

# Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

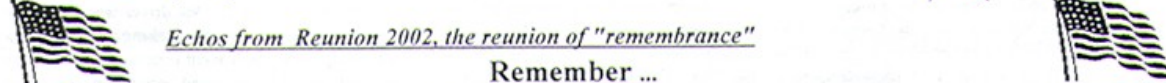
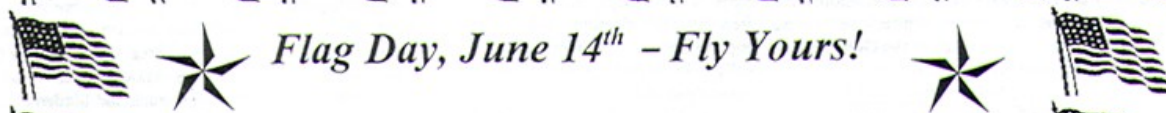


"All Included - None Excluded"

Volume 4, Number 9

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June, 2002



Echos from Reunion 2002, the reunion of "remembrance"

## Remember ...

by TSNA Chaplain Dr. Billy Lowe

"I thank my God every time I remember you." These are the words of the Apostle Paul to the congregation at Philippi. They mean more than a casual greeting or giving the impression of some one "being nice." No, this statement carries with it an intense meaning of affection. Paul had experienced something deeper and stronger with those good folk. It came from the great encouragement he had graciously received from those other believers. His was a special relationship.

My first reunion with the Tan Son Nhut Association was this past April. What an experience! There was a deepness that came through during those four days that I had not expected. I'm referring to the sense of family that surrounded us all. Like nineteen other "first timers," I met with a group of total strangers; at least that's what I thought! In an instant I realized that I was not with strangers at all. I was among brothers. Sure we had been at Tan Son Nhut at different times, and held down different jobs, and had been different in rank, but an uniting bond bound us in a spirit of family. We had served our nation and we had served it well at Tan Son Nhut. I was among my brothers and I had never met them ever before. But I knew who they were by the spirit about them.

As I drove south from Washington, down 95 and then to 85, taking me back to my home in North Carolina, reflections of our reunion led to other personal revelations. I had only personally known one individual who had died in Vietnam. But on Friday, April 26 I discovered some other brothers who had "given all they had" at The Wall. Our wreath for them was like any family that leaves flowers on the graves of those beloveds passed on into glory. To be truthful I now must answer that over fifty thousand of my kin died in Vietnam. A spirit of family was there at The Wall and shall forever remain for me and for so many others.

A day has not gone by that I have not recalled meeting and getting to know so many at the 2002 Reunion. And always, I say a prayer for you and I thank God for the deeper and stronger understanding of life that I gained through out experiences together.





# *Ear on the Vietnam War*

## Securing USAF Tactical Air Communications

By William C. Grayson CSSP, OCP

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**Introductory Note:** One of the costly lessons learned during the Vietnam War led the Air Force to broadly apply automated security to its tactical communications. Today, cryptography is routinely specified for new USAF communications systems. The old Air Force Security Service was instrumental in leading this advance, a critical force multiplier contributing to astounding air supremacy in the Gulf War, the Balkans and over Afghanistan.

In late 1965, I was an Air Force Captain assigned to the National Security Agency at Fort Meade as a Cryptologic Staff Officer. At the time, I was chief of a special Research Section, responsible for term (as differentiated from immediate) intelligence analysis and reporting of a very high priority foreign target. The work was narrowly specialized and I was the only USAF member assigned in the all-civilian branch to which my section was assigned. When my assignment to Detachment 5, 6922 Security Wing of the old USAF Security Service arrived that fall, my civilian NSA managers sought to have my assignment there extended but I was already completing a 4<sup>th</sup> year extension and HQ USAF non-concurred. It took two full days to debrief me from all the special security accesses I held.

In July 1966, I reported to Tan Son Nhut AB as commander of a 40-man detachment, working within the special security compound next to the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force Headquarters building. Like me, all the troops in the detachment had been drawn from foreign intelligence assignments around the world and brought with them to Tan Son Nhut a wealth of detailed but useless information about various foreign air forces. Useless because Det. 5 was a Communications Security (COMSEC) unit with a mission of intercepting and analyzing USAF communications for insecurities. Basically, the "insecurities" we listened for were compromises of classified information which, in a combat environment could get people killed.

