



# REVETMENTS

## The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

### Assignment Tan Son Nhut

By Tom Rosinski  
7th AF Plans  
TSN 1968

In 1967 I was on my second assignment to the Pentagon working in War Plans. Many of my AF buddies from my prior assignment to the Pentagon had volunteered for Vietnam and were stationed at Tan Son Nhut. One day I received a call from my best buddy, Billie Rea who was working in 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force Plans at Tan Son Nhut. During our conversation he told me that there was an opening for an administrative NCO and that I should volunteer for it and join my buddies. He said that there was no problem being assigned to the Saigon area as it was as safe as living in New York City or Chicago. The war was not close by according to him.

He convinced me and that night I went home and informed the wife and family that I was volunteering for Vietnam and they supported me in my decision. Sure enough, 30 days after volunteering I received orders for Tan Son Nhut. Moved my family to Lumberton, NC where the wife would be near her parents and I was off to Vietnam.

I arrived at Tan Son Nhut in the daytime on 15 January 1968 and was greeted by Billie Rea and my AF buddies who proceeded to get me processed in and assigned quarters in Ellis Compound. I turned down the

opportunity to reside in Saigon even after Billie told me about the advantages of living off base (good decision on my part). That first night in Vietnam was very scary as I saw the skies around TSN being lit up by flares being dropped. The word was that it was lighted to spot any enemy activity in the area. Little did I know what was to come. I realized at this time I was in the War Zone and questioned my volunteering decision.

I was assigned to the 377<sup>th</sup> Combat Support Group with duty as NCOIC of Headquarters 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force Plans where I quickly learned that the war was heating up as we processed plan after plan to step up the air war. My job included screening all incoming message traffic regarding operations in and around TSN. I became aware that something big was about to happen in and around the base.

The routine of working 12 to 16 hours a day, six and a half days a week was welcomed as there really was nothing else I wanted to do. Had a good crew of NCOs and airmen, some I had worked with before who worked their tails off. Colonel Bottomly, the Deputy Chief of Plans was an outstanding officer and I really enjoyed working for him even under strenuous conditions.

Things were uneventful the first couple of weeks until the early morning hours of 31 January 1968 when the night was broken up with loud explosions and sirens blaring. All of us in hooch 531 had heard that Tet was

celebrated with a lot of fireworks and many of us believed this was just part of the celebration but what we quickly learned was that what we were hearing were 122mm rockets falling all around us. Tan Son Nhut was under attack. We all scrambled for the sand bag bunker located about 25 yards from our hooch.

In the rush to get inside the bunker several of us were physically pushed into the bunker landing on our stomachs covered by other bodies. There were a lot of scared and concerned support troops in that bunker listening to rockets and small arms fire all around us. The sad part is that there were no weapons available in our area. Although we had all been trained on the M16 prior to deployment to Vietnam, the word was that the higher ups were concerned that we would shoot each other. It was several hours before the all clear came and we were able to return to our duty sections and began talking about what we had just been through.

For several weeks after Tet, the rocket attacks continued. It got so that when the siren went off during the night all of us in my hooch would just roll out of bed and pull our mattress over our bodies and wait for the all clear sign.

During one of the day light attacks, I was riding my bike from Ellis Compound past the heliport to my work area when a 122mm rocket hit near me. It was so close it knocked me off my bike. It took me several minutes to

get my wits and clear the ringing from my ears before I could continue on my way. Scared wasn't the word for how I felt. When I arrived back at my duty section, Billie Rea was there and I informed him that Saigon was a war zone and not as safe as NY City.

One of my saddest days at TSN was 18 February 1968 when two of my fellow airmen (Sgt Bruce Carey and Sgt Richard Ramsey) were killed in their hooch in Ellis Compound during a rocket attack. Pictured below is part of the rocket that hit the hooch. When they were clearing the area I was given this shrapnel as a souvenir which I have in my possession. I had heard that one of them was packing for his return trip to the CONUS. The hooch that they were killed in was just up the street from where I lived so I had to pass it several times and witness what devastation the 122mm rockets made. I always wondered, how much longer will this go on and who would be next.

