



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam

DECEMBER 2012 #2



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

The shortest sermon or meditation of the year should be during December! The religions of the world all celebrate the end of a "year" - our calendar says December. Thus, "short sermon" but why? It's because the message is "short and sweet".

Here it is: We have been given Life, Hope, Care, Concern, Presents and a Future through our beliefs and our faith. All faith's share this and commitment to celebration of our beliefs.

This should be a time when (oh how we wish it could be) we admit that we all seek love and fellowship and that the Supreme Being is greater than we are as individuals.

My prayer in December would be that "we can embrace each other, share our beliefs and not, not destroy each other just because we disagree on some things".

May the God of us all allow us time to be taught to love each other.

Now that's short!

End of sermon.

Chaplain Bob



An Addition to TSNA Board of Directors

With the promotion of Rich Carvell to Vice President, the TSNA Board of Directors (BOD) had a vacancy. That is no longer true. Joseph Kricho con-

sent to allow President George Plunkett to appoint him to a pro tempore position on the board. Some of you may have already noticed that he is already listed as a Director on the TSNA web site. In addition to participating in the routine business by the officers and board members of your association, he will focus his talents on being Director of Veterans Services.

After 23 years of service, Joe retired from the Air Force as a Senior Master Sergeant in 1990. He served as an Instrumentation Technician, Communications Center Technician, and Site Development Superintendent. While at Tan Son Nhut, he was with the 1876th Communications Squadron.

He is an excellent choice for being Director of Veterans Services considering he belongs to the following organizations in addition to the Tan Son Nhut Association: Vietnam Veterans of America; Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Air Force Association; Air Force Sergeants Association, Society of American Military Engineers. His list of contacts must be pages long.

While Carol Bessette and I were dining with him after the Veterans Day wreath ceremony, he revealed something else of interest about himself. He has graduated from culinary school. How many other attributes are yet to be revealed? The board needs to take advantage of his culinary knowledge. We will ask him to comment on the banquet menu for the next reunion. How can anyone complain about a food venue that has been reviewed and approved by a gourmet chef?

Welcome to the TSNA BOD, Joe.

Dale Bryan, TSNA Secretary

CHARLES PENLEY

Our Webmaster and Director of Communications, Charles Penley was recently honored in his town by being the featured as the Vietnam Veteran of the week. Here is the article:

Vietnam Veteran Spotlight: This week, we offer our gratitude to Kingsport's **Charles E. Penley**, a lifetime member of VVA Chapter 979. Mr. Penley served us in the U.S. Air Force and was in Vietnam from October 1967 through July 1969. He was born and raised in Kingsport, attended Dobyns-Bennett High School and East Tennessee State University, and has spent his entire life here. Following his time in the Air Force, he worked for the Hawkins County Sheriff's Office, then decided he wanted to return to the military. This time, he opted for the U.S. Army, re-enlisted, and retired from there, serving a total of 22 years in the military. One of his lengthiest assignments was that of the Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Vietnam. He has been a military policeman during his career and also a sentry dog handler. Mr Penley's current efforts include being the webmaster for the Web site for all who served at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, as well as for the 377th Security Police Web page. He enjoys maintaining contact with his fellow military personnel. We wish you many happy and healthy years, Mr. Penley, and we thank you for your service to our country.



If A equals success,
Then the formula is A = X + Y + Z.
X is work. Y is play.
Z is keep your mouth shut.

-Albert Einstein

ALL ABOARD!!



Several restaurants are available on the 24 acre complex.

The phone number for reservations is 1-800-TRACK29, (1-800-872-2529) Please mention TSNA to receive the special room rate.

An announcement will be made when our honored guest speaker is confirmed or when other information becomes available.

I hope to see you there !!!

George

Fellow Members,

I hope that I am the first to wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

A hotel contract has been signed with the Chattanooga Choo Choo for next year's reunion.

The dates are June 13, 14 and 15, (Thursday, Friday and Saturday).

Check-in time is 3PM. Check-out time is 11AM.

The Hospitality Suite will begin operation on Wednesday, June 12. We would greatly appreciate volunteers arriving early to help unpack and set up displays and to stay later on Sunday to repack everything.

The room rate is \$120. per night. This includes all taxes and fees. This rate will be honored for up to three days prior to and two days following the reunion.

48 rooms are available on restored train cars for a higher rate.

Reservations must be made by May 21, 2013 to ensure room availability.

The supply of handicapped accessible rooms is limited.

