

Revetments

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



"All Included - None Excluded"

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The Tan Son Nhut Association, Washington, D.C.

September, 2002



*"Beware of
rashness, but
with energy and
sleepless
vigilance go
forward, and
give us
victories."*

Abraham Lincoln
1863



More Tales From Tan Son Nhut

Scatback Revisited

by Larry S. Fritts

In August 2001, when I read the Scatback article (*White Whales and Tales of Scatback* by Mark Fleisher, *Revetments*, August 2001) I knew that I needed to respond.

I served two tours in the Republic of Vietnam – February 1966 - February 1967 and December 1970 - December 1971. The first was radically different from the second regarding content, but each was one year long.

Adventures at Tay Ninh

My first tour started at Tan Son Nhut when we landed in a World Airways 707 and deplaned in that sweltering heat and humidity of Saigon. Mercy! It was hot!

After clearing through customs and waiting half the afternoon, we were bussed to Bien Hoa Air Base, my base of assignment. To make a long story short, I ended up spending ten months temporary duty (TDY) with Detachment B-32, 5th Special Forces, at Tay Ninh as a Forward Air Controller (FAC) crew chief for O-1 Bird Dogs. It wasn't a unique assignment, but I think it was a little unusual for six USAF troops – two pilots, two crew chiefs and two ground radio operators – to be on a Special Forces team for a year. It was a great tour for me, full of rich experiences and people – each unforgettable. I departed that first tour on a Continental Golden Tail 707 out of Tan Son Nhut, not thinking once that I would be back again less than four years later.



01 at Bien Hoa, 1970 (USAF)

To Be or Not To Be – 'Nam Style

On December 14, 1970, I landed in a C-118A (53-3231) at Tan Son Nhut to begin my second tour. I was to be assigned to 7th Air Force Flight Operations, known as Scatback. There may be a chicken and egg situation here that I don't know about – but the term "Scatback" came from the aircraft radio call signs we used – "Scatback 01, e.g."

After Master Sergeant Hoogerwerf rotated I was to be the chief C-118 flight engineer until Master Sergeant Tony Gaines arrived later. The "to be assigned to" part need to be explained. In May 1970, I received word that I had an assignment back to Vietnam as a flight mechanic on EC-47s at Phu Cat. I had to go through Air Force Survival School at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington – and then the Jungle Survival School at Clark Air Base, Philippines, prior to arrival in-country.

I was a long time C-118A Flight Engineer, stationed at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, at the time. And, as a long time C-118A fraternity member, knew the locations and people at C-118A sites all over the world – including Saigon. I wrote a letter to Major James Boulter, a Scatback C-118A pilot with whom I had flown as a crewmember at Richards Gebaur Air Force Base, Missouri. He wrote back that it looked good for me to be picked up by Scatback and to stay in touch.

I went through the usual port call and processes to get to Snake School at Clark Air Base. Nearing completion of school, I called Saigon and was told to meet the next Scatback C-118 on Sunday at base operations. I did and that and met Chief Master Sergeant "The Chief" Bobby N. McCasland, my boss until he rotated in August 1971 (I think). The next day I advised the air terminal folks to take me off their manifest. They didn't quite understand how a technical sergeant could be doing that – but they didn't send the cops for me.

On Tuesday morning, after arriving at Tan Son Nhut on Monday, the Chief took me to 7th Air Force Headquarters. The Chief introduced me to Staff Sergeant Dave Kaman, who changed my assignment from Phu Cat to Tan Son Nhut. Simple as that! This was the start of my awakening to the fact that if somebody wanted something done, and knew the right people with authority, it could be done.

The Scatback enlisted aircrew was approximately 13 strong and comprised of flight engineers, flight stewards and radio operators. I already knew several of these troops from prior assignments. We were quartered in Hootch 1586 in the Willard Compound behind Hotel 3 helicopter operations area.

Join Scatback and See The World!

We primarily flew the C-118As (re-3131, 53-3304 and 51-3827). The last one was configured with a stateroom and was primarily U. Ambassador, Ellsworth Bunker's and General Abrams' aircraft in which we flew many other missions as well. The stewards also flew the C-47s some. I don't remember that the radio operators flew the Goons very much, if at all.

