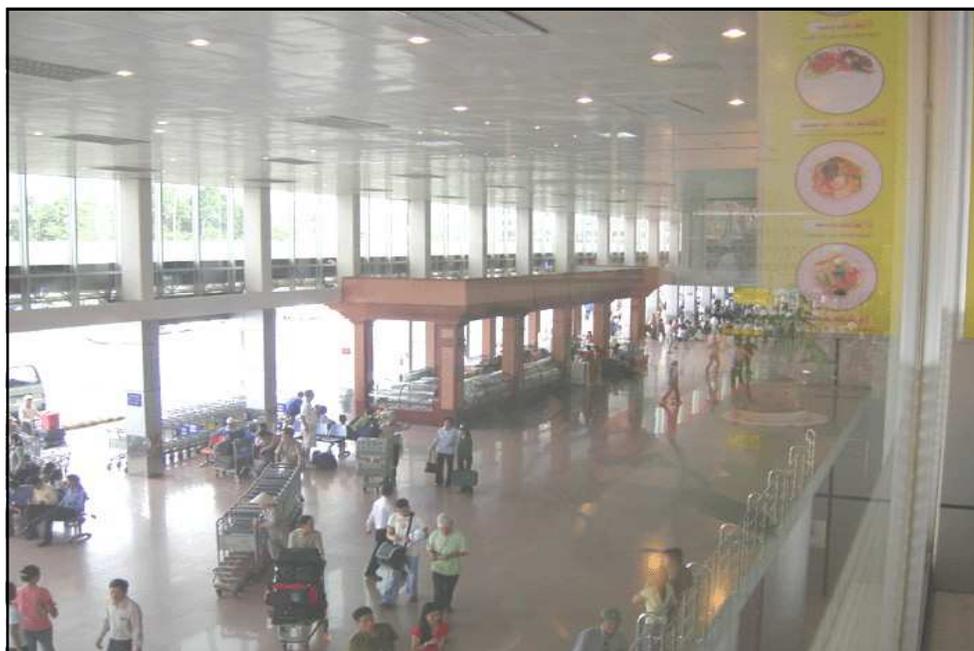


## A Bit of Modern History

Pictures taken by member David Stiffler In June 2006



TSN Ramp, control tower, and revetments in the background



Tan Son Nhut Air Terminal

# A Bit of History

## The Commanders

### The Commanders

#### US Pacific Command, Honolulu

Adm. Harry D. Felt	July 31, 1958	June 30, 1964
Adm. U.S. Grant Sharp	June 30, 1964	July 31, 1968
Adm. John S. McCain Jr.	July 31, 1968	Sept. 1, 1972
Adm. Noel A.M. Gayler	Sept. 1, 1972	Aug. 31, 1976

#### Pacific Air Forces, Honolulu

Gen Hunter Harris Jr.	Aug. 1, 1964	Jan. 31, 1967
Gen. John D. Ryan	Feb. 1, 1967	July 31, 1968
Gen. Joseph J. Nazzaro	Aug. 1, 1968	July 31, 1971
Gen. Lucius D. Clay	Aug. 1, 1971	Sept. 30, 1973
Gen. John W. Vogt Jr.	Oct. 1, 1973	June 30, 1974

#### Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Saigon

Gen. Paul D. Harkins	Feb. 6, 1962	June 20, 1964
Gen. William C. Westmoreland	June 20, 1964	July 1, 1968
Gen. Creighton W. Abrams	July 1, 1968	June 29, 1970
Gen. Frederick C. Weyland	June 29, 1970	March 29, 1973

#### 7th Air Force, Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam

Organized April 1, 1966, replacing 2nd Air Division

Lt. Gen. Joseph H. Moore*	April 1, 1966	June 30, 1966
Gen. William W. Momyer	July 1, 1966	July 31, 1968
Gen. George S. Brown	Aug. 1, 1968	Aug. 31, 1970
Gen. Lucius D. Clay Jr.	Sept. 1, 1970	July 31, 1971
Gen. John D. Lavelle	Aug. 1, 1971	April 6, 1972
Gen. John W. Vogt Jr.	April 7, 1972	Sept. 30, 1973

\*Moore was commander of 2nd Air Division from Jan. 21, 1963, to March 31, 1966. Seventh Air Force left Vietnam and moved its headquarters to Nakhon Phanom AB, Thailand, in March 1973.

#### 7th/13th Air Force, Udorn AB, Thailand

Maj. Gen. Charles R. Bond Jr.	Jan. 6, 1966	March 31, 1967
Maj. Gen. William C. Lindley Jr.	June 1, 1967	May 31, 1968
Maj. Gen. Louis T. Seith	June 1, 1968	May 31, 1969
Maj. Gen. Robert L. Petit	June 1, 1969	March 5, 1970
Maj. Gen. James F. Kirkendall	April 15, 1970	Oct. 11, 1970
Maj. Gen. Andrew J. Evans Jr.	Oct. 12, 1970	June 30, 1971
Maj. Gen. DeWitt R. Searles	July 1, 1971	Sept. 8, 1972
Maj. Gen. James D. Hughes	Sept. 9, 1972	April 19, 1973

The commander was a deputy commander of both 7th Air Force and 13th Air Force. In March 1973, 7th/13th Air Force reverted to Det. 7 of 13th Air Force.



*PACAF Commander Gen. John Ryan (l) meets with 7th Air Force chief Lt. Gen. William Momyer.*



*Gen. Lucius Clay Jr. (l) transfers command of 7th Air Force to Gen. John Lavelle in 1971.*



*Army Gen. William Westmoreland (l) and Army Gen. Creighton Abrams (r) pin a fourth star on USAF Gen. William Momyer.*

**VIETNAM**  
  
**VETERAN**

**Revetments will be published bi-monthly, commencing September 2006.**

**If you have a story or perhaps a special picture you'd like to share please forward it to:**

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

**Or**

**Send it via email to: [tansonnhut@aol.com](mailto:tansonnhut@aol.com)**

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

remember someone watching Ernie being brought in and asking if he was still alive"?

When I say that the next morning is a painful memory then I'm only being honest. When I think back on that day I still get a tinge of a headache.

When we were able to revive Ernie I was glad to hear him speak and know that his brain and body could still function. He just sat there on the floor for a few minutes to try to regain some coordination of his movements.

Getting dressed for us was not a problem as neither of us had gotten undressed. I asked "Ernie, you okay"? He looked at me through eyes that reflected deep pain and said "What did I eat? I feel like it must have been razor blades and pin cushions. My mouth is so sore I'm afraid to take a drink of water."

Who could have known that something that looked and tasted so good and was served to you by people you admired and trusted could turn on you with such vengeance?

Evidently our behavior was acceptable as we never heard anything to the contrary. The day after the celebration was one of the longest days of our lives up to that point.

When we pulled up to the Thai barracks to make our delivery they came out to greet us with their usual enthusiasm. There were some questions asked as to the state of our health and how had our night gone. There were also some whispers and snickers but that was to be expected I suppose. My advice? Don't drink. If you must consume then moderation is the key to survival. Don't let looks or taste lull you into a false sense of security.

Most of all though—leave that Thai whiskey alone.



**Taken during Tet. We delivered much needed water to the Army troops on the perimeter. That is me on the left.**



**On the left is a co-worker and friend, Arnold Seifert. We continue to stay in close contact nearly 38 years later. Arnold is also a member of the TSNA.**