During the Vietnam era, the USAF had no specific technical training program for COMSEC analysts and staffed its COMSEC units with intelligence officers and airmen, who both collected and analyzed the intercepted traffic. My own background, at the time, consisted of eight years of USAF service, including an intensive training course in radio traffic analysis, three years in the UK as a flight commander at RAF Chicksands, and the NSA assignment. Among the detachment staff, the

combined knowledge of our own Air Force was sparse. Although the analysts were suddenly assigned to "an English language problem," which should have simplified their task, we struggled with such basics as major USAF command structures and subordinations; aircraft types and variants; USAF tactical weapons, security classification policy, and - most importantly - elementary communications infrastructure and the tactical air command and control process.

Maximizing the complexity of our situation was our lonely uniqueness: we were a detachment of a wing in the Philippines, which had no COMSEC mission, and reported operationally to HQ of the Pacific Security Region in Hawaii. Not only were we basically on our own in a combat zone, our "security violation" reporting mission led vast numbers of USAF people to see us as another "enemy." Not as bad an enemy as the VC/North Vietnamese, but bad enough to be denied important information and support needed for dealing with Air Force COMSEC issues throughout South Vietnam.

Our "trained-for-the-wrong-war" status put us into many difficult situations - some comical and some highly stressful. I recall a team of analysts - having put their intelligence backgrounds behind them and trying to think in a USAF context - looking for a map location, "Phan Song" not realizing they had intercepted a friendly reference to a heavy radar supplied to the North Vietnamese by the USSR and catalogued as "FAN SONG" by NATO. The only part of my job - and a very small part - that I was immediately comfortable with was collecting information on the enemy SIGINT threat to 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force and briefing it to all the tactical units I could reach. (During the year I spent in-country, I briefed movie theaters full of troops at every base in South Vietnam at least once; a total audience of over 5000.) US and South Vietnamese ground units had captured and turned-in many enemy documents containing USAF radio frequencies, call signs and key fragments of intercepted voice traffic. News of the reality of this threat confirmed a listening enemy and was the most effective imperative of the COMSEC detachment's security message.

I will always remember my own most stressful event as a defining moment in my maturation. It occurred less than a month after my arrival in-country, while every aspect of life there was still very much a confusing blur. I took a phone call from the HQ 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force

Command Section, requesting that I come over to see the Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Franklin A. Nichols, right away. The only rationale our Detachment First Sergeant could come up with on such short notice, was that we must have been reported for having "acquired" a refrigerator destined for a neighboring unit. While our detachment analysts didn't know much about the US Air Force, they did know the sound of opportunity knocking and had a refrigerator down off a truck and hidden in one of our hootches while the driver was momentarily in the billeting office asking for the intended recipients. So I went over to General Nichols' office ready to plead ignorance and promise immediate cooperation in returning the misdirected refrigerator. But that's not what he wanted to talk about.

The general's aide took me in and I introduced myself. The Chief of Staff cut right to the chase. It seemed that the Operations Plan for 7<sup>th</sup> AF's newly organized Tactical Ops Control Center (TOCC) had been reviewed at Headquarters of the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) and a reviewer found a lack of meaningful COMSEC detail in Annex K, the Communications Annex. The comments that had come back to 7<sup>th</sup> AF from MACV suggested that an implementable plan was needed to prevent the compromise of classified target and strike planning information being communicated among the TOCC, fighter wing operations, airborne Forward Air Controllers and aircrews aloft. General Nichols was hoping I could help. Thinking fast on my feet, I supposed that the detachment's senior NCOs would know what to do and so told the general I could handle it. "Good," he said. "Why don't you sit over there and write it up?" he suggested, gesturing to a table and chair in a corner of his office. He immediately returned his attention to a pile of papers in front of him, signaling clearly that he and I were through talking.

Seated at the corner table, I remember the grip of panic as I tried to think of a way to explain - in terms the general would understand - that all my USAF experience was in other disciplines and that I knew very little of USAF COMSEC. Fortunately, I quickly recognized that as a path leading to a steep cliff and my mind cleared. Apparently, the general knew even less about the subject than I did and, I told myself, I really did know something I could use.

(See Ear, continued on Page 3)



Borrowing from earlier experience with someone else's tactical air force, I decided in real time that 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force needed to encode radio communications containing pre-strike details, such as target coordinates and time-over-target, with a manual code, if the time of transmission was earlier than an hour before time-over-target. My choice of an hour was completely arbitrary and based on nothing I knew to support it.