Our missions took us all over Southeast Asia. They weren't all joy locations – Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Ben Thuy, Pleiku and Da Nang are examples. There were some pretty good one though – Hon Kon, Bangkok, Seoul, Kadena Air Base, Kathmandu and the Philippines are examples. I guess Dothan, Alabama should be on the good list too because I helped ferry a C-118 back there across the Pacific for extensive corrosion maintenance in April 1971. I was able to take a couple of weeks leave before going back to Saigon on a commercial DC-8 out of Travis Air Force Base.

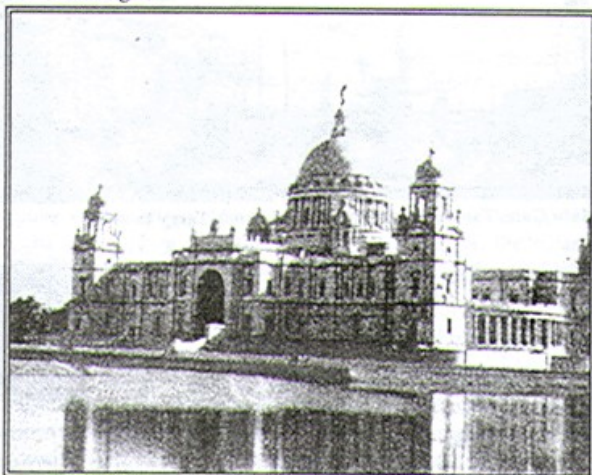
Back to the 2001 Revetments Article –

I disagree that "Scatback's job mostly was to transport V.I.P.s in Vietnam and around Southeast Asia." A segment of our mission was to carry V.I.P.s, but I say that it was less than thirty percent of the mission – and all those thirty percent trips weren't

(See Scatback, Continued on Page 3)

(Scatback, Continued From Page 2).
the "garden spots" of Southeast Asia.

The Scatback T-39 fleet had a big job of courier duty in Southeast Asia. The C-118s and C-47s carried a lot of airmen, officers and civilians of all agencies, not categorized as V.I.P.s. I also remember hauling Base Exchange (BX) goods for the Tan Son Nhut Exchange.



The Victoria Memorial, Calcutta

I'd say that the reference to "decommissioning" the "C-118" should have been regarding the White Whale C-123. It was not in the Scatback complement of aircraft during my tenure, but I did see it on the flightline one day. I think an Army general was using for getting into "forward" areas. One of the flight stewards, my Scatback "roomie," Master Sergeant C. C. Parker, had flown the White Whale previously. It was obvious that the C-118s had not been decommissioned because I flew several hundred hours in them out of Saigon (1970-1971).

The part about landing at Calcutta for diplomatic clearance to over-fly India to get to Kathmandu, Nepal was accurate. The time zone there was also off the rest of the world by fifteen minutes. I've always thought these two situations were harassment techniques against the Western World. Kathmandu is a very interesting place in the Himalayas, but definitely not a place to live in very long. After eating some Nepalese food one night in the Soltee Hotel, I



Hanuman Dhoka (Durbar Square), Kathmandu, Nepal

I had intestinal sickness like I've never had any other time in my sixty years. I was so sick that the United States Embassy doctor had to visit me in the USAID (Aid for Economic Development) Compound quarters where the Scatback enlisted crew normally stayed while TDY.

On one of the Kathmandu trips, our C-118 aircrew was invited by U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, Carol Laise, Ambassador Bunker's wife, to attend the Fourth of July celebration at the U. S. Embassy. It was the first time I ever smelled marijuana and knew what it was. There were many "hippies" in attendance on the embassy grounds and a group of them sat in a circle passing a pipe. The smoke reminded me of the exotic smells of the Kathmandu open-air marketplace where signs announced hashish and marijuana for sale. I was glad when we left there.

As previously mentioned, each of my Vietnam tours was rich with experiences and people. Each was unique in its content and mission. I wouldn't want to do either again, but I wouldn't trade them away, now that they are complete and I was able to serve our country effectively in two completely different operational environments.

Tan Son Nhut Association, thanks for all you do. This is a great forum.

* * *

(Member Larry Fritts resides in Bellbrook, Ohio.)