Parking is free.

Upon request, airport transportation can be provided by the Choo Choo shuttle. The cost is \$10.00 per room each way.

Breakfast buffet discount coupons in the amount of \$5.00 for up to two per room per day will be provided. Normal buffet prices are \$12.95, \$13.95 and \$14.95. Plated breakfasts, for which the coupon does not apply, are \$11.95 and \$13.95.

There is a free shuttle that tours downtown. It originates and ends at the Choo Choo.



Christmas Past

Anyone that has spent the Christmas holiday away from home understands the longing for family and loved ones that time of year. For me, December 1971 was no exception.

At the end of my shift in early December, I anxiously made the daily trek to my P. O. box located behind the BX just outside the 1300 area.

I was expecting the usual letter or two, which added to the suspense. To my surprise my mail slot was full of letters. Had to be fifteen, maybe even twenty envelopes inside. My first thought was that I was looking at the wrong P.O. Box. I hadn't written as often as I should have and, definitely not to so many people that they would all reply at the same time.

Sure enough, it was mine, so many letters from names I didn't recognize. After taking a moment to carefully read the addresses I realized that a class from one of my home town Parochial schools wrote the letters.

Back in the confines of my cubicle in the 1300 area I read the letters. They were written by sixth graders from Mrs. Pelletier's class at the Saint Louis De Gonzague School. Awesome letters, Mrs. Pelletier's class had a grasp on reality beyond their years.

Most expressed the sadness of what it must feel like being so far from home at Christmas. They shared details with me about their home life, parents, siblings' friends, pets, their favorite teacher (Mrs. Pelletier), favorite sports teams and their dislikes. They very much understood that my family missed me as much as I missed them.

I answered every letter, personalizing every reply to the individual the best I could by referencing key points of their letters. The replies were all mailed within a couple days with the hope they'd be received before the Christmas school break. I would like to believe the letters were read aloud in class but, I have no way of knowing that for sure.

Six months later my tour of duty ended and I went home on a 30 day leave. Most of that time was spent on our wedding plans, visiting with relatives, and errands. Being consumed with the here and now left little time for thought to an appropriate response for a kind and, sincere gesture extended to a lonely serviceman far from home so many years ago. My priorities upon returning home should have included a personal acknowledgement to Mrs. Pelletier and her class of shining stars.

As the years passed by, life seemed to slow down a little leaving time for reflection and regret. Regret for not arranging a visit with the Administration Office at Saint Louis de

Gonzague School in early June of 1972 with actual letters in hand requesting to address Mrs. Pelletier and her class. I didn't though, and I have always looked upon that as a missed opportunity, a common courtesy ignored.

One, if I had to do over again. I would have taken an hour of my time to express my appreciation to those wonderful students and their teacher. Unfortunately, at that time I was too involved with events unfolding around me and less in tune to the common courtesy of a personal acknowledgement.

The years passed too quickly distancing that moment in time, making any further attempt to acknowledge those wonderful students and their teacher seem offensively selfish and insulting on my part. I missed that opportunity long ago. Serving as a constant reminder that in life we don't get do over's.

Occasionally, I pause to reflect on that special walk to my post office box that December of 1971, rekindling the joy and excitement I experienced from that thoughtful and sincere gesture so many years ago.

Like many saved items from decades past, most of those letters have been filed away in boxes somewhere, long since forgotten. I still have 4 or 5 of the letters in my Vietnam memories photo album that I keep in my office bookcase at home.

Occasionally, I take the photo album from the shelf, read the letters again, smile, reminisce and carefully put them back until next time. I am still in awe of the emotional & inspiring impact their letters had on me then and, still has on me now after all these years.

The realization being, memories left unfulfilled, no matter how wonderful can be haunting. Still, a reassuring calm comes with being the proud recipient of those kind and thoughtful letters. Conflicting emotions, perhaps but, I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

Michael J. Splylios
377th Security Police Squadron
June 1971-June 1972



Along with the article on the previous page, Mike has sent along copies of the 7 letters he still has, including the one to the left.

In addition, here are some of the comments I have copied from the other letters, which I find very interesting:

"I bought a few gifts for Christmas. Mike what is your favorite hobby? My is hocky. I like other sports but hocky is my favorite. I have two teachers. One of them is Miss Pelletier, she is nice and young. And the other is a Nun, she is pretty good too. Yvon"
December 10, 1971

"The class helped decorate the class and it looks very nice. We have a manger put up and it makes the class brighter up. I hope your having something nice down there like we do....Your friend Therese"

"I have two sisters and two brothers. Their names (from oldest to youngest) are Billy, Jane, me, Elaine, and Eddie. I have one cat and two birds. The cat, Pete, is black, gold, gray, white, all mixed. I have a canary and Elaine has a parakeet. Sincerely, Denise."