I wrote out the whole concept in three paragraphs with a #2 pencil on yellow paper. After reading it through a couple of times, it made sense to me so I walked it over to General Nichols' desk. He looked up and I handed him the draft saying something like, "General, here's what I think we need to do." The general looked at the paper, skimmed my very best penmanship in just a few seconds, and thanked me without asking any questions. I was as anxious to be out of his office as he obviously was to be back to whatever he was working on so I saluted and left. Walking back to our secure compound, I realized I had no carbon copy (remember carbon paper?) or photocopy and had no idea where my yellow paper was headed. (Later that day, when I called the general's aide, I was advised the draft had already been typed and would go down to MACV in downtown Saigon in the next pouch.)

But before I made that phone call, I totally horrified the detachment's senior NCOs by what I had done. However, feeling operationally confident for the first time since setting foot in Vietnam, I called my Ops boss in Hawaii. Having had little more experience with USAF operations than I did, he really didn't understand what I was talking about but suggested authoritatively that I should have first called for back-up. He said I would receive a message ASAP with detailed instructions. My next call was to my principal customer, the COMSEC Officer of the 1964<sup>th</sup> Communications Group, which provided 7<sup>th</sup> AF's communications support. The COMSEC Officer, a first lieutenant with about two years experience in teletype maintenance, also didn't know what I was talking about and seemed unfazed.

Several things clicked into place quickly in the next few days. My expected message from Hawaii arrived, dryly specifying the manual code appropriate for 7<sup>th</sup> AF's use and advised how it should be acquired. Next I had a very friendly phone call from the MACV COMSEC Officer in Saigon, who spoke to me as though he and I were in the same club. It was he who had rejected the TOCC's original draft. My handwritten draft had been typed, sent downtown, and retyped as three paragraphs of the Operations Plan, Annex K. When I later saw a copy of the signed-off plan, it was my first look at it in its intended context. No one had changed a word of my original draft except for adding the designator of the prescribed manual code.

With a head now two hat sizes bigger than before my encounter with the Chief of Staff, I went to see the TOCC Director and discussed the

practical application of the "code" provisions of Annex K. We were in agreement that all pre-strike radio communications that disclosed both target location and time-over-target would be encoded if the transmission was to be made earlier than 60 minutes before bombs on target. We further agreed that there were flying safety implications of tactical aircrews trying to deal with the mechanics of decoding in the cockpit so TOCC controllers would wait till the planned strike was 59 minutes away before making air-to-ground transmissions. Pre-strike transmission to distant ground controllers at the various deployed fighter wings, however, were to be encoded, if they met the early tasking criteria.

Distribution of the codebooks to the field took almost a month and were naturally met with stiff resistance by assigned users. We monitored numerous phone calls between the TOCC and fighter wing operations in which our COMSEC detachment was confirmed as "an enemy." We also heard the TOCC stand its ground, however, and since the pre-strike orders came from Headquarters, the fighter wings had no option but to comply. The brief training period was scary with our intercepted communications revealing significant levels of confusion, error and frustration. On the scheduled code D-Day, however, the secure targeting communications scheme went operational.

It was immediately obvious from our communications intercepts that the TOCC controllers were delaying release of all the pre-strike messages till minus 59 minutes. In the first week, not a single code message was heard. As the delaying tactic became clearly recognized as sabotage, deep disappointment set in as we had gotten Saigon, Hawaii and Washington excited by the coming proposed great leap in tactical COMSEC. In the second week, however, we had an opportune break: we intercepted a pre-strike message released at minus 70 minutes; somebody in the TOCC had screwed-up. We wrote that one up as a Transmission Security Analysis Report and sent it to a long list of addressees at IMMEDIATE precedence.

I personally walked the TSAR over to the Director of the TOCC and we had an unhappy discussion in which I revealed my disappointment at listening to his controllers circumvent the process. I asked the director if it might not be a good idea to bring the subject up with the Chief of Staff but he didn't think that was at all a good idea and said he'd redirect the controllers, making sure they knew the Security Service was listening. Over the next few days, we monitored a good effort among various controllers. Day by day, the number of encoded messages rose and increases in proficiency were obvious. There were still some confusion and some errors, including a pretty bad one that was blamed (although not confirmed) for a friendly fire incident that I feel guilty about to this day. But between Thanksgiving and Christmas 1966, a captured hand-written document came in from a destroyed enemy position that listed the

frequency and callsigns of a Da Nang fighter squadron, followed by codegroups carefully transcribed by an enemy intercept operator in the phonetic alphabet he had heard.

