

# Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



"All Included - None Excluded"

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January, 2002

## TET '68!

### TWO ACCOUNTS

by

*Frank Ybarbo*

*Perimeter Road, January 31, 1968, Tan Son Nhut Air Base*

*... with a touching story from David Koopman, commentary from Thomas Joyce and a photographic essay by Lance Coar. . . and of course wise words from our Chaplain.*



## TET '68 - How Friendly is Friendly Fire?

By TSNA Member Frank Ybarbo, Mesquite, Texas

With vividness, I recall the events of this incident during the night of the 1968 Tet attack on Tan Son Nhut. If you have read Keith Nolan's book, *Battle for Saigon*, you read a brief summary of this incident in the battle for Tan Son Nhut section. Although one could refer to this incident as "friendly fire," it was not so friendly to those of us on the receiving end. As many of you know, being under fire is somewhat terrifying regardless of the origin. The following is an accounting of this event as it occurred. Perhaps some of you will recall this incident.

\* \* \*

### Uneventful - at first . . .

It was January 30, 1968. Based on intelligence and an earlier alert, the 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron, Charlie Flight (night shift) was posted early by 1900. I was assigned and posted to the Delta Sector, Vietnamese C-47 area ditch. This area was just to the left when entering the flight line from the Security Police Central Security Control (CSC). The C-47 area was directly west, immediately across the taxiway from the F4 Phantom revetments. The C-47 area floor was PSP and very hard on your feet. The ditch I was patrolling ran west from the C-47 area through the Vietnamese Air Force area all the way to the west end perimeter - and it was very scary at night. With me in the C-47 area were Security Policemen A2C Sokol, A2C Brandenburg, A2C Weidner, and another A2C we only knew as Terry. Terry would be seriously wounded during this ordeal.

As many know, the earlier hours of the night were rather uneventful.

At approximately 0230 (January 31, 1968), the NCO Security Alert Team (SAT) jeep containing Staff Sergeant Tutson and one other staff drove up to my post, stopped and without further ado, handed me two M-26 grenades and four additional M-16 magazines and told me to look alert because bases from north to south were already under attack. Oh yeah, they also told me to lock and load and promptly drove away.

A short time later, as I looked to the east, I saw a huge red fireball rise up in the distant night sky. Obviously reality began to set in so I gathered with Sokol, Brandenburg, Terry and Weidner to get some mental support, and the scoop on what was going on. I did not have a radio, but one of the other guys had one and reported that the Bien Hoa bomb dump had just been hit.

### Things get more interesting . . .

Wow, this was some interesting stuff! Well, when it rains, it pours. Around 0330,

radio transmissions from the west end perimeter blared something about mortars hitting in the west near 051 gate, and unidentified personnel running toward the perimeter fence. I could hear Airman Tucker in Tango 4 (west end tower) frantically reporting off base mortar positions. Suddenly, a Razorback gun ship appeared directly above us belching rockets and minigun fire toward the west end. I still remember the M-60 belt casings hitting my helmet.

As I recall, all five of us were huddled in the middle of the C-47 area. We received a radio transmission reporting that unknown personnel had been spotted under the aircraft in the west end of the C-47 area. Simultaneously,

was on the point. We moved west down the dark ramp for about one hundred meters, checking under the airplanes and the adjacent parallel ditch. We saw no movement, nor any evidence of enemy presence. Except for the commotion on the west end perimeter, the C-47 area was dark, quiet - and hauntingly still. We all agreed that the area was secure. Subsequently, we relaxed and started walking back in fire team formation to where we had started.

### And then . . . !

As we approached the middle of the C-47 area, Brandenburg was on my left and Terry was about ten meters to my right flank. For reasons unknown to us at the time, a flare went up over our heads and was drifting down just to the west behind us. As I turned to look up at the descending flare - all hell broke loose!

There was a sudden burst of automatic weapon fire, and in a millisecond, before I could turn to the direction of the fire, I saw and felt the heat of tracer rounds as they zipped by my face, simultaneously hitting the sleeves of my fatigues and glancing off my helmet!

Then it dawned on me - we had been ambushed! Rounds were ricocheting and impacting all over the place as we all went for the dirt, or in this case the PSP! Although this all happened very quickly, everything appeared to be in slow motion while numerous thoughts raced through my mind before I could react.