"I have a wonderful family. I'm sure you do too. I have a mother, father, and two sisters. My oldest sister is 14. Her name is Diane. My youngest sister is 8. Her name is Julie. So that leaves me the middle sister. We also have an Angora cat. His name is Misty. He is a beautiful cat. Carolyn."



St. Louis De Gonzague School
Nashua, NH

Nashua N.H. 03060
Dec. 10, 1971

Dear Mike,

How are you? I'm fine. My name is Mike [redacted]. How's the weather up there? Well it's snowing over here. In fact on Thanksgiving Day there was a real big snow storm. We had about eighteen inches of snow. That's alot for Thanksgiving!

I go to St. Louis school, I'm a sixth grade and my teacher's name is Miss Suzanne Pelletier. In our class we have a manger instead of a Christmas tree. We put our gifts around the manger instead. I made the manger out of wood, glue, nails and hope!

My hobby is coin collecting and building models especially air planes and ships. Usually I play with my models and they get all messed up and broken but I keep on playing with them. But most of my models I keep on ^{a little table or} hanging them from the ceiling.

My favorite sport is hocky and my best hocky team is the Boston Bruins. I like hocky alot and I even play on my troop 255 hocky team as goalie at Camp Doucet.

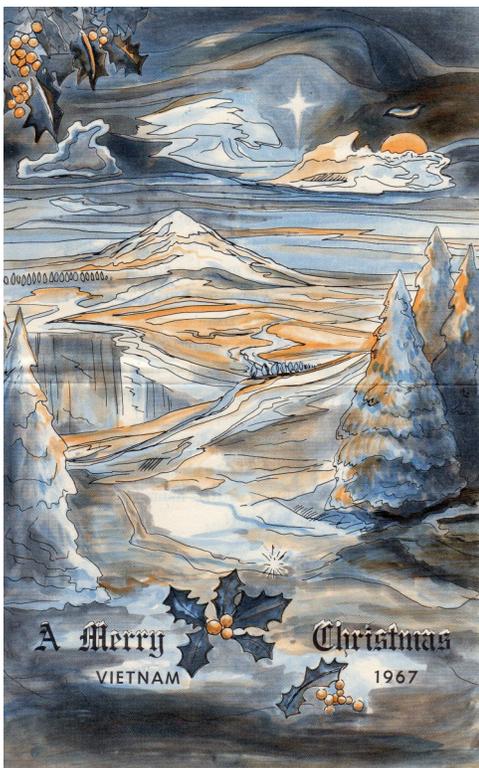
Our family will be putting up our Christmas tree this weekend.

I thank you for all you've been doing over there and I know your doing a great job.

Your partly known friend,

Mike

P.S. Have a Merry Christmas.



Thanks to Harold Boone for the Christmas 1967 item above.

Prayer for Christmas

Our Father in Heaven, we give thee thanks for the gift of thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Prince of Peace and Lord of Life. May thy gift of Bethlehem, announced by the Angelic Chorus, be born again in our hearts this day. Help us to know and experience the meaning and blessedness of their message: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men." Remove from us fear and hate and help us to know by faith thy peace which passes all understanding. We pray that the spirit of Christmas will be shared by our loved ones. With them help us to ponder, like Mary, the deep mystery of Christmas. May the truth and love which the Holy Child of Bethlehem brought to earth abide in our lives. In His name receive our praise and thanks. AMEN

Christmas Day Dinner

- Shrimp Cocktail
- Crackers
- Roast Turkey
- Turkey Gravy
- Cornbread Dressing
- Cranberry Sauce
- Mashed Potatoes
- Glazed Sweet Potatoes
- Buttered Mixed Vegetables
- Assorted Crisp Relishes
- Hot Rolls
- Butter
- Fruit Cake
- Mincemeat Pie
- Pumpkin Pie w/Whipped Topping
- Assorted Fresh Fruits
- Tea w/Lemon
- Milk
- Assorted Nuts and Candy

'Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,
 in a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone.
 I had come down the chimney with presents to give,
 and to see just who in this home did live.
 I looked all about, a strange sight I did see,
 no tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.
 No stocking by mantle, just boots filled with sand,
 on the wall hung pictures of far distant lands.
 With medals and badges, awards of all kinds,
 a sober thought came through my mind.
 For this house was different, it was dark and dreary,
 I found the home of a soldier, once I could see clearly.
 The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone,
 curled up on the floor in this one bedroom home.
 The face was so gentle, the room in such disorder,
 not how I pictured a United States soldier.
 Was this the hero of whom I'd just read?
 Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed?
 I realized the families that I saw this night,
 owed their lives to these soldiers who were willing to fight.
 Soon round the world, the children would play,
 and grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day.
 They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year,
 because of the soldiers, like the one lying here.
 I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone,
 on a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.
 The very thought brought a tear to my eye,
 I dropped to my knees and started to cry.
 The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice,
 "Santa don't cry, this life is my choice;
 I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,
 my life is my God, my Country, my Corps."
 The soldier rolled over and drifted to sleep,
 I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.
 I kept watch for hours, so silent and still
 and we both shivered from the cold night's chill.
 I didn't want to leave on that cold, dark, night,
 this guardian of honor so willing to fight.
 Then the soldier rolled over, with a voice soft and pure,
 whispered, "Carry on Santa, it's Christmas day, all is secure."
 One look at my watch, and I knew he was right.
 "Merry Christmas my friend, and to all a good night.

Thanks to Janice Jones for the poem.



REVELMENTS #2



DECEMBER 2012

EDITOR'S NOTE

Since December 2008, we have had 203 new members join TSNA. That represents around 40% of our total current membership.

So I decided to go back to December 2008 and reuse some of the small articles I received that year about Christmas at Tan Son Nhut.

Christmas 67

By: Bernard Bucholz
1876th Communications Squadron

I spent Christmas 1967 at work in the 7th Air Force Command Post Comm. Center. Christmas greetings were going back and forth between the comm. centers on all the teletype circuits in addition to the normal traffic. Many people brought cookies, candy, and other edibles received from home to share. We also had received from the Red Cross or USO a couple of large mail bags full of Christmas cards from citizens from all over the USA and we enjoyed looking through them.

My Christmas 68 at TSN

By: Bob Lee
377th SPS

As it got closer to Christmas 1968 at Tan Son Nhut, everyone seemed to go into themselves. It didn't seem possible to find much to be merry about. The weather, the atmosphere, and the confusion of war certainly didn't remind anyone of our most celebrated holiday.

On a day about one week from Christmas, I found in my mailbox, as I often did, a card that said I had a package to pick up at the counter. As the postal clerk (wearing a red Santa hat) rounded the corner, I could barely see him behind the two large boxes he was trying to balance. He passed

them to me with a smile and a "Merry Christmas!" It was my first glimmer of Holiday Spirit.

I walked the short distance back to the 377th compound, and made my way to my ground floor "cube". A crowd began to gather around, because boxes from my family in California usually contained treasures, like : SPAM, Best Foods mayonnaise, Roman Meal bread, chocolate chip cookies, fresh oranges, and Bazooka Bubble Gum.

Today was different. As I got the tape, the cardboard, and the plastic trash bag covering opened on the larger of the two boxes, I was overwhelmed by the smell of a high Sierra forest...!

Inside of the box was a perfect, 4-foot tall, Silver Tip Fir tree. Its stump wrapped in a damp towel, and enclosed in a plastic bag. I carefully removed the tree and looked around at my mates...I saw more than one tear, as we all took in the familiar sight and smell of this little beauty.

We quickly opened the smaller box, to find a tree stand, twinkle lights, garland, and ornaments. We decorated and carefully placed the little tree atop my small fridge.

Through the Holiday season, the tree became a place where everyone would come to spend their night off. And a place where more than one toast was made. And a place to pinch off a few stubby needles and smash them in your fingers to release that wonderful smell of every Christmas tree you had ever cut.

As the holidays passed, and I got "shorter" and "shorter", no one would allow me to take the tree down. It became brown, and frankly, a fire hazard. The ends of its branches were bare from having its needles "pinched", but the lights still twinkled. As I left for home in March 1969, my cube mate said that he would like to keep the little tree there for the next Christmas.

Bless all who came home, and especially, those who didn't...!

Christmas 66

By: Ed. Vymazal
377th SPS
Apr. 66 to Apr. 67

Hi,
I received an E-mail to describe the celebration of Christmas when I was In Viet Nam.