By the early part of 1967, the use of the code was routine. Very likely, controllers newly arrived in-country were told during first-day orientation that using the code was part of the job and so presented less resistance. Nevertheless, we still issued occasional TSARs. The high point of my Vietnam tour came in February, just days before my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. A target and bombs on target time were revealed in a plaintext message almost two hours in advance. The TOCC's response to our TSAR noted that the tasked squadron at Phan Rang AB had already rejected the mission because of the compromise. From then forward, the TOCC self-policed itself by either canceling or rescheduling prematurely disclosed strikes.

Detachment 5, 6922<sup>nd</sup> Security Wing won an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for 1967



## Reunion Honor Roll

The following members proudly attended Reunion 2002. We thank Member Bill Coup for compiling this roster. Next year we hope the list covers the whole page. Plan now!

Carol and John Bessette - Frank Bracken - Jenny and Vic Brown - Thomas Campbell - Mary and William Carlson - Bill Coup - Lee Curry - Max Day - Betty Evans - James Fahr, Jr. - Mark Fleisher - Keith Feuerhaken - Dean Gard - Joseph Gatto - Nancy and William Grayson - Denise Hill - Johnnie Jernigan - Albert Keeler - Billy Lowe - Rick Matern - Marilyn and Ken Moll - Robert Need - Jerry Norville - Michelle and John Peele - Patricia Relyea - Irma and Robbie Robertson - Wayne Salisbury - Regina and Dennis Shay - Jack Streubing - James Smith - Thomas Tessier - James Warrington - Benjamin White



and  
Guest Speaker Major General  
Edward F. Grillo, Jr.





"All Included - None Excluded"

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President, John Peele  
Vice President/Comptroller Ben White  
Vice President/Secretary John Evans  
Chaplain James M. Warrington  
Vice President/ Exec.Dir Robert Need  
Communications Charles Penley  
Parliamentarian Jerry Norville

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#### Membership Information

Annual Membership \$20.00

Five Year Membership \$80.00

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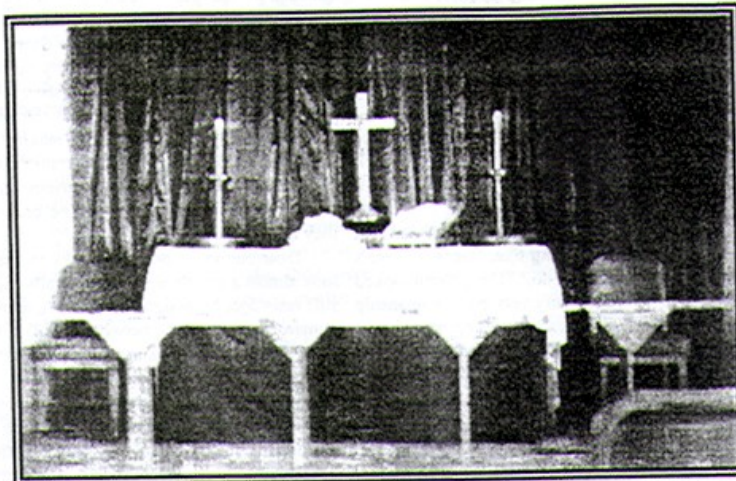
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#### Another Tan Son Nhut Chapel

### 69<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion Chapel Camp Gaynor, TSN



Member Terry Love (Lakeville, Minnesota) was there in 1966. Member Dave Koopman (Little Canada, Minnesota) was there in 1968. They both must have been touched by several recent items in *Revetments* touching on chapels at Tan Son Nhut. Terry



The altar, 69<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion Chapel, Camp Gaynor, Tan Son Nhut 1968

sent us a chapel bulletin from Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1966. David sent us pictures he took in 1968.

We are always deeply grateful for the warm interest shown by members like these two. Chaplain Warrington didn't send us any message this month so we will quote from the back page of Terry's 1966 bulletin.

#### Meditation on the Lord's Prayer

By Walter R. Bowie

#### Our Father, Who Art In Heaven.

Help me to believe this day that there is a power to lift me up which is stronger than all the things that hold me down.