When the rocket attacks stopped, there were some good times at the NCO Club. It was an ideal place to meet and release some of the tensions of the day. There was a country band called "Country USA" that would frequently play at the club. A couple of the most popular requested songs were "San Francisco Here I Come", "Green, Green Grass of Home" and "Silver Wings". Believe me there were many beers consumed while these songs were being played. I met a lot of good folks at the NCO club from all branches of the services and heard many war stories.

I also spent some of my spare time with a group of NCOs and airmen from Ellis Compound who volunteered time to a local orphanage where we helped to paint several of the rooms. Here we witnessed the real victims of the war, the children who were left without parents. It was a long year, but an assignment I will never forget. I was one happy guy when the Freedom Bird lifted off TSN and headed for Yokota AB, Japan where I was being assigned

to Hq 5<sup>th</sup> Air, DCS/ Intelligence.

Early in my assignment at Fuchu I was called to the Commander 5<sup>th</sup> Air Forces office where he presented me with The Bronze Star for my duty at TSN. It was a total surprise to me because all I did was my job the best I knew. The citation read as follows:

"Technical Sergeant Thomas Rosinski distinguished himself by meritorious service as Noncommissioned Officer-In-Charge, Administrative Branch, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Headquarters Seventh Air Force, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam while engaged in ground operations against an opposing armed force from 15 January 1968 to 9 December 1968. During this period, while exposed to the hazards of hostile rocket and mortar attacks, Sergeant Rosinski performed in an outstanding manner while supervising the administrative office. His super administrative and management and close attention to detail assisted materially to the overall effectiveness of the Seventh Air Force mission. The exemplary leadership, personal endeavor and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Rosinski in this responsible position reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

I am very proud of this award but after finding the TSNA web site I have learned the real details of that scary evening of 31 January 1968 when some very brave and heroic Security Police and others gave their lives in defense of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Before this, I only had heard that TSN had come close to being overrun by the VC and that a large number had been killed outside the base. What an eye opener the "After Action Report" on the TSNA website was for me some 39 years later. My job was not nearly as dangerous as those who defended TSN.

To all you fellow veterans who served in Nam, I say hold your heads high and be proud of your service to this great nation we call the United States. Let

us all give our full support to our troops who are now fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I am looking forward to meeting some of you at the Reunion in St Louis.

God Bless America!



122mm shrapnel piece



**January 31, 1968**  
**On my bicycle**

**By Lt. Col. Jack Wimer**  
**7th Air Force Scatback**

(From an email to Bob Laymon, TSNA Director)

My nephew, LTCmdr. Brian Wilson, forwarded to me your E-mail regarding 31 July, 2008, reunion in St. Louis. I am very happy to have your address and the opportunity to possibly meet some old friends. Also, the TSNA Assoc. is interesting as I served in 7th AF in Blue Chip from Oct. 1967 until Oct. 1968 (did not fly that year). On the morning of Jan. 31st., 1968, I rode my bicycle from my room in an alley off VoTan Street to the main gate at Tan Son Nhut. It was still dark and the gate was blacked out and barricaded. An Air Policeman shouted from behind the concrete to turn off the headlight on my bike and to pedal fast through the gate. I pedaled fast and headed for the O'Club as I normally did for breakfast and after passing the gymnasium, I ditched the bike and dove into a sand-bagged bunker and waited out the fire-fight on the flight line, then proceeded to Blue Chip where we continued to launch missions for the next 7 days without coming out of the command center. We had no advance notice of the Tet Offensive. From Vietnam, I

was assigned to Bergstrom AFB, TX, to fly retired President LBJ in T-39 #62-4478, now on display at the National Museum of the Air Force. When LBJ died in 1973, I went back to SEA as Ops. Officer of Scatback at NKP. Scatback had recently moved from TSN to NKP. I had many interesting experiences there, including flying back into TSN while the peace talks were taking place and see North Vietnamese officers at base ops. Also, I believe I flew the only T-39 to get shot up (happened at Phenom Phen, Cambodia...had left engine shot out with 30cal. and numerous holes in fuselage). In short, it would be great to reunite with some old friends. I was unable to download the reunion info. you sent to Brian. Would you please E-mail me direct the same info. Also, [I want to join TSN Assoc.](#) Thanks, Jack.