In 1966, Dec.04-05, we (the 377th) had the first ground attack in force on a major U.S.Air Base in the History of the USAF. We lost (KIA) one handler and had wounded (4) more. We lost 5 dogs (KIA) and that put us 9 to 10 dog teams down. So as I remember, we didn't have Christmas that year at the Kennels and we had no days off for awhile after then also.

So to all my 377th K-9 buddies who were there, I thank you for celebrating the Christmas 1966 with me, we will never forget. And if you weren't there, what can I say?

REVETMENTS DECEMBER 2013:

OK, so we have these from 4 years ago. And it's too late to add any for this year.

But PLEASE write to me at: lfry2@dejazzd.com with your thoughts on YOUR Christmas at TSN!

I wasn't there for Christmas, but my orders are dated December 26, 1961; my Passport is dated December 26, 1961, and my South Vietnam entry stamp is dated December 29, 1961, so that is pretty close.



From "the staff and management" of TSNA:

Please have a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

REUNION 2012

Thank you, thank you and thank you from the bottom of my heart for the hundreds of gifts y'all so wonderfully gave me in Dayton, Ohio at the TSNA family reunion last month. My brother, Charles Penley, and I arrived with a very good friend, Charles Gray, on Tuesday. There were others already on ground to begin the business of preparing and setting up our temporary house until the next Sunday. Thanks to our magnificent board and their wives for planning and executing the Best reunion as of yet. There were other Brothers and Sisters who stepped in and helped to set our house up for the Big celebration of all Vietnam Veterans and their Loved Ones. Each minute of the days of Oct. 9-14, 2012 were put in motion for the recognition and homage of each Vietnam Veteran who served in Nam. Y'all stood so proudly and even though the wind was swift and so cold, the "bubble of Love" felt by all of us made us warm! You stood for those who never made it home, for those who came home, for those who were mentally and physically wounded and for those POWs and MIAs. Y'all made yourselves and us so very honored and proud!

Thank you, Brothers and Sisters, for all the hugs and kisses, jokes, foods, serious conversations, laughs, tears, and a man named Zeke and his awesome dog, Tyr, and for the feeling of family of the TSNA that each of you have contributed on your part to create the strong and growing association that she has become. This Memorial Dedication was created by you, paid for by you and shall forever stand as The Memorial Monument to you and all Vietnam Veterans. Pat yourselves on the back and feel the Honor and Love that you gave so freely to others.

We hope to see y'all in Chattanooga, TN in 2013 and if at all possible, please, plan to attend. Each TSNA family reunion is in itself a memorial to all Vietnam Vets and each of you has

earned the recognition, honor and homage that is waiting at every reunion just for you.

Welcome Home! Thank You!! You did Good!!!

Peace and love to all,

Janice Jones



OBITUARY NOTES:

Thanks to Bob Laymon for keeping us in touch with the passing of two military "notables":

MAJOR GENERAL FREDERICK C. "BOOTS" BLESSE.

General Blesse passed away November 1.

... General Blesse again volunteered for combat duty and in April 1967 was assigned as director of operations for the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing at Da Nang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. During this one-year tour of duty, he flew 108 combat missions over North Vietnam and another 46 in Laos and South Vietnam. He was decorated for valor for helping unload the bombs from a burning F-4 aircraft during a rocket attack.

In May 1968 he again was assigned to Nellis Air Force Base, this time as director of operations of the U.S. Air Force's first F-111 wing, the 474th Tactical Fighter Wing, and in June 1969 became commander. In July 1970 General Blesse became commander of the 831st Air Division at George Air Force Base, Calif., and then was selected for another tour of duty in the Republic of Vietnam as assistant director of operations for Seventh Air Force, Tan Son Nhut Airfield.

COLONEL RALPH S. PARR, JR.

Colonel Parr passed away December 7.

... In 1963, he helped bring the F-4C into the USAF inventory and was one of its first instructor pilots. He served as an F-4 squadron commander and then flew the aircraft on two combat tours in Southeast Asia. He earned the Air Force Cross while serving as Deputy Commander for Operations of the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing. During the siege of Khe Sanh, despite extremely poor weather and intense enemy fire, he attacked and destroyed two North Vietnamese mortar and six gun positions. On his second SEA tour, he returned to the same wing as Deputy Commander and then Commander.



BELOW: Carol Bessette and Joe Kricho in the Veteran's Day presentation parade.



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