#### Hallowed Be Thy Name.

Help me to be sensitive to what is beautiful, and responsible to what is good, so that day by day I may grow more sure of the holiness of life in which I want to trust.

#### Thy Kingdom Come.

Help me to be quick to see, and ready to encourage, whatever brings the better meaning of God into that which otherwise might be the common round of the uninspired day.

#### Thy Will Be Done, On Earth, As It Is In Heaven.

Help me to believe that the ideals of the spirit are not a far-off dream, but a power to command loyalty and direct my life here on our real earth.

#### Give Us This Day our Daily Bread.

Open the way for me to earn an honest living without anxiety; but let me never forget the needs of others, and make me want only that benefit for myself which will also be their gain.

And Forgive Us Our Trespasses, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us, Make me patient and sympathetic with the shortcomings of others, especially of those I love; and keep me sternly watchful only of my own. Keep my eyes lifted to the highest, so that I may be forgiving, because I need to be forgiven.

#### And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil

Let me not go carelessly this day within the reach of any evil I cannot resist, but if in the path of duty I must go where temptation is, give me strength of spirit to meet it without fear.

For Thine Is The Kingdom, And The Power, And The Glory For Ever And Ever. Amen.



Cover of the Chapel Bulletin, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1966



# Reasons for Revetments

**Editor's Note:** Some members probably see *Revetments* as a nuisance. But it, and Charles Penley's website are not only keeping the Association alive, but are providing for its steady growth. The following are just a few reasons why *Revetments* is vital to the memory of those who served at Tan Son Nhut.

**From the wife of deceased member, Gerald R. Clark** - What a pleasant surprise to open

*Revetments* (April 2002) today (April 3) and see a very familiar picture on the cover, and then to see my husband's name at the bottom has made my day! Please keep us on your mailing list. Gerald had kept each issue in a spiral notebook while he was living and I have continued to save them for our children and grandchildren. So please keep our family on the mailing list.

Jerry told a very interesting story off and on for years that I would like to relate. One night while on duty in his POL job at Tan Son Nhut he was driving a loaded fuel truck near the flight line when Viet Cong began firing mortar shells. Knowing he was sitting on a potential fire bomb he quickly headed for a ditch with his rifle in hand. Soon after an officer jumped into the ditch with him. "What are you armed with, airman?" he asked. Jerry told him, "I'm sticking with you," replied the officer as he had only a side arm.

My husband said that he couldn't remember anything after the shelling started until he was down in the ditch, so he asked the officer if he saw a fuel truck rolling down the tarmac. Jerry was amazed when he found out that the truck was parked, the brake on, the lights turned off and the wheels were chocked! He had done all the things he was trained to do automatically in the heat of the moment.

Jerry was a young 24 year old when he returned stateside - he was the "old man" of the guys he shared the barracks with. He was the father of 3 small children (2.3 and 4 years old) when he left. In January at his funeral our older son, who was 3 when his dad left for the 'Nam, spoke of Jerry's nickname being "Spike." "You know," he said, "God showed me that spike is something that holds things together. A spike holds railway ties together. What do you use to hold a tent up? You used a spike. And my Dad held things together."

Jerry loved America. He served his country, his family and his God to the best of his ability. After the service in the funeral home, he was honored with over 70 officers from Smith County Sheriff's Department and several judges in a procession, the end of which could not be seen, that followed the motorcycle patrol to the cemetery where the honor guard waited. Again the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed, the American flag folded and

presented to me and Taps were blown just before the setting of the sun.

I was proud for him, proud for our nation and proud that our children and grandchildren could wish I could be there for the launch of the new know this man who did his "duty to God and 460<sup>th</sup>". You will carry on a tradition of proud country." It is men like him and men like service from World War II through Vietnam to yourselves who make this nation what it is. God this new war again terrorism. How much you bless you and God bless America. Sincerely,

**Mrs. Gerald R. Clark** known to the public. But like the rest of today's **Overton, Texas** Air Force you will do what is required and do it well.