Except for Airman Terry, all of us laid helpless and still on the PSP with our M-16s focused on the area of the firing. I could feel stinging on the bridge of my nose. My mouth was dry as a bone and I could smell gun power in the air. It was eerie and shocking. I could hear Terry screaming out with pain, pleading for someone to please help him. In the hail of gunfire he had been hit - and hit bad. With the light of another flare, I could see his motionless body about twenty meters away, lying on his back on the PSP. We were frantic and in shock and there was nothing I could do personally to help him

or to improve our situation. To add to our horror, I could see troops moving towards us from the area of the firing. At this point the flare light went out and I made a move to crawl out to Terry - but Sokol grabbed my shirt and told me I would not have a chance.

Fighting panic, we frantically tried to get through on the radio to CSC as the flare-lit troop silhouettes edged closer and closer to our (Continued, See *Friendly Fire*, Page 3)



Watchtower, TSN (Tango)

we all turned our heads and looked to the west end of the area. Man, it was dark as (bleep!) down there. Being the gung ho (we didn't know any better ... yet) troops of the 377<sup>th</sup>, we briefly debated the issue and decided to go check out the report. As trained, four of us formed the standard four man triangular fire team and proceeded cautiously - locked and loaded, safeties off - towards the area where the personnel were spotted. Not to complain, but I



position. Due to the intensity of the radio transmissions from the west end battle position, it was impossible to get through to CSC. All we could do was lie there and prepare to defend ourselves as we trained our M-16s on the approaching troop movement.

But - as the troops moved in our direction they appeared too big to be Vietnamese. We heard sounds of English. We heard more English demanding us to stay put if we were Americans.

With great relief, to us, we finally recognized that it was a thirteen man Quick Reaction Team (QRT) coming to our rescue. We did not know that it was this same Delta QRT that had rained the hail of bullets on us. They did not know, as they approached, that we had our weapons trained on them with a high degree of frantic intensity. Only the Lord knows why we did not pull those triggers.

Airman Terry was seriously wounded. Airman Brandenburg had a gash under his eye. My nose was slightly cut and either Airman Sokol or Weidner had a piece of his finger sliced off. Given the intensity of the fire from the QRT, it was unbelievable that we survived and to survive with only scratches, except for Terry, was beyond our imaginations.

The QRT assisted Terry, and he was eventually removed from the area in a jeep. Like Sergeant Coggins, who survived the 0-51 bunker - Terry was never heard from again.

At the time of the incident we did not know whether the Delta QRT was firing at us or someone behind us. We suspected that the QRT responded to the same radio report to which we responded regarding personnel spotted under the aircraft in the C-47 area. Perhaps there were enemy troops in our area.

The following morning a security policeman across the taxiway on the north revetments asked me why we returned fire on the QRT. I told him that we didn't, but he said somebody did because there were tracers going both ways. According to policy, security policemen did not load tracers into their clips.

So the question remains on whether or not, there were enemy forces about to attack us in the C-47 area but backed off when the QRT opened fire.

The following night I did see movement in and around the ditch and the adjacent Navy hootch, and there was sporadic sniper fire directed at us in the area.

Airman Terry was whisked away and we never learned of his fate. The rest of us were very fortunate to have survived this incident virtually unscathed. Today, I continue to have thoughts of that night and the sight and the pleading of Airman Terry as he lay wounded on the PSP. But for now, it's all a far away memory which now sits forever active - just beyond the realm of my first daily thought.

## What Was It All For?

by

Member David Koopman

Little Canada, Minnesota

I was assigned with the U.S. Air Force to Tan Son Nhut and the 460<sup>th</sup> Field Maintenance Squadron as a Jet Engine Mechanic from September 1967 to September 1968.

When I arrived in Viet Nam it was with a strong desire to help the Vietnamese people defend themselves against communist aggression. The story I'm about to tell is almost insignificant in the injustices of war, but it has bothered me for over thirty years now - and, I'll never forget it.

I lived in hootch number 1245, which was located next to the perimeter fence in the 1200 area of Tan Son Nhut. It was southwest of the main gate and across from the old French cemetery on the road to Cholon. The perimeter road and two fences were all that separated my hootch from my Vietnamese neighbors.