(Editor's note: Jack is now a member, and we all enjoyed meeting him and Brian in St. Louis.)



### ***Jerry Sommerfeldt And TET '68***

**By Charles Penley**  
TSNA Webmaster

During the TET Offensive, Jan 31, 1968, a 377th Security Policeman, Jerry Sommerfeldt was performing his duties as part of the Quick Reaction Team (QRT), enroute to the 0-51 Gate to help defend the gate and the installation when Jerry was badly wounded.

Eventually Maj. Carl Bender picked Jerry up from the battlefield and placed him on a security police jeep, driven by 1Lt Melvin Grover and it was Grover who drove Sommerfeldt to the 377th USAF Dispensary to receive immediate treatment.

Once the ambulances, which were under guard from the 377th Security Police Squadron, started making runs to 3rd Field Hospital about 1/2 mile straight out the Tan Son Nhut Main Gate, Sommerfeldt was transferred

there.

Sommerfeldt spent approximately two weeks at 3rd Field Hospital and then transferred to Tachikawa, Japan.

From Tachikawa, Japan, Sommerfeldt was then transferred to Chanute AFB, IL.

Sommerfeldt's condition kept getting worse due to an infection.

They transferred him to Lackland AFB, TX hospital. Once he was there, they told him that he would be in the hospital for approximately two years. They had to operate and replace his hip and placed Jerry in a full body cast.

The doctors were very accurate in the length of time in the hospital. Altogether, Jerry spent almost three years total in the various hospitals.

Jerry then received a 100% Medical Discharge. Upon discovering the Tan Son Nhut Association, Jerry became a member.



### ***Bob Dylan Song***

**By Bill Stribling**  
[Razorbacks Gunships](#)

Brothers, On the thirty year anniversary of the TET Offensive, one of the major networks did a documentary on the series of battles. In one segment, there was prolonged footage of GI caskets being transported to waiting C-141 Starlifters on trams with the words and music of a haunting song playing throughout the whole segment.

At the time, the music and melody made my eyes wet with tears because I, like you, truly understood their sacrifice. I wondered what could be the name of a song so appropriate, and who could be the artist, but never seemed to be able to get an answer.

Last night, I went to Wal-Mart to buy

my wife a CD of the Tran Siberian Orchestra using a gift card, and to use up the card, I bought for myself a Bob Dylan CD.

When I put the Dylan CD in to play it, after a bit, a song came on that was hauntingly beautiful, and at once it was clear to me, that for me at least, this song defines the Vietnam experience for anyone that was there, and especially for those of us unfortunate enough to have been in sustained combat.

At this point, I remembered the words that I had heard 10 years ago that made me so sad. This was the song, "Not Dark Yet" by Bob Dylan. Every one of you need to hear this if you can stand it. For those of you that do go to the trouble to download it, let me know if you agree, or am I just losing my marbles.

**<<<<< TSNA >>>>>**

### ***Project Bitterwine***

**By: Garry W. Entress**  
[377th Supply Squadron](#)

I was the Project Bitterwine monitor for the Registered Equipment Management Section only. I'm sure Base Supply had their own monitors.

Basically I was directed by 7th Air Force to expedite the delivery of prefabricated buildings, jeeps, and other vehicles to forward USAF units. In most cases those USAF units were attached to Army units like the 25th Infantry Division and/or Marine units that were operating along the "Street Without Joy." Of course, expediting meant worry about the paperwork later. For the most part, Project Bitterwine as it related to the prefabs was a failure at TSN. The prefab buildings came packaged in a Conex. We had the Conexes stored in a Base Supply storage area near the Vietnamese Air Force HG. What units the 25th Infantry didn't steal...the ARVN did. The Base Supply storage area was unsecured. However, the Aussies were operating in the Vung Tau area so we gave some of the



prefabs to them to keep the ARVN from stealing them. Such was life at TSN . . . Haven't thought about this for over forty years. . .