**She was one of the last Americans in Vietnam (From her new membership application)** - Looney I will be thinking of you and the

DoD Civilian, Secretary to the Chief of Army activation of the 460<sup>th</sup> on Monday when the Division, Defense Attaché Office, Saigon, Tan ceremony takes place. I can think of nothing Son Nhut, Republic of South Vietnam, July 1974 that would have made me prouder than to be to April 29, 1975. Arrived Saigon via Air there with you. However that is not possible. Vietnam and left Saigon via USMC helicopter on I was never prouder of any unit I was in evening of 29 April 1975. Still working for DoD during my twenty years, than I was of the 460<sup>th</sup> at Headquarters, Air Force Communications Tactical Reconnaissance Wing in Vietnam. The agency, Scott AFB, Illinois, as a Writer/Editor, perpetuation of the Wing into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is Will be retiring after 36 years of service on June well deserved and appropriate. You can be sure that we veterans of Vietnam are looking on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

While permanently closing/retiring DAO- reactivation with pride. Congratulations, you Saigon records in Honolulu, Hawaii, following now carry on a proud tradition. We are sure evacuation from Saigon, a group of us made a your own accomplishments will add to the proud pact to meet in one year for a reunion. This record of this Wing.

turned into an annual event known as the Saigon May God be with you and the members of Mission Association Reunion. They meet every the new 460<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing. year (usually during Memorial Day weekend) to commemorate the evacuation from Saigon on 19 April 1975.

**MSgt. William A. Coup**  
**Boca Raton, Florida**

I went to a couple of the reunions but as time **Member gives current report on Vietnam** - I went on I found it harder and harder to "re-live" made my second trip to Vietnam this past the memories and found it was easier to just put March. It was another nice trip. I mainly went the memories "on a shelf" for safe keeping. For to attend the wedding of my Vietnamese son, the past couple of years I have been "surfing" the The wedding was very nice and it was held in Internet in search of others who served over there Vien Long Province, about 2 hours from Saigon, and reading about their experiences. Your site is We came back to Saigon for the reception one of the best I have come across and have which was held in a restaurant on the Saigon enjoyed reading the comments from members and River, just a few blocks from TuDo Street (now called Dong Knoi). I do believe this same "guests."

**Linda Billings** restaurant was there in 1968.

**Belleville, Illinois** The Vietnam we knew is beginning to disappear into growth, technology and

**Member has just one word for the recent TSNA reunion** - A one word description - Gate road was hard to recognize. Many GREAT!! Thanks to dedication and effort the buildings are going up along the road and they 2002 TSN Reunion was an outstanding success, even have a Kentucky Fried Chicken in the old It was my first reunion, and certainly won't be my Main Gate area.

last. I regret I missed the past reunions. But Vietnam is changing for the better. The

A few years ago the nation had a "Welcome old hustle and bustle of 1968 is back. Bars, Home Vietnam Veteran." That was good, but for restaurants (good ones) and clubs are beginning me personally, I was welcomed home this past to spring up everywhere. Downtown Saigon at night was bristling with hordes of Hondas and

Attending the reunion was a wonderful people coming out to have a good time (except experience. For the first time since serving in here are no VC). The plaza in front of the Rex Vietnam I felt a real brotherhood and bond with Hotel was exciting.

others of the same era. Best regards. Tan Son Nhut is also receiving some

**Wayne Salisbury** modernization on the west end. The area was **Roanoke, Virginia** (See Reasons, continued on Page 6)

## More Reasons for Revetments

### Continued from Page 5

being cleared for airport improvements. Anyway, just thought you'd like an update on my trip. Hope it gives you some insight.

Frank Ybarbo  
Mesquite, Texas

**Member found reunion to be a "learning experience" - (Editor's Note: Member Carol Bessette is a professional tour guide in Washington and gave us admirable informative dialogue as we rode around the city to various points during Reunion 2002. We are grateful for that, and for her comments from a recent message.)**

I did a tour recently of all the memorials (a group of international military officers and at every memorial. I ran into one of our guys. I think his name is Dennis Shay (Fresno, California) - the one with the medical background. He and his wife were taking a commercial tour of the memorials. He said only then was the layout of the city beginning to make sense, and commented that he wished he had had that kind of a tour earlier.

His comment made me think - if the reunion is held in DC at some time in the future, one thing I would recommend is a half day "Welcome to Washington" tour. We did that with a reunion group last October. It could include a drive by the Capitol, Supreme Court, White House, etc., and visit to the major memorials. I didn't realize until the (TSNA) reunion that a fair number of the folks were not familiar with the city.

I do think the boat ride is a great idea, and from what we discovered with the reunion last fall, the *Nina's Dandy* is the best bargain. There are a couple of others that get very, very expensive. Only other option that you might want to consider is the boat ride down to Mount Vernon. But, if tourism picks up and Mount Vernon is filled with 8th graders, that would not be such a great experience. (Long waits to get into the mansion, etc.)