Opposite my hootch, on the other side of the perimeter road, stood a couple of conex containers separated by a space covered with plywood for a roof. The conex was used by a young Vietnamese girl as a stand from which to sell Cokes. I'm sure she was not authorized to be on the perimeter road, but no one in authority ever told her to leave.

During my tour in Viet Nam, one of my duties was Charge of Quarters for the top floor of hootch number 1245. One day, shortly after the Tet Offensive began, someone ran up to me and said, "Come quick, or there is going to be a murder."

I rapidly followed him to the south side of the hootch where a group had gathered around an angry drunken airman with a knife who was threatening to kill the little Vietnamese Coke girl. I asked the airman why he wanted to kill her. He said she was V.C. He had just received a letter telling him that the V.C. had killed his best friend - so he was going to kill her to get even. Some one in the group told me that after he had received the letter, he drank and brooded the whole day. Now he had come down to the fence and lured the little Vietnamese girl over with an offer to buy a Coke - and then he grabbed her.

I weighed 150 pounds and had no combat training. He looked like he weighed about 225 pounds and he had a knife. Glancing around I didn't see anyone who looked willing to help me. So, to distract the airman I asked him about the friend who had died. What we talked about I don't remember, but I wanted to keep his mind off of killing the little girl.

Finally, I said to him, "If you kill that little girl, even if she is V.C., you will either be executed or go to prison for the rest of your life. Don't let the V.C. win by killing her. Let's turn her in to the Security Police and let them dispose of her. In that way, you can win."



It must have touched some spark of reason in him, because he agreed, but insisted that he had to tie her up, and wouldn't let me take her unless he came along. After he tied her hands behind her back, I loosened them a little and told him I was making sure the ropes were tight.

Someone with a jeep offered to drive us over to the main gate where we could turn her over to the security police guards. When we arrived at the main gate, the driver of the jeep took the drunken airman and his hostage over to the security police while I explained to another policeman, out of earshot of the airman, what had happened. The police took the little Vietnamese girl, and we went back to our hootch to let the drunk sleep it off.

The next day, after my shift, I was walking back to my hootch when I noticed the little Vietnamese girl was back selling Cokes from her stand. She saw me coming and picked up some rocks and threw them at me.

I thought to myself, so much for good intentions. Here is another V.C. in the making. She, of course, had no idea that I had kept her from being killed - I was just one of her tormentors.

Good men fought, bled, and died in that war. Looking back on Viet Nam, so long ago, sometimes it makes me wonder.

What was it all for?

## Project 2002!

Member Bill Grayson, Bowie, Maryland, has proposed a wonderful "Project 2002" for the Tan Son Nhut Association. Even volunteering to be the project leader, Bill says, "Some of the articles in the most recent *Revetments* are excellent for their uniqueness and interesting subject matter."

"I would like to republish selected archived *Revetments* articles in book form. At the same time, I would solicit additional writings from members with the objective that they are for publication in *Revetments* and the book, which would be targeted for publication in 2003. A photo gallery, with pictures supplied by TSNA members would be an important part of this project."

We deeply appreciate and fully support Bill Grayson in this project. In fact, this is the core reason for the Association's being. We are the ones who must preserve our history and accomplishments. What do you have to say?







"All Included - None Excluded"

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### Thoughts of Our Sky Pilot

By  
Chaplain James Warrington

### Echos of Christmastide 2001

That Friday afternoon, 1655 hours local time, the phone rings. Just after the second ring I pick up the receiver saying, "Good afternoon." Silence. Waiting a bit I then say, "Hello?" A young female voice asks, "Is this Chaplain Warrington?" Replying in the affirmative, she asks me, "Do you marry people?" I answered that I sometimes do that, but I generally limit such duties to military personnel at local military installations. Normally weddings are the privilege of priests in the local parishes.

With a bit of questioning I learn that the bride is currently on active duty with the Air Force, stationed at Tinker Air Force Base near Oklahoma City, and the groom is also on active duty in the U.S. Army at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Neither of these two had been married before. It turned out the wedding was already scheduled for one

week after the following Monday at the bride's parents' house located nearby in Falls Church, Virginia. As I started to explain that the couple would need to get a Virginia marriage license, the woman explain, "We don't need that, we are already married!"

