



# REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam

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## IN SEARCH OF A PLACE TO LIVE: SAIGON, 1968©

By Robert Robinson Gales  
President, TSNA

On my way to Saigon, after 22 hours in an upright position since departing Travis Air Force Base, I finally arrived at Clark Air Base, Philippines, on Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 2155 hours. My adventure to Saigon was again interrupted, and I was informed of a delay until the next day due to unspecified "ground activity" at Tan Son Nhut Air Base – activity that was subsequently called the TET Offensive, 1968. Because of non-availability at the Clark Visiting Officers Quarters, I was taken by bus to the House International Hotel, just off the base, where I placed my head on a pillow and my body on a soft bed. I slept.

As instructed, I arrived back at the Clark MAC terminal at 0330 hours on Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, for the privilege of waiting for my 0500 departure. The Clark terminal was packed with weary military, nearly all with heads down, bodies at 45° or prone, and eyes closed or at least glassy. After a relatively brief flight from Clark Air Base, I finally arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, where I was met by Major Murray Rothaus, the Base Staff Judge Advocate, and Captain Frank Luna, an Assistant Staff Judge Advocate.

I exchanged my green for MPCs, drew a helmet, flack vest, and M-16, and was driven to the air conditioned Base Legal Office – 377<sup>th</sup> Combat Support Group, Office of the Staff Judge Advocate – across from the Base Commander's Office and adjacent to the dispensary and mortuary. After a bacon and eggs breakfast and a steak lunch, I rode rear shotgun in the back of the jeep, scanning the

rooftops as we drove through Saigon to my temporary billet with Rothaus and Luna, a gated 2-story residence - 29 Duong Tran Quang Dieu (District 3) – across the street from a USAID facility. The flares and gunfire kept me awake briefly, but I eventually floated off to a sound sleep.

On Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, I checked in with the base housing office and learned I was number 150 on the waiting list for government quarters and inspected one of the newly constructed Officers' BOQ rooms, or should I say roomettes. It was only 8' by 8' or 64 square feet of space. That was deemed unacceptable by me, because it is 46 square feet less than the directives require, and I expected to hold out!

MACV Directive 210-3, *Installations Billeting Policy*, at paragraph 2.d., states: "All quarters under military control are considered adequate." Paragraph 5.a.1., states: "The minimum space criteria per individual shall be approximately 110 square feet per officer, and 70 square feet per enlisted man. This space criteria does not include the bathroom facilities associated with a room." Paragraph 5.b.5 states: "Company grades (O-1, O-2, O-3) will be assigned to bedrooms considered adequate for higher ranks if they are not required for those ranks, otherwise they will be assigned on the basis of 110 square feet per officer. Six company grade officers may share a single full bathroom."

On Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, I again checked in with the housing office and learned I was still on the waiting list. It had rapidly decreased from 150 from one week earlier, down to 6. I still held out hope that I could beat the system and obtain a non-availability to enable me to reside in a villa in

downtown Saigon.

On Tuesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, I learned the housing office had just opened a "new" government billet somewhere in downtown Saigon, but they could not pronounce the name of the facility or tell me where it was located. The authorities wanted everyone to move out of Saigon – they called it Operation Moose – Move Out of Saigon Expeditiously - and yet they decided to still buy, rent, or build quarters in Saigon.

On Monday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, after having discussed a possible move with my colleague, Captain J. Bryan Williams, III, another Assistant Staff Judge Advocate, I moved into a beautiful villa located at 135 Duong Vo Tanh (District 2). Unfortunately, he failed to discuss my move with his other housemates and I was ordered by the ranking housemate, a somewhat disagreeable individual, Lieutenant Colonel J.J. Horton, to vacate the premises. I remained overnight at Bryan's room and the following day moved back to 29 Duong Tran Quang Dieu.

On Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, I finally took a look at the mysterious billet – Horne Hall BOQ - located at 149/154 Phu Tho Hoa (District 5), just off Duong Nguyen Van Thoai (popularly called Plantation Road), now known as Ly Thuong Kiet - about one mile from the Tan Son Nhut Air Base main gate. Horne Hall BOQ was located across from the Commissary open storage yard, and two blocks from the Idaho BOQ and the Annapolis BOQ/BEQ, and adjacent to an army billet. The only entrance to the BOQ was guarded by Chinese Nung guards, armed with World War II vintage carbines. Sand bags and fencing were there to thwart unwelcome entry. The housing office told me room 501 would become vacant in a short time

and I could have it if I wanted. I told them I would consider the option.

On Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, I took another look at what was to become my new home and discovered it was filthy. There was mud on the floor, a broken light fixture, and two dirty beds. I advised the housing office of the situation and they said it would be cleaned and repaired for me.

On Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, I went to the housing office and signed up for room 501, Horne Hall BOQ. The housing office had a low counter and with a loose-leaf 3-ring binder on it. This binder was for Horne Hall BOQ (and possibly other billets), and each room was depicted with a plastic cover over each page. When I informed the housing attendant that I would take the room, he took a grease pencil and placed a big X on the plastic page covering one of the beds in room 501. He then went into a room to the rear to get linens for me. When he did so, I reached across to the binder and placed a big X on the other bed as well. That was that. I now had a double room to myself for the duration and no-one was any the wiser!

Room 501, Horne Hall BOQ, was on the top floor of the Q. There were two interior staircases, one on each side of the building, from the first to the fifth floor, and one staircase from the fifth floor to the roof. A Nung guard stood by the lone staircase to the roof. Surrounding the roof was a low wall, about waist high. The roof had one apartment – room 501 – with a bedroom and private bathroom (toilet and shower), cold, but no hot, water, windows in two walls for cross ventilation (one in the bathroom and one in the bedroom), and a ceiling fan. The fan was so slow I could stop it by putting my finger in the air for the blade to strike. There was no shower curtain. The bedroom had two beds, two metal clothing lockers, a table, and two chairs. The penthouse – room 501 – was my new home for the duration of my assignment to Vietnam.

The roof was the social center of the building, for in addition to some deck chairs from which to catch some daytime rays or watch the nighttime hostilities at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, there was a television setup so anyone could watch Armed Forces Vietnam Network and see the news as well as Bobbie the Weather Girl.

Horne Hall BOQ repulsed a ground attack by combined NVA and VC troops during Mini-TET in May 1968, but that is the subject for another story.

**2010 TSNA REUNION  
ATTN: REUNION ATTENDEES!!**



The 2010 TSNA Reunion is only days away.

For physical reasons, I won't be there.

Therefore, in remembering the wording we probably all saw in our military career (and don't ask me why I can remember it verbatim 50 years later):

"The exigencies of the service having been such to preclude the issuance of competent written orders in advance . . . so and so is hereby released from assignment . . . ."

Soooo, the orders as such to ALL those attending the Reunion is that you are appointed "Revetments Field Editors", with the responsibilities to take lots of pictures (and take notes of what the pictures are!), write up as many stories and anecdotes as you can, and send them to me as soon as possible! My email address is: [lfry2@dejazzd.com](mailto:lfry2@dejazzd.com). The duration of this assignment is a little over two weeks, since I would like to have everything early in the week of October 25th, for inclusion in the November issue of Revetments.

These orders are irrevocable and must be completed as assigned.

Thank you!

Larry E. Fry  
Editor, Revetments



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Below is the first of three parts of the Vietnam chapter from the book, *Turning Final* by Lt. Col. Jim Reed (Ret) USAF. Jim is a TSNA member and has graciously sent us this chapter for publication in Revetments.

**Chapter 6**

**1969-1970  
Tan Son Nhut Air Base  
Saigon, Vietnam**

It's a shame that wars can't be decided by the side that sings the best songs!