(It was) a well organized and executed reunion. We have "been there" so we know what it takes - and the stomach-churning that can be involved.

When I said at the banquet that I found the reunion to be a "great learning experience" that was very, very true. It is so easy, at any point in your life, to become isolated from the rest of your "community." This was very true at Tan Son Nhut. I realize that my life revolved around four geographic points: my room, my office, the club, and the BX. I had absolutely no idea what was happening on the base or who was doing what.

I didn't even know what the rest of 7th Air Force headquarters was doing. And since I worked in the special security area, even people in the other parts of 7th Air Force Intelligence didn't know who we were - and they definitely weren't supposed to know what we were doing.

So, the weekend really opened my eyes to a lot that had been going on around me. And especially to those people who were working hard to help keep me alive! Yes, I knew it at the time, but the impact of what they were doing is much greater on me now. I'm glad to get to know them.

Carol Bessette  
Springfield, Virginia

**Member forwards a very good quote -** Came across a CSPAN rebroadcast of a Joe Galloway (co-author of *We Were Soldiers*) appearance at the Naval Academy, where he said, "... maybe we (Vietnam Veterans) weren't the greatest generation. But we were the greatest of our generation!" Amen to that. Regards,

Mark Fleisher  
Horseheads, New York

**New Member directs our attention to medics on Tan Son Nhut -** I recently decided to rejoin the Tan Son Nhut Association. As a sergeant E-4, I was a medic stationed at Tan Son Nhut from September 1966 until March 1968 with the 21st Casualty Staging Flight (CSF) which was attached to the 377th USAF Dispensary.

To update the [tsna.org](http://tsna.org) Memorial website, I would like to add the information of my close friend, Mike Sorter, who was killed in a collision accident on the runway, involving his ambulance and a small military commuter plane which was landing at the time. As I was informed afterward, the ambulance crew was crossing the runway, responding to an explosion at the bomb dump. At least two other people, the driver and another medic in the ambulance perished during this incident. No one in the plane was seriously injured from what I was told.

If anyone recalls the incident on June 19, 1968, I would appreciate hearing from them. There should also be two more names added to the Memorial site, once we establish the identities of the other medics who perished in the ambulance.

At the Memorial site there is a listing of William Lawrence McMahon, died February 19, 1968. The unit is listed as 7th Air Force Headquarters. He was also one of our medics with the 21st CSF, and I would appreciate upgrading his unit list if possible.

Bill's death was especially sad. He literally died within his last few minutes of departing Vietnam. After completing his tour of duty, he was among hundreds of other Servicemen who were waiting to board their plane at the Tan Son Nhut terminal, when a 122 mm. rocket hit the roof of that building. Although many were injured, only Bill died instantly when he received fatal shrapnel wounds to the brain.

Keep up the good work. Sincerely,

Ralph Schneider  
Carpentersville, Illinois

## Project 2002



In several recent issues of *Revetments* we have been trying to get your attention to a project designed by Member William Grayson.

He says, "For several years, TSNA members have been documenting reminiscences of their Vietnam service and/or have submitted personal photos for publication in *Revetments*. All of the *Revetments* articles and photos are interesting and unique vignettes of that faraway war. They merit permanent, formal documentation in a multi-purpose book."

The book would have the following characteristics:

- Incentivize maximized member documentation of their TSN and VN experiences.
- Create a professional, quality archive appropriate for libraries and serious subject matter research.
- Provide a family heirloom for members to help following generations understand their roles in the Vietnam War.

Documentation can cover the following subject areas:

- Living and working at TSN-Saigon-RVN; daily life.
- On the job experiences (note of caution: any discussion of what may have been or still is classified National Security Information needs DoD and/or USAF pre-publication clearance - an author's responsibility to obtain)
- Significant mission successes/events (note above applies)
- Combat action on the base.
- Other subject areas to be suggested by members.
- Photos, maps, articles/clippings, etc.

Contact Bill Grayson for further details on form and time of submissions:

[William.CTR.Grayson@faa.gov](mailto:William.CTR.Grayson@faa.gov)





## The Taylor B. McKinnon Page Days At Tan Son Nhut ... and other propwash

*Dear Tan Son Nhut Members,*

You have served the interest of your country by opposing tyranny at the risk of your own lives – your service resulted in the fall of the Evil Empire (characterized by the former and revered President Ronald Reagan).