At first this sounded like a Romeo and Juliet set-up. Then I recalled that while stationed in Germany, the laws of that country required a civil marriage ceremony, after which the churches were allowed to have their own service. So arrangements were made so that I might counsel this couple thrice concerning the Christian view of the marriage covenant, difficulties of being married yet living apart, and notification of squadron/company commanders so that military records could be revised. But my problems were: What marriage service ceremony should be used and what documentation could be given to this couple?

After looking through the options for the celebration and blessing of a marriage; I formed up an adaptation that could be appropriate for this particular situation away from a chapel. Then I started telephoning various religious supply stores in the immediate area. They only had regular marriage certificates. Then I telephoned a Methodist store which had a knowledgeable sales clerk who listened to my unusual situation and need. "We have a certificate for the renewal of marriage vows, would that do?" she asked.

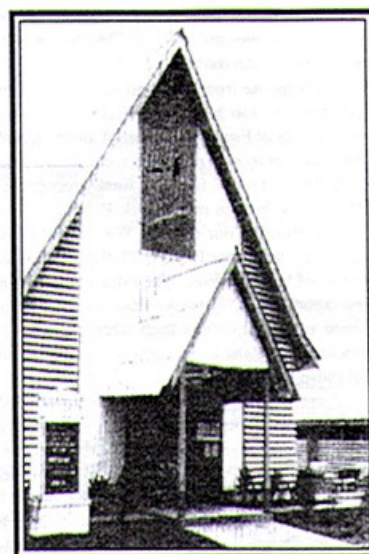
"What does it say? Read it to me," I asked.

She did. The words could apply to this instance. "How many do you have?" I asked.

She replied, "Just one."

"Set it aside for me right now. I shall be at your store within the hour." So a certificate was obtained.

A supplemental blessing of a civil marriage was held in the rear garden area of the bride's family home. The groom's family had flown in from Oklahoma City for the festivity. The weather cooperated beautifully. Both families, including younger children, had elaborate refreshments to share as well as gifts. The families appeared to be pleased with the efforts of this old retired chaplain.



Main Chapel, Tan Son Nhut Air Base  
Courtesy of Mark Reveaux

*All's Well that Ends Well or perhaps  
Much Ado About Nothing.*

\*\*\*  
Last year I wrote about the National Conference of Viet Nam Veteran Ministers. This year their annual conference was held at the Dominican Siena Center located just north of Racine, Wisconsin by the beautiful shore of Lake Michigan. The entire five day program was a powerful learning experience among comrades.

The trip to and from this annual conference was made aboard the Amtrak Capitol Limited and their Hiawatha Service. Do I like trains? I found the railroad track system in and around Chicago fascinating with multitudes of switches and cross overs. While in Chicago I found my visit to the National Viet Nam Veterans "Art" Museum, located at 1801 South Indiana Avenue a very moving and rewarding experience. For mature adults this museum is a must see.

*May the Lord bless you  
and keep you all!*

*Faith fully,  
James Warrington*





Member Frank Ybarbo  
Member Norman Whitlow  
in the background

## TET '68 - Most Horrific Night of My Life!

by

Member Frank Ybarbo  
Mesquite, Texas

It was February 17, 1968. As usual, Charlie Flight of the 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron at Tan Son Nhut airbase was posted around 1900 hours. It was just about dark by the time we were posted. This night, which was the most horrific and trying night of my life, I was posted on the east entrance of the F-4 Phantom revetment area. The F-4 area was just about in the middle of the flight line. The east entrance faced the terminal. Like the nights before, we had intelligence reports of potential mortar and rocket attacks.

A2C Knudson was also on the east entrance this night. He was on my left on the north opening of the F-4 area next to the taxiway. At each end of the opening there was a small two-layer, one-man sandbag bunker. These were probably the smallest bunkers around, measuring about three and one-half feet high, barely large enough to lie in. Why they were so small, I will never know.