(Editor's Note: I want to publish some more about Project Bitterwine. Let me know what YOU know about it.)



### 377th Air Police Squadron Radio Transmissions TET Offensive 1968

Contributed by Charles Penley  
TSNA Webmaster  
377th SPS

The following information is redacted from the 377th Air Police Squadron, Central Security Control (CSC), Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, Vietnam, on January 31, 1968.

The TET 1968 Attack on Tan Son Nhut began early in the morning at 0321 hours.

Echo-37 was also known as the O-51 Bunker.

#### I am only reporting their final words.

#### 0320 hours

Echo-37 is also known at the O-51 Bunker. It is manned tonight by five Air Policemen.

1. Sgt Alonzo Coggins, who will be wounded seriously in a few minutes, and spend approximately eight hours inside the O-51 Bunker with the enemy. He will also endure, several tank rounds, Razorback rounds and jet bombs tonight.

2. Sgt William Joseph Cyr, who will be Killed In Action, within minutes.

3. Sgt Louis Harold Fischer, who will be Killed In Action, within minutes.

4. Sgt Charles Edward Hebron, who will be Killed In Action, within minutes.

5. Sgt Roger Bertha Mills, who will be Killed In Action, within minutes.

(Echo-37) Security Control, be advised ( Garbled transmission)

(Echo-37) Echo-37, to Security Control.

(Echo-37) Out there beyond the tree line is approximately about 25 people, they just fired mortar barrages.

(Echo-37) Security Control, Echo-37.

(Echo-37) Be advised, vicinity of numerous VC outside the fence at Echo-3

(Echo-37) (Garbled transmission.) ... o n E c h o - 3 7 .

( E c h o - 3 7 ) E c h o - 3 7 .

(Echo-37) This is Echo-37, I've been hit seriously, I'll probably need an ambulance .

(Echo-37) Security Control, Echo-37. ( 0 3 4 6 h o u r s )

(Echo-37) (Garbled transmission.)

(Echo-37) The VC are running around, over-running our area. ( ... A lot of transmissions are over-riding the radio f r e q u e n c y . )

(Echo-37) Security Control.

(Echo-37) They're directly in front of this post, in the ditch, there must be 15 of em.

(Echo-37)(Tango 1) (Echo-37 speaks and then Tango-1 talks over them) Tango-1 to Security Control.

(Echo-37) Security Control, from Echo-37

(Echo-37) They're completely inside the base, they're all around this position, we're running low on ammo, one man dead & two badly injured. (0354 hours)

(Echo-37) Echo-37.

(Echo-37) That's 10-4. (Sad to say that this will be the very last transmission from Echo-37, better known as the O-51 Bunker.) (0355 hours)



By Gary Edwards  
377th CES Fuel System Maint.

Let me tell you when it rained in Southeast Asia it did not mess around. Only one other place as bad, and that will be another story.

At first with our gear on we would run to the nearest shelter until we figured out you were going to get wet no matter what, either from the rain, or from the humidity. You sweat like crazy under the poncho. You might as well take your time and walk.

Even going to the base theater across from Hotel-3 Helo port, the roof would leak so you had to take your poncho there. As I remember the season was for like two to three months long a couple times throughout the year. Not sure what time of the year it was???

I lived in the 800 area. Out my back door was the covered patio, night movie screen, tables and chairs.

To the left was the bomb shelter if you wanted to use it or you just put on your flak vest, helmet and crawled under our double bunk beds to cover up until the all clear sirens gave the all clear. The shelter was in front of the bathroom shower.

Also to the right of the patio area was another bathroom, shower building. In back of all this to the north was a huge drainage ditch for the rain to drain off.