Ashleigh Brilliant

I had received an alert for a Vietnam assignment while stationed at McClellan AFB, so I wasn't too surprised when one day I got a call from the Air Force Personnel Center. I was surprised at what transpired after that. The voice on the other end said, "Major Reed, we need pilots in two separate assignments for Vietnam, and you are qualified for both. We couldn't figure out the one that best fit, so we thought we'd do something different and let you decide." I went into shock. This had never happened before. I covered the mouthpiece and told Major Joe Skiera, sitting across the desk from me, what the Personnel Center had said. He suddenly got interested. I asked the voice on the other end what the two assignments were and he said that one was in C-119 Gunships. There were few pilots around who had a C-119 background, and I was one. What was the other assignment? I couldn't believe my ears when he said that the second assignment was flying T-39s out of Tan Son Nhut. I told Joe and he lis-

tened as I, in my excitement, blurted out "I'll take the C-119 assignment!"

"NO!" Joe said. "You mean T-39s."

"I mean T-39s!" I shouted into the phone.

And that's how I got into SCATBACK. If Joe Skiera hadn't been sitting there, I'd have wound up in C-119 Gunships. Not that it would have been a bad assignment. I enjoyed flying the old C-119, but there were a lot more trips to Bangkok in the T-39. I found out later that the urgency to get a T-39 pilot over there was that several of them had been lost in the crash of a C-47 en route to Hong Kong on an R&R flight. That made them really short of pilots.

When the orders finally came through assigning me to SCATBACK in Vietnam with an en route stop in the Philippines for Jungle Survival School, I got a wild hair. I knew they had T-39s at Yokota and some other bases in the Far East and thought it would be great if one of the birds that was coming out of overhaul in the States might coincide with my transfer and I could ferry it over rather than go across the Pacific via commercial or with the Military Airlift Command. I called the Air Force Command Post and found out that there was a bird going to Yokota that would coincide with my tour in Vietnam. So the orders were cut and, with my crew, I proceeded to Lincoln, Nebraska, where the overhaul facility was for Air Force T-39s. The T-39 is a relatively short-ranged aircraft, so it would be an island hopping trip over to Japan. We flew from Lincoln to McClellan AFB, where all Air Force birds are processed before going overseas in the Pacific. Then we flew to McChord AFB, near Seattle, and on to Elmendorf AFB, at Anchorage, Alaska. From Elmendorf we flew out the Aleutian chain to Adak, where we spent the night to prepare for the toughest leg of the entire journey. The leg from Adak to Midway Island is 1,436 nautical miles long.

The T-39 has no real way to navigate over water and, depending on variables such as winds, load, altitude, etc., has about a 1,600 nautical mile range to dry tanks. This gave us a planned 20-minute fuel reserve, if everything went right. In the morning, after getting the Air Force Command Post to authorize our Flight Plan (necessary because we had to violate Air Force fuel reserve requirements in order to make the trip), a four-engine Navy P-3 turbo-prop, capable of giving us a position and which flew at about half our speed, took off.

We took off an hour later and flew the same track as the P-3, passing him at the approximate halfway point to Midway. After we lost the TACAN (about 200 nm South of Adak), we were strictly DR (Dead Reckoning) from then on until we could receive the TACAN about 200 nm north of Midway. At the halfway point, the P-3 gave us a fix that enabled us to confirm our fuel burn and we were exactly on schedule, so we pressed on.

We arrived at Midway with exactly 20 minutes fuel reserve, as planned. That poor P-3 crew flew eight hours simply to give us one fix. A quick turn at Midway, then on to Wake Island, Guam, and Yokota AB in Japan. On the leg from Guam to Yokota, we passed directly over Iwo Jima, which happened to have been turned back over to the Japan Self Defense Air Force (JASDAF) the day before. I got the towers attention when I made our position report in Japanese from a USAF airplane.

SCATBACK, in Vietnam, was a great outfit. Each of the pilots in SCATBACK T-39s were chosen because they were either an Instructor Pilot (IP) or Flight Examiner (FE) in the airplane. Partly because of the difficulty of the mission, and partly because of the fact that we flew a lot of Generals; they didn't have to meet flight currency requirements and, therefore, had to have an IP along if they were at the controls.