The night and the F-4 area was relatively quiet except for the sights and sounds of a few power generators and crew members milling about working on aircraft. Around 2300 hours, a large JP-4 fuel truck drove up and backed in next to the F-4 revetments right next to Knudson's post. The cab of the truck was facing the terminal (east). I could make out that the driver was sitting in the vehicle.

### Visitors . . . ?

Around 0100 or so (now February 18<sup>th</sup>) I was standing about twenty meters from my small bunker facing to the west into the revetments. By now, the flight line was relatively quiet except for one crew working in one of the revetments using a large night light. It was quiet enough for me to suddenly hear an unusual sound coming from behind me. My heart began to pound as I considered that I let enemy forces sneak up on my post. Thoughts raced through my

mind. What do I do now??!

I knew I had to do something and do it quick or I was dead. I could envision sappers bursting past me into the F-4 area and blowing up multi-million dollar airplanes and killing those maintenance guys. How would I answer to that? How would I explain letting this happen?

With my back to the potential enemy and my M-16 slung on my right shoulder I was out of position to make any effective response. I knew I had to do something. I also thought, if this were enemy forces they would surely have shot me by now. All these thoughts occurred in about five seconds.

So, in one continuous movement, I whirled around, quick drawing my M-16 to a firing position ready to engage the enemy. What I saw shocked me. I froze!

### IT WAS A VERY LARGE RAT!

It was sitting on its haunches, looking at me and making something of a growling sound. In my frenzied form of panic I pointed my M-16 at it and stomped my foot. Evidently, this upset the rat and he ran directly at me. I jumped into the air and he ran under me and took refuge in my bunker. Now I was screwed.

### And evil this way comes . . .

With the rat scare over, I began to relax a little. It must have been around 0130 and suddenly I realized that the flight line had become dark, very quiet and an eerie stillness hung in the air.

Whoa!!! I had felt this same thing before. It was like just before a Texas tornado when the air becomes deathly still and quiet with not so much as a breeze. It was strange and I felt something was about to occur. A sense of fear rose within me. I tried to ward this off as paranoia but my senses got the best of me. Sweat beads appeared on my face and my throat became dry. Something made me very scared!

For some reason I turned and faced the east perimeter looking towards the C-130 area which was located just behind the control tower, about 600 meters from my location. I was about twenty meters from my bunker. I stood there for a while

looking east. Suddenly - without any warning - I saw a huge explosion in the C-130 area! Vividly, I recall the blast and the wide spray of red, hot shrapnel - IT WAS HUGE!!! Oh, my gosh, it was such a shock I didn't even hear the sound of the explosion. Almost simultaneously another explosion occurred and then another and another all coming directly toward me with terrifying speed. In a split second I turned and dashed the twenty meters to my bunker, never taking my eyes off the incoming rounds. In the last instant, knowing I would not get into the bunker before the rockets were on top me, I dived for my bunker with all I had in me. Comically, as I was in the air, I remembered that the rat was in there. But, at this point, I no longer cared. It is odd how circumstances will modify your priorities.

Just as I hit the floor of my bunker the rounds impacted all around me. Blam! Blam! I was pitched a foot into the air from a prone position. Again I was pitched and again and again with multiple impacts within meters of me.

Suddenly, I heard and felt the most powerful impact I have ever experienced. Over the top of my bunker I saw a huge fireball tower into the night sky. As I peered over the rim of my bunker, I saw that the JP-4 fuel truck had taken a direct hit. I felt the powerful concussion and intense heat of the explosion. My ears were ringing and deafened with the blasts. Blam! Blam! More rounds impacted. I could hear screaming coming from the F-4 revetments. My body was immobilized with fear. My legs were weak and my whole body was trembling. Blam! Blam! Debris was falling on top of me. Huge chunks of shrapnel were slamming into the metal revetment walls just above my head. There was something hot burning my hand. I buried my head into my helmet and felt I was literally crawling into my flak jacket for safety. But there was no safety to be found.

I could smell burning fuel and other acrid smells. I could still hear distant

(Continued, See Night, Page 6)



(Night Continued from Page 5)

impacts. For a second I thought it was over - and then - blam! blam! - more impacts all around me. This seemed to have gone on for hours. In reality, as I recall, we received approximately 110 rounds of 122 mm. rockets in about a ten minute period.