One afternoon I was out on the patio when it started raining. The ditch was huge like maybe 15 to 20 ft. wide at the top and tapered down 8 to 10 ft deep. It rained so much it just about crested the ditch. The ditch ran from the west main gate, east towards the

Anyway, during this one storm I looked up river to the west and here are two guys coming down the ditch in their raft they made, having a good old time.

Had to shake my head over that one. I guess they were bored????? Everyone enjoyed that one.

Because of all the humidity there was plenty of very large cockroaches at night, sometimes waking you up from sleep.

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## ***My Just In Case Letter***

By Charles Penley  
TSNA Webmaster  
377th SPS

Mom, Dad, Brother, Sister's and Sister-in-law:

This letter is being written to you just in case I don't come home as I had wanted. It will be sent with my other belongings. That is the reason I have not put a date above.

By this, I mean that if the worst happens to me, then know that I love each and everyone with my very being, heart and soul. That God, is with me and that, “his will be done.”

The thoughts I want to convey in this last letter, is hard to accomplish. My mind is racing with so many thoughts that I don't think it is possible to place them all on paper.

The manner in which you raised me to become a young man, no parent could have accomplished more. There were always the hugs and kisses from each of you. There was never a hesitation for any of us to speak these three words to one another. "I Love You".

I think of my mother. My mother who would put her arms around me and tell me that things will be alright. Who

taught me to sing what I wanted to say to her, because I stuttered so badly. My mother who will be dear and close to my heart. Always!

I think of my father, Whom I have the greatest love and respect for. Who showed me all things in life and the meaning of life. Even though you and I are separated by thousands of miles, I know that you are with me always.

I think of my brother, Jerry and his wife Carrie. Jerry always looking after me and taught me many things about becoming a man. Hunting and fishing with him was the best of times. To explore the forest and lakes, just to see what was there. And Carrie's beauty and laughter.

I think of my sister, Clara Imogene. I wanted to let you know that when I dream of you, that you are not the baby infant who died at thirty days old, of double pneumonia. You come to me as an angel of approximately twenty years of age. Your attire is a beautiful white robe. Your beautiful mannerism and peace emanates from you, to me.

I think of my sister Janice. One year, one month, one week and one day older than me. Who was taller than me when I was thirteen and she fourteen. Now I am fifteen inches taller than her, she loves to tell everyone that I am her little brother.

Being at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam is totally different from anything that I have ever experienced. There will probably come a time when I must do my duty to my fellow man. It will be very possible that a life must be taken, to save another man's life. All life is very precious.

In the name of the Father, the Son  
and the Holy Ghost, Amen !!!

Your son and brother.

Charles Eugene Penley

By James Neel  
8<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port Squadron

I met him in March, 1968, at Tan Son Nhut and served under his command. He was a wonderful man and in his memory, I plan to join the Tan

Armor, Cav, and Infantry rush head-long into the melee. Breaking the lines like an angry sea deep into enemy territory. Approaching a crossroads, what do we see? The area secured by two lonely MP's directing us forward, how can this be? How long have they been waiting for me? What a crazy person this MP must be. He has no firepower or armor like me. And I thought everyone followed the three

A guest speaker, honored guests, mini-symposiums, and registration costs will be publicized as plans are finalized.



## UNTOLD STORIES

By John Mayfield  
13 RTS

There are some untold stories during my time frame at TSN.

When I arrived at TSN in July of 1964 I stayed at tent city. After you were there for awhile they were just completing some hooch's. Tent city was not a very enjoyable place to live. And when you got to move to the hooch's you lived in a much better environment. Once one was on base for awhile it was understood that bartering became a practice. Now I know not everyone did but there are many who did who just will not admit it.

I was close to the men in the Army who flew for the 97<sup>th</sup>. They would always need things and so it became a practice to exchange items to make the other units' life more bearable. The chow hall needed some things, the army needed some things, and so bartering became a practice. I was stationed at 13 RTS which was right next door to Headquarters for 7<sup>th</sup> AF.