We had two scheduled trips a week to Clark AB in the Philippines. These were great trips because we got out of the war zone, had some good food at the club and got to see what the real world was like. It allowed us to maintain perspective. On one of these trips I got cleaned up and headed for the bar in the Officers Club before getting some good vittles. I sat beside a dapper old gentleman who turned out to be a 72-year-old retired Army Colonel. He told me that he had been living in Florida with his wife and mother-in-law – she had to be in her nineties – and those two old women just got on his nerves. So he packed up and he was going around the world, space available. I asked him how long he had been on the road and he said three months. My comment that he wasn't making too good a time was met with, "Oh, yes, I'm making great time. But I met a nurse in Tachikawa and spent two months there."

One memorable mission was a scheduled trip from Saigon to Clark AB to airlift Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, when he had command of the Naval Activities in Vietnam. As we approached the Philippines with Admiral Zumwalt in the back, we were advised by center that a severe squall line was going over Clark AB and that they were evacuating the tower. That sounded strange to us, but we could see the towering cumulus in the distance, indicative of some tough weather. We advised the Admiral that Clark was hopeless and he said to divert to Cubi Point and he'd get a staff car over to Clark. So we changed our flight plan and got in ahead of the squall line as it approached Cubi. By this time it was getting dark, and we could see the violent lightning inbound to Cubi. When the Admiral deplaned, we tried

to get off and head back to Saigon before the squall line got to Cubi, but after the first engine was fired up, I had my hand on the starter button for the second when a massive lightning bolt struck the ground and all the runway lights went out. So we shut down and headed for the club.

Gabby Haynes, the other pilot, and I sat down for dinner. Normally we flew in flying suits, but because this was a VIP mission, we were in our summer khakis and, therefore, suitably dressed to eat in the dining room. I noticed that while we were eating, two Navy guys kept looking over at us and whispering. Finally, as we finished dinner, one of them walked over and said, "Hey, you guys are Air Force, aren't you?" We replied yes, and with that he said, "We'd like to buy you a drink." And that's how I found out about the Animal Room.

It seems that during the Vietnam conflict, the Navy ships would sit off the Vietnam Coast for six months at a time. When they finally got off station and came to Subic Bay/Cubi Point for Liberty, the guys were so pumped up that they would destroy the Officers Club. After the Base Commander had had enough, they built a special room adjacent to the club, complete with a simulated cockpit of an A-7 Navy Fighter, and called it the Animal Room. In the Animal Room, they could break glass and furniture to their hearts' content and the club would just bill the ship.

These two Navy guys that wanted to buy us a drink had an ulterior motive, and I should have figured that out. What they REALLY wanted to do was get these two Air Force guys to ride the A-7. As we walked through the broken glass, pushed aside the numbed bodies and waded through the scotch spilled on the floor, I saw a wonderful sight. There, in the Animal Room, was the mockup of an A-7 cockpit. It sat on tracks that went through a makeshift hole knocked out of the brick wall and ran down into a shallow pool. The object was to strap

in and go through the rev-up motions for a carrier shot and then someone on the side would hit the button and a 3,000 pound nitrogen charge would propel you on the tracks through the hole and into the pool. As you went out the hole in the wall, you pulled a lever that dropped a hook in an attempt to catch the wire that prevented you from going to the bottom of the pool. Just before the wire there was a ramp. So if you dropped the hook too soon, it bounced over the wire. Too late, and you missed. Either way, you wound up in the pool and then it was a survival situation to get unstrapped and back to the surface. To catch the wire the timing had to be perfect. At that time, there had been 3,000 shots and only 12 guys had ever caught the wire.