**Aftermath . . .**

Suddenly, all stopped in an eerie silence. Then, came the sounds of sirens, people screaming and the smell of fires. Knudson came running over to my bunker and jumped in. Everyone was alert for enemy attack - but none came. I finally brought myself to a standing position on shaky, trembling legs. I saw the results of the burning fuel truck. I asked Knudson about the driver who was sitting in the truck. He said there was no one there or there was nothing left of him. The truck, like the F-4s which were hit, looked like a pile of useless rubble, and very little rubble at that. It was difficult to believe that these wasted hunks of rubble were moments before highly technical equipment. The driver of the truck was nowhere to be found.

I walked out to where I had been standing when the attack started. There was a huge hole in the concrete just a few feet from where I had originally stood. I remember seeing fires everywhere and what appeared to be a big fire in the 800 maintenance area just off the southeast end of the flight line. Later, I recall that there were multiple casualties in the 800 area.

That night was the most helpless night of my life. The helpless fear in a rocket attack is of the worst kind. I'm sure many of you who have experienced rocket attacks CLOSE UP know what I'm talking about. All one could do was simply lie there waiting for death to occur. It was unlike the experience of being shot at. You could neither fight nor defend yourself. Taking cover was of little comfort. The rockets were going to hit where they were going to hit and there was nothing you could do about it.

Just ask that fuel truck driver - who, by the way, did survive the impact. I saw him some months later on the flight line just before another rocket attack which occurred around 0100 hours one night in November 1968. And, of all people, this

## TET '68, TSN & HISTORY

by

Major Thomas Joyce, USAF (Ret.)

(Editor's Note: Major Joyce, currently an ROTC unit commander in London, Kentucky, was seven years old when the Battle for Tan Son Nhut was fought. On active duty he has been a security police squadron commander. He is an avid historian and when he was designing the Base Force Protection Lab at Lackland he used the history and experiences found in the Tet Offensive as his pattern for further base defense programs. The following are a few comments he made in 1998.)

The fact is that thirty-one years ago, the north Vietnamese threw everything they had at Tan Son Nhut Air Base and attempted to

same driver drove up and backed his fuel truck next to my post which was on the very end of the north revetments.

About thirty minutes later, two 122s hit about twenty meters from me and his truck, and again the driver escaped death or injury. Ironically, the driver was sitting in the truck. When I heard the alert, I yell, "ROCKETS! ROCKETS!" He bolted from his truck to a walk-in bunker. As he entered the doorway, the rocket impacted and blast blew him into the bunker shredding his clothes. Finally learning his lesson and heeding my advice, he got in his truck and moved off the flight line.

Before he left, I asked him how he survived the February 18<sup>th</sup> rocket that hit his truck. He said he was sitting in the truck with the door open while reading a book. When the rocket hit the truck, the force blew him out and on to the tarmac knocking him senseless. He said someone found him a few days later as he wandered aimlessly around the flight line with no memory. Later he recovered and was sent back to driver duty.

Amazing, isn't it?

The February 18<sup>th</sup> rocket attack was just one of the many which occurred at Tan Son Nhut during 1968. However, it was by far the most devastating both physically and emotionally. I rotated back to the U.S. on December 12, 1968. I came back home, but I brought the rocket attacks and the emotional wounds back with me.

Sound familiar to anyone?

Revetments, January, 2002

drive the Americans into the sea. It could very well have been Custer's last stand (or Westmoreland), but it wasn't.

It was a spectacular, decisive victory! In an ironic victory where the Air Force was the infantry and the Army was the Air Force, joint-combined forces won a classic battle over the enemy, and I think we should celebrate and memorialize the victory, and study it as a classic battle for decades to come.

When I talked to General Westmoreland about eight months ago, he told me his great regret was not having taken public responsibility over the intelligence surprise that caught him off

guard during Tet. He said he knew the NVA could launch an offensive, but he wasn't worried because he had faith his forces could defeat them - and they did. The fallacy of Tet is that people only remember it for the image of the attack on the United States



Thomas Joyce

Embassy, the police chief shooting a V.C., Khe Sanh and Hue. While each of those events were important in their own right, the key to the NVA battle plan was Tan Son Nhut. Whoever controls airpower over the capitol city controls the city, and less than 1,000 security police stood in the way of seven NVA/VC battalions (augmented by mechanics and pilots) who intended to overrun the base, capture the aircraft, and achieve air superiority over Saigon.