The historical time has come when you may again add to the reputation of own beloved country as an example of a place in the world where people can make a difference.

Prior to 1939, commercial airplanes (primarily DC-3s and Boeing 247s, along with smaller Lockheed 10s (2 and 14) could not cruise at higher than 10,000 feet (mean sea level) for fear of exposing the passengers to hypoxia (anoxia, it was then called) or lack of oxygen. On a standard day, half the oxygen in the atmosphere is gone by 18,000 feet (msl).

In 1939 the Boeing Company expanded their 1935 creation, the Boeing B-17 bomber into a transport plane, using its supercharger to pressurize a large passenger cabin. This allowed passenger flight above 20,000 feet (msl) where there was calm air, and rarely were there thunderstorms and inclement weather. This became the Boeing 307 Stratoliner.. (See Figure 1)

The last of these historic airplanes recently ditched in

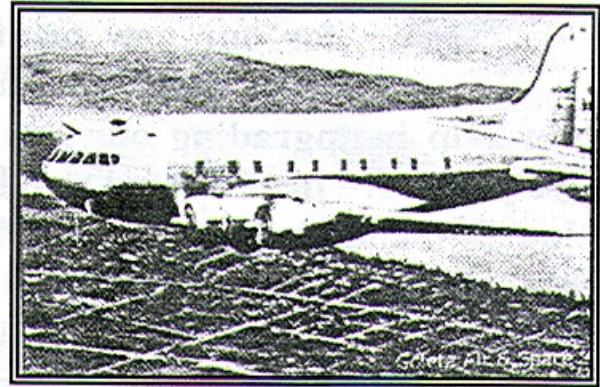


Figure 1: The Boeing 307 Stratoliner over Seattle

the Pacific Ocean near Seattle, where it was built. Plans are being made to retrieve the Stratoliner.

While in Viet Nam I observed two examples of the historic airplane. One at Saigon flying for Air Viet Nam, and the other at Vientiane, Laos, flying for Air America.

You members of the Tan Son Nhut Association are in a position to testify to the existence of those two Indo China based airplanes.

Where did you see the last one?

The one in Figure 2 was the one used by those negotiating the status of Viet Nam after 1975. The Saigon based one flew from Saigon to Hanoi each day. They went by way of Laos since they were not allowed to fly direct from Saigon to Hanoi.

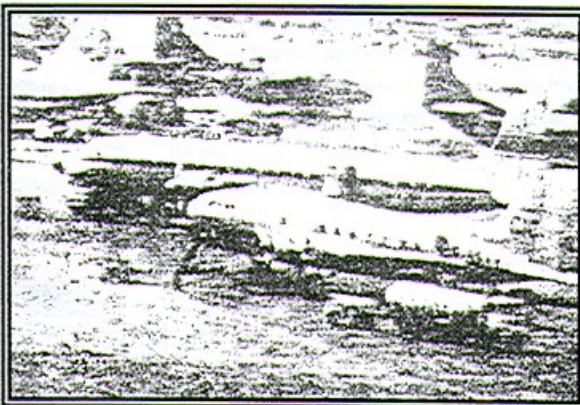
The B-307 Stratoliner is easy to spot. The only four engine bird we ever built with a tail wheel, i.e. conventional landing gear.

I am hoping that the one that ditched can be dragged from the ocean and transported to the Dulles Section of the National Air and Space Museum. The larger birds are out at Dulles International Airport.

I urge you to join me in this project. Write me through the TSNA Public Affairs Office.

Best to all!

*Taylor B. McKinnon*



Boeing 307 (center) at Tan Son Nhut 1968





## Printer Pledges Are Coming In!

In just two weeks six of our fine supportive members made pledges in excess of 20% of the total \$7,000 needed for our new printer. We can't thank these members enough! We still need your help in upgrading our printing abilities so we can give you more professional publications. Do Not Send Money -- send pledges to Public Affairs Office, Tan Son Nhut Association, Suite 709, 330 West Brambleton Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510 - or - FAX: (757) 627-0878 - or - E-Mail: [hercules29@worldnet.att.net](mailto:hercules29@worldnet.att.net)



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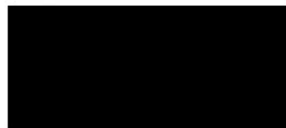
For further information call Bob Need  
at (757) 627-7746

Thank you, please help us as soon as you can.

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