The drunks were having a wonderful time, but they couldn't wait to see these two Air Force guys make fools of themselves. Gabby asked what would happen if he caught the wire. A Navy Captain who appeared to be the leader of this motley crew said that anyone who caught the wire would get their name on a plaque. By this time, Gabby had a few drinks under his belt and boasted, "Get the plaque ready."

I was first and, when the shot hit, was propelled to the bottom of the pool. Gabby was next and, again, boasted that he'd get the wire. When his shot came, it was a cold shot that barely moved him along. He dropped the hook early and it merely went up the ramp so slow that instead of bouncing over, it caught the wire. Gabby jumped out and shouted, "I caught the wire! Where's the plaque?" Well, you can imagine that there was a very irritated bunch of Navy guys. The one in charge got right in Gabby's face and said, "You don't get your name on the plaque with a cold shot!" Gabby snapped right back, "You didn't say anything about a cold shot. You said if I hooked the wire I'd get my name on the plaque. I hooked the wire. Now I want my name on the plaque!" I tried to shut him up, but it was hopeless.

Things looked as if they could turn ugly, and we were certainly outnumbered. But, as it turns out so many times with drunks, we wound up singing songs at the bar.

Check in the December issue for Part 2.



(Editor's Note) The following is based on an email from TSNA member Cary Louderback to a friend of his from Vietnam. This "article" goes a long way to explain what the job of the "Mobility" teams was.

October 29, 2004

Alan,

I'd forgotten our old barracks was 872. You jogged another memory....thanks.

Well, as things wound down and troop levels got lower and lower, I think it's accurate to say things with MOB got a bit hairier.. But, I wasn't there earlier, so I obviously can't be sure. I was with Sgt. Bob White though, and he'd been in the siege of Khe Sahn in 68 (think it was 68). He agreed.

Anyway, places I hit include: Kontum (repeatedly) and it was the worst. We hit it my first few days with MOB. We'd been somewhere up North, can't remember where but I know Hue City was VERY close. Anyway, we'd been 3 days and nights with virtually no sleep, just a rare cat nap on a pallet up on our AT (rats were REAL BAD). I'd been awake for nearly all of around 80 hours (no one believes that, but we know it IS possible), when we headed to Kontum.

Kontum was VERY HOT when we hit. A 130 had sideswiped a downed Cobra, lost an outboard engine and leaked most fuel...amazingly no fire. The hurcy was blocking part of the strip so we went in on a 123 and short-stopped on a dime.

Weren't those fun landings?

Refugees everywhere, Kontum was nearing overrun and to this day I've never experienced anything crazier. All any local wanted was to get on anything leaving. Anyway, we drug the Cobra off to the side.

Never knew how or why but there was an AT on the downed 130. Crew was picked up before we got there. Seems there should have been a MOB team with that AT but...

We did the manual ramp drop, got the AT and pulled the Cobra first, then the 130 out of the way. Huey brought a mechanic in and with a little of our help and, get this, the good, old versatile AT dropped the engine offwing. To be honest it wasn't a very pretty DROP.

We took lots of incoming during that time. sitting on that AT, let me tell you !!!!!!! I was ALWAYS the driver on our team, seems my night vision was pretty good and I grew up on a farm and have driven everything imaginable all my life.

Did minimal ugly patching on the 130, ripped off some of the worst hanging skin, used the AT to jump start and fired the 130. Knowing that it'd run, called for a flight crew. Another Huey later, Hurcy was ready to go.

For about the next 18 to 24 hours we turned 130's, 123's, choppers, anything that would come in. We moved a heck of lot of refugees out and took a heck of a lot of incoming. Have no idea how many locals were hit and only know of one US Major that got wounded. Still don't know why he was near the back of the 130 on turn. We grabbed him, got him stabilized (his bird never stopped, sure they didn't know and it's good they didn't keep their bulls eye on our ground) and shoved him into the next bird turning. Did all we could and finally managed to get on a 130 and left. As luck would have it our bird lost an engine on take-off. Three's not a problem on a 130, right? Got worse. Enroute to Saigon, lost another engine to ground fire.