I bartered for and wore a set of Army fatigues. The army fatigues were much more comfortable than our fatigues. I wore them with the sleeves rolled up and my AF stripes on them. I know more than once I left our building next to headquarters 7<sup>th</sup> AF and General Westmorland probably saw me but never said a thing. The fatigues worn by the Army back then are what the Air Force wears now but only camouflaged. They had large pockets on the side and big pockets on the front.

Getting back to the untold stories. On any given night the streets of Saigon in different areas could be found military vehicles. One of the popular vehicles back then used on base was the Econoline. Not only enlisted but officers were known to drive off base using these vehicles. It was not uncommon to also see 1 ton and 1-1/2

ton trucks down on the streets of Saigon after hours. Piaster's on base were about 150 for \$1.00. If you went off base the exchange rate was about 3 to 1. There were many things in the early years of TSN that were never mentioned. I wanted to print this as time goes on more things that are clear may fade.

One of our favorite hats to wear was our "Go to hell" hats, which were the equivalent to the Australian's Army cap. We had our own lingo on the side of these caps and the favorite was an insignia that said "go to hell".

Things were a little crazy but most things were accepted the early years which probably were not later on as the base became more up to date. I sat one day on a roof and saw Gen Ky dive his planes on the ARVN army as they were trying at that time to decide who would be in control of the military.

I returned to the states in July 1965. I was back to work in a civilian job within a week. No one had any idea the things that were floating around inside my head. I never told anybody about this till today as I type this.

In closing, after reading Dave Koopman's story I can relate to his not having easy access to a weapon in case of an emergency such as the enemy coming on base and you were only able to run somewhere to get a weapon. When I was there they were stored on the other side of the base in a Conex under lock and key. I bartered and had my own weapon in my locker.



### NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

From: Gary Monahan  
SP4 U.S. Army

I was assigned initially to the 58th Transportation Unit Headquarters Company from the 90th Replacement Company out of Long Binh.

I was domiciled at Tent City "B" behind MACV Headquarters. I worked as a clerk to Major J. W. Pershing, (nephew of Blackjack Pershing) in a building on Tan Son Nhut across from the morgue. After the Tet Offensive, I was reassigned to D Company of the 110th Transportation Unit where I worked in the Motor Pool and drove.

During my time at Tan Son Nhut I stood perimeter guard, participated in expelling NVA and Viet Cong forces from the air base during the Tet Offensive, and remained in a perimeter guard status until mid-February when I was returned to my unit.

During the Tet offensive I was part of the "Task Force 35" unit under the command of the 377th SPS. I have been through numerous mortar and rocket attacks and participated in events of expelling Viet Cong from the Tent City "B" compound when the perimeter had been breached—1967 and 1968 were busy times for the communists at Tan Son Nhut and I was sure glad when my time came to rotate back to the world.



From: Randall N. Stutler  
377th SPS

When we first got to TSN we were in a tent for 3 or 4 days (myself and Robert Arvai). We filled a lot of sandbags! Then we moved to a little hooch up from the Main Gate on the perimeter road; bunks were three racks high with only room for a duffel bag between the bunks, it was tight! I think we were there for about two months then we moved into the "concrete palace" and we became the 377th Air Police Squadron. I remember a bunch of stupid things that happened. I was there for the attack on 13 April 1966. I made a mad dash to Gen. Moore's in Saigon, all of Cholon seemed to be on fire and under attack. I was there for the infamous "Saigon Parade".

**Tan Son Nhut Association**  
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Arlington National Cemetery November 11, 2008  
Photo by Craig Campen

The following is retyped from an official document submitted by Bill Grayson. The original memo is too small to be readable here, but the message comes across no matter what.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**  
**HEADQUARTERS 7<sup>TH</sup> AIR FORCE (PACAF)**

Reply to Attention of: CS

15 October 1966

Subject: Sky Diving

To: All Wing and Support Group Commanders

Sky Diving or Parachuting of any sort does not lend itself to the conditions presently existing in Southeast Asia.

Request you advise all assigned/attached personnel that participation in such activities is contrary to 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force policy.

FOR THE COMMANDER

FRANKLIN A. NICHOLS, Brigadier General, USAF  
Chief of Staff