Member Treats Himself to A "Mini" Reunion

A few months ago, Member Robert G. (Bob) Anisko, of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania decided that forty years was enough. It was



Harvey Clark (L) and Bob Anisko doing Las Vegas



Bob and Tony Palermo taking in the Los Angeles scene

time to have a "mini" reunion with some of his close comrades who were stationed with him at Tan Son Nhut between December 1962 and June 1963. Bob, Harvey Clark and Tony Palermo were air policemen in the 6220th Air Police Squadron.

They all agreed to a brief reunion and Bob headed first to Las Vegas to reunite with Harvey. And then it was on to Los Angeles to spend a little time with Tony. Apparently they all had a good time as Bob comments with soft laughter, "No one aged one bit."

* * *



Founded 1995
By Don Parker & John Peele

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**Thoughts of Our
Sky Pilot**

Chap. James Warrington

How We Learn

One of the hardest things in life, especially for parents, is to let children find their own way. It is so hard to stand on the sidelines and let those we love make what we know to be costly mistakes. Often out of love and concern we rush in and attempt to control the situation. The result is that we hurt our children by planning their lives in every detail.

How much wiser is God, our Heavenly Father! He knows that only those things we learn by trial and error are really learned. He gives us opportunity to grow by learning for ourselves. He leaves us room to make our own mistakes. He



Main Gate, Tan Son Nhut, 1967 by Member Terry Love

does not take from us the joy of making our own discoveries. He respects our freedom even when we abuse it. At times He must let us go into "the far country" as did the Prodigal Son. He is waiting always for our return, but He will not rush down the hill to meet us until we choose on our own accord to come back to Him.

Christopher Morley has written a poem called *No Coaching* which pictures this aspect of God's wisdom:

"I went to the theater
With the author of the successful
play.
He insisted on explaining
everything;
Told me what to watch,
The detail of direction,
The errors of the property man,
The foibles of the star.
He anticipated all my surprises
And ruined the evening!
Never again! And mark you,
The greatest author of all
Made no such mistakes."
* * *

Our three chaplains are available to our members for all pastoral needs. If desired, please call Public Affairs, TSNA, Phone: (757) 627-7746, or FAX: (757) 627-9878. E-Mail: hercules29@worldnet.att.net

President Peele Comments ...

We're Growing!

The Tan Son Nhut Association is now growing steadily. Two years ago we culled out those who had not paid their dues for an excessive period of time. That brought us down to a little over 200 members. As of this issue we are now just under 400.

This is the 48th issue of *Revetments*, the first appearing in October 1998. A year later, 1999, our acclaimed internet website opened, and to date has been visited over 17,000 times. These two communication tools have not just kept us in touch with each other, but have opened the door to many new friends who have now joined us.

Following our fine reunion in Washington last April, a number of old and new members have come forward and are helping us build the platform that will eventually lead us to establishing a great memorial for all of those who served at, passed through, and even gave their lives for Tan Son Nhut. Thank you all!

John Peele, President





The Communications Center

The Truth About Waltzing Matilda . . . (Editor's Note -
On Page 7 of the August issue of *Revetments* we did a photo feature on Member Phillip Greethead of Kalgoorlie, Australia, and mentioned their popular song *Waltzing Matilda* as having had a German-influenced origin. We were dead wrong. So much for the info on the internet.)

Just about the meaning of the song *Waltzing Matilda*. The song itself is a very simple piece written in the 1800s. It's about a "swaggy" (I think you call them hobos in the United States) who steals a sheep. He is then chased by the mounted troopers. At the end of the song he jumps into a billabong (waterhole) and drowns himself rather than being taken alive.

Australians have debated for years just why this song is so popular and why they can relate to it. My own opinion is that it represents our rebellious and free spirit. Most of our early settlers were convicts and imprisoned Irish rebels.

Yes, there certainly are a lot of people of German heritage in Australia, but I don't think there is any connection with the song there.

The actual meaning of "Waltzing Matilda" is slang for a swaggy carrying his swag (bedroll or Matilda). I suppose it was called a Matilda as it was the swaggy's only companion.