Down to two sets of props, but we got faith in the 130...no sweat!

No kidding, on approach, we lost the *third* engine.

Short ending; we managed to land - with credit to an OUTSTANDING CREW. We spun around and off the runway but finally stopped...SAFE. "HOME" at last.

MSGT. William Moore told me and some others that he was gonna put us in for Bronze Stars. Never heard another word and never saw him again. Didn't really care for over 20 years.

I do remember that there was a story in the paper about us at Kontom. Can't remember name of the paper, but it was in '72, around Tet, I think.

Anyway, Kontum was the worst. Sent us back there 2 days later. Never saw our AT again and still feel bad about leaving it. Was told it was seen a couple miles away with a 50 cal. hole in the engine. Just hope one of ours took it out rather than having it used against us! People think I'm nuts when I talk about those 10K AT's, but they were very good, reliable "friends" to MOB teams, huh?

Other places hit:

Phan Rang, Song Be (lots), Pleiku, Quin Nhon, Quang Ngan, Tuy Hoa, Ban Me Thuot, Nha Trang, Da Lat, Loc Nhin, Tay Nhin, Phuoc Vinn, Cao Lann, Vung Tau, Hatien, Vinn Long, Can Tho (with OLAY) then for my last couple of months), and all over the Delta.

Don't really remember these places, some yes some no, but while at Can Tho I did one smart thing. Had a map of RVN engraved and painted with all the places I'd been with MOB. Little did I know I'd "need" that later.

Don't get me wrong...memories of what went on are VIVID!! Names, dates etc, are not, though. Like you,

I'm sure, Nam will ALWAYS be like yesterday....right?

Names: Sgt. Bob White, SSgt. Chamalouck (sp?), TSgt. Miller, Jordan (last name), Georges. A guy with me at Can Tho from Dodge City...name? A German Shepherd at Can Tho named "OLAY" pronounced "OLEE".

He'd eaten so much steak off the ration birds we worked there, he'd often sniff and let 'em lay there. We all ate VERY WELL at Can Tho, but after I'd had about a week of only Kimchee with Koreans and warm beer at Phan Rang, I felt I deserved to eat good!!

Thanks a bunch for the site and for contacting me. First contact with anyone that was in MOB or had even heard of MOB since I got back HOME in '72.

later,

Cary

[Editor's Note: After receiving Cary's TSNA Application, I contacted him about his work in Vietnam. Here is his return email, which explains some more things.](#)

Hi Larry,

After saying "you're welcome" I'd like to say I'm very happy about joining TSNA. I look forward to learning more about TSN, especially since by the time I arrived in-country, things were really dwindling down. I did not see a lot of US forces, other than USAF at TSN.

Now to your questions/ comments. I'm not at all surprised you've never heard of the 8th Aerial Port Sq. MOBILITY Section...."The Chosen Few". I've always used this in describing our operations. We were the "Army" guys in the Air Force. I don't know what things were like for earlier mobility guys, other than what I learned from a few of them last year

during a reunion at my home, but in my time, we did not enjoy support from other US forces. We were very much on our own in the field. Never knew where we were going, for how long or how hot conditions might (or might not) be when we arrived.

On our missions, we toted everything we thought we'd need with us going in. Kinda hard to do when you know nothing about where, how long or how bad things might be or get to be.

Before I go on, let me refer you to the website that Alan Runfeldt set up for Mobility: [www.8thmob.org](http://www.8thmob.org). Might be cool to have a link from the TSNA site (and vice-versa).

Anyway, up until 2004, 32 years after I got home, I had NEVER talked to ONE SINGLE SOUL that had ever heard of Mobility. I was very tired of feeling like anyone I discussed mobility with probably thought I was making it all up. (Doesn't everyone just KNOW that Air Force guys had it made in Nam...never got shot at, etc....). Then one day I found the mobility website. WOW!!!! I had finally come across other guys from Mobility. REALLY changed things for me. Short story, we got a very small reunion together with a few Mobility and a couple of Combat Controllers for a weekend at my home in 2006 !! REDEMPTION !!! All the guys I've talked with were in Nam earlier than I was, so I've yet to find someone who experienced the same kind of atmosphere I did.