They expected all Vietnamese to rally as they had against the French, Japanese and Chinese in the past.

The story of Tan Son Nhut was never told because the Johnson Administration wanted to downplay the Tet Offensive. By censoring it, Johnson and Westmoreland lost the confidence of the American People because they saw pictures on the television of the U.S. Embassy, and so on and so forth. By downplaying the bad, they lost a golden opportunity to accentuate the good.

Westmoreland was in fact winning the protracted battle against the communists. The mere fact that they changed their (Continued, See Tet, TSN on Page 7.)





**TET '68 – and now  
Member, SMSgt.  
Lance Coar, Penllyn,  
Pennsylvania shows  
us what the other  
guys have been  
talking about ...**



**Revetments, 1968 style  
(Tet, TSN continued from Page 6)**

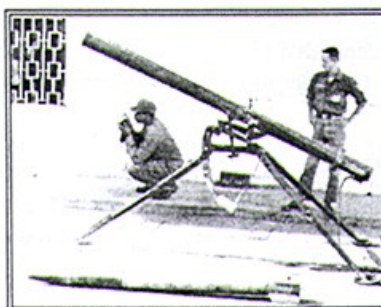
strategy from guerrilla tactics to all-out offensive proved they were desperate.

Westmoreland was right! North Vietnamese Army documents record that they could not sustain their rate of casualties and had to change their strategy.

The strategic mistake was in censoring the Battle of Tan Son Nhut and issuing press releases explaining that it was only a small sapper attack that killed just four airmen. And that mistake was compounded last year (1997) when we censored the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle for the 30<sup>th</sup> time. At what point in history do we want to hear the truth – 40 years – 50 years – perhaps 100 years?

If I could live my life over again and in any period of time, I would be a lieutenant at Tan Son Nhut during Tet. I'm tired of viewing the Viet Veteran as a leper. I'm tired of ignoring the subject. I'm proud of every man and woman who served there. I want to know about the war in all its detail – good or bad, so I can learn from it. Just as I have learned from a life-time study of every military operation Americans have ever been involved in. They all have their good and bad points.

Maybe it was politically correct for the past thirty years to ignore Viet Nam, but I challenge that unwritten rule today – and you can quote me on the subject.



**Russian 122 mm. rocket and launcher in  
front of Headquarters, 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force**



**.. And Ybarbo was standing guard here?**



**The poignant remains of the base chapel,  
shown on Page 4 of this issue.**



**The Tan Son Nhut Control Tower**



**... another revetment incident**

All of the photography on this page is the property of SMSgt. Lance S.

Coar and is from the Lance Coar Collection.

*Revetments* is deeply grateful to Lance for allowing us to publish them.

\* \* \*



*"Pilgrimage of Honor - Reunion of Remembrance"***Final Plans Delayed***The National Cathedral*

Due to circumstances beyond the Association's control, the finalization of the accommodations between the Association and the Holiday Inn, King Street, Alexandria, has been delayed. The delay is based on our request for discounted accommodation rates, which are currently \$135 per day at the Holiday Inn. In view of this, Public Affairs has had to delay

preparing the final program for submission to the membership. Every effort will be made to include the program in the February issue of *Revetments*.

Registration fees (including the Potomac River Cruise and Luncheon, the formal banquet and bus transportation) is \$125 per person. Please prepare check or money order to "Tan Son Nhut Association" and mail to Exec. V.P. John Peele, 6203, 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Riverdale, Maryland 20737. **Registration fees must reach Peele by January 31, 2002.** Response appears to indicate that this is going to be a great reunion. Over fifty members have responded already. We want all of you to be there.

**Contact one of the following now -**

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**Charles Penley**  
TSNA Website  
[www.tsna.org](http://www.tsna.org)



**REUNION 2002  
NEWS**  
April 25, 26, 27, 28

**The Tan Son Nhut Association**  
**Public Affairs Office**  
**Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue**  
**Norfolk, Virginia 23510**



Renewal Date -