Check out the Mobility website and get back to me. Note: There's quite a bit to read in the Forum entries and some things of interest in the links. Included in the links is a letter I wrote to Alan describing part of one of the missions I was on at Kontum.

Cary



From: Harlan Hatfield  
460th AEMS  
Jan 67—Jan 68

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(Used with permission)

### **Veteran recalls battle leading to Medal of Honor**

By Senior Master Sgt. David Byron  
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (AFRNS) -- In 1968, a battle raged where heroes arose only to be unacknowledged for 18 years. Proper recognition occurred during a White House ceremony Sept. 21 when Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Richard Etchberger was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor after saving three of his men in a battle that failed to make headlines at the time because of its then-highly classified nature.

Retired Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Daniel was one of the Airmen Chief Etchberger saved during the battle at the Lima 85 radar site.

The mission, named Heavy Green, was to provide radar information and assistance to U.S. aircraft bombing military targets in Hanoi, Vietnam, its surrounding areas and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The radar site, located on a hilltop in Laos, was not officially acknowledged until 1986 because Laos was considered a neutral country during the Vietnam War, despite U.S. and North Vietnamese forces often operating there.

Sergeant Daniel said that although the mission was to guide bombers on long-range strikes, as time went on the radar crews were forced to direct an increasing number of bombing runs closer to their own location.

The North Vietnamese army had dis-

covered the site's location and made a concerted push, including building roads to bring in heavy artillery, to launch attacks against the site.

On the evening of March 10, 1968, the radar crew experienced a lull in guiding bomber missions and decided to take a dinner break. Sergeant Daniel had the additional duty as cook for his shift.

"I asked them what they wanted for dinner, and they all said steaks, so we went down to the barbecue pit and fired up the grill," he said. "We hadn't started cooking yet, and [Air Force Lt. Col.] Bill Blanton came up and said, 'Fellows, we need to have a little get-together up in the equipment.'"

Colonel Blanton told the team that the North Vietnamese army had surrounded them and the situation looked dire, Sergeant Daniel said. While calling in evacuation helicopters was a possibility, that option was rapidly disappearing as darkness approached. A flight out the following morning would be more likely.

"We took a straw poll of everybody that was there," Sergeant Daniel said. "We decided to just go ahead and drop bombs all night, and in the morning, detonate all the equipment and get out on choppers at first light."

As it turned out, they did not have as much time as they had thought. During the meeting, the North Vietnamese army began its attack. The first artillery round hit the barbecue shack.

"It was a good thing we were at that meeting and not having dinner," Sergeant Daniel said.

The radar team split into two crews. One team would pull the first shift manning the equipment, the other would return to the sleeping quarters, rest and prepare to relieve the first team. The sleeping quarters and bunker were located next to the barbecue shack.

"I said I wasn't going to stay in quarters or the bunker," Sergeant Daniel said. "They already hit there and had the range down on that. I said we should go down over the side of the hill, where we went to write letters. Nobody would find us down there."

On one side of the hill was a ledge where the Airmen often sat to compose letters or tapes to send home. It was 10 to 15 feet below the top of the hill, with a nearly 3,000-foot straight drop below. The five-man crew decided to take cover there.

The five Airmen started hearing small-arms fire and grenades going off on the hilltop, Sergeant Daniel said. "Shortly thereafter," he added, "someone caught a glimpse of us and started emptying their rifles at us."

In the first volley of gunfire, two members of the team were hit, one fatally. The crew returned fire with their M-16s. After the next exchange, two were dead and two others had been wounded. Chief Etchberger was the only one not wounded.

During lulls in the gun battle, the enemy began tossing grenades down on the ledge.

"If I could reach them, I'd pick them up and throw them back on top of the hill," Sergeant Daniel said. "If I couldn't reach them, I'd take the butt of my rifle and kick them off over the edge of the mountain."

When one grenade landed outside both his own reach and the reach of his rifle, Sergeant Daniel said, he rolled the dead body of a comrade over on top of it.

Roughly 15 yards separated Sergeant Daniel and Chief Etchberger. Sergeant Daniel had a radio near him, and as the attack continued, the chief directed him to call in an air strike on the top of the hill. Throughout the night, a succession of aircraft unloaded their ordnance, both bombs

and bullets, on the hill.

At daylight, three members of the team still survived on the ledge. An Air America helicopter spotted them and hovered, lowering a sling. Chief Etchberger broke cover, exposing himself to the enemy, and closed the gap between himself and his wounded colleagues.

"[Chief Etchberger] scooted me on over and got me on that sling," Sergeant Daniel said. "After I was up, he got [Capt. Stan Sliz] up on the sling."

After the two survivors were aboard the helicopter, the chief began to secure himself to the sling. Before he could go up, Staff Sgt. Bill Husband, who had been playing dead atop the hill, dashed to the ledge. The chief locked arms with him, and they rode the sling together and boarded the helicopter.

As the helicopter began to climb, a North Vietnamese soldier emptied his weapon into the underside of the aircraft. Chief Etchberger was mortally wounded and died during the evacuation flight.

"[Chief Etchberger] was one hell of an NCO," Sergeant Daniel said. "He knew the equipment. ... He knew how to handle people. ... He knew how to do and how to do it. You were eager to follow the man, to do what he wanted you to do."

The Heavy Green mission began with volunteers, briefings and sworn statements of secrecy at the Pentagon in 1967. For those involved, the White House Medal of Honor presentation and the Pentagon Hall of Heroes induction ceremony Sept. 22 will provide closure to the mission.

"It's only fitting," Sergeant Daniel said, "that we're back in the Pentagon to finish it up and put an end to it, right where it started, 43 years ago."

To view photo, click [here](#).



## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By: Bob Chaffee  
TSNA Chaplain

October holds a unique place on the calendar of the year and ends with a "strange" costume event. For those of us that live on the gulf coast it's the height of the hurricane season when we check our bottled water supply and make sure our power generators have fuel (if we have generators). Of course let's not forget it's also the month for our TSN gathering.

Most people do not know the history of the last day of the month. I looked it up just to be sure my facts are correct! "In the old Celtic calendar the last night of October was 'old years night', the night of all the witches, which the church transformed into the eve of All Saints." This seems to be a strange start for a very deep religious season Halloween but that is "the fact".

For the Chaplains it comes down to this, on Halloween night we have the witches but on the next day we had better put away all that witch stuff and become aware of all those servants of God who gave their very lives in His service.

If we take Halloween seriously, we are realizing that as of the end of that day we now must prepare for a much larger event, a hallowed eve on December 24.



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### A "FIRST" FOR TSNA

Establishing "communications" with the IRS is not usually the top of most people's list of accomplishments, but for TSNA, this was an accomplishment--the result of a long process. First, TSNA was re-registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Once that was completed, the TSNA attorney filed the forms for TSNA to be recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt organization. As reported a month ago, we received that designation in mid-August, retroactive to February, as a 501 (c) (19) veterans organization. (The biggest impact for TSNA members is that donations to TSNA can now be deducted from your personal taxes.)

And then the next step was to file tax returns with the IRS--the first time TSNA has done this. This is a formality; there was no tax to be paid. But, it was a recognition and formalization of the new TSNA status. And, as the one who prepared the paperwork, it is with a great sense of relief that it is put in the mail and sent on its way--

**Carol Bessette**  
**TSNA Treasurer**



Mr. Ralph E. Krause	CA	Sep 67 - Sep 68	Hq Squadron 460th TRW
Dr. Robert Garcia	TX	Dec 68 - Jul 69	1876 Communications Squadron
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