Hope I haven't bored you too much with the explanation, but thought I'd better put the record straight. Thanks again for the article. Best regards,

Phill Greethead
Kalgoorlie
Western Australia

Member Would Like To Contact David Koopman, Re: Radar Dome Sniper . . . It was with interest that I read the (July) issue of *Revetments*, and I noticed in the article by David E. Koopman, that he makes mention of an incident. "I recall the sniper on the radar dome near the Air Force chow hall." I wonder if he could contact me.

It has been over thirty years and I was there during the incident. I have, for years, been anguished by that event and have been seeking witnesses as to what actually occurred. Airman First Class Robert Garrido was the victim of a shooting (KIA) during that incident and I had just spoken to him that prior evening. Robert was going home and was just waiting for the *Freedom Bird*. Robert is pictured on the Virtual Wall net.

I was with the 619th TAC Squadron, Detachment One, and we were in the concrete barracks right under the radar domes. The Security Police mess hall was in our compound. I was there in 1967-1968. Any help will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Richard Sena
12718 W. Hollyhock Drive
Avondale, Arizona 85323
(623) 536-1333

Help Needed For Verification of Assignment . . . Hi, I need

some help verifying that my husband was stationed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base about 1963.

We are applying for disability due to cancer and the government is saying that he was not in Vietnam! He was transferred from Tan Son Nhut

to MACV. Can you possibly help with some documentation that proves he was stationed there? Or can you guide me to where I could find this information? His name is Vincent DeLuca, AF11372529, E-3 (he thinks). He was in radio relay repair. Thank you so much.

Janie and Vincent DeLuca
angel22558@earthlink.net

Tan Son Nhut Names Missing From the Vietnam Veterans Memorial . . . I am aware of at least two names of men killed at or flying from Tan Son Nhut Air Base whose names are not on The Wall.

First Lieutenant Tom Lubbers, 19th SOS (?) was killed in an AC-119 crash off the end of the runway in the Spring of 1970. He was a classmate of mine from Officer Training School Class 68-F.

Also, Major Bobby Huggins, 3rd TRS (RF-4C), was shot down in the Spring of 1970 on a mission from Tan Son Nhut. Thanks.

1st Lt. Larry Mayes
Rapid City, South Dakota
8th Aerial Port Squadron
TSN, Nov. 1969 - Oct. 1970
jump@bigmentors.com

Needs Help on Father's Career History . . . Hi, I am the

daughter of Sergeant Hugh McCain (RA18297687). Dad passed away in 1994. I am researching his Army career for a scrapbook for my grandchildren. I am trying to get the history of each unit Dad served with, and hopefully find someone from each unit or base who may remember working with him.

Dad was in the 'Nam in 1962 - 1963, and again in 1966-1967. When he was there in '62-'63, he was with the USA UTT Helicopter Company, USARPAC, APO 143. He was a crew chief on Hueys. I found a picture he had taken of himself, standing under a unit sign that says "We Lead The Way - U.S. Army Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company, 571st Tans. Det. (Aircraft Maintenance)."

There are small metal-roofed buildings directly past this sign. My Mom thinks this unit was near Saigon, although she is not sure. She said the name "Tan Son Nhut" sounds familiar.

I was hoping maybe you can tell me if this unit was stationed at Tan Son Nhut during the time Dad was there. I can't find any sites listed on the website pertaining to this unit. Thank you for your time. God Bless.

Gayla (McCain) Phillips
P.O. Box 99
Ivanhoe, Texas 75447
(903) 664-4052
gsred@msn.com

Couple Plans Preparation of Gift to the Association . . . My husband, Larry, and I received his personnel record from Project Corona Harvest, performed by the 19th Special operation Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, from December 1968.

We plan on sharing this with the Tan Son Nhut Association. Larry has photos that were taken there at that time also. It may take a lot of reading and such to get the photos and records put together, but we plan on having this gift for the Association soon.

Mary Porter
Seaside, Oregon
(Ed. Our thanks to you both!)

Think "postcards" —

The Artist's Statement

(Editor: The Tan Son Association has an incredibly talented and capable membership. And, certainly not far from the top is Member Richard Fulton of Pittsburg, Kansas. He has been an enlisted man, an officer, a DOD civilian, he's a splendid writer, lecturer, and political analyst. We knew he was a photographer, but we didn't expect this. He is having a showing September 30 - October 18 at Labette Community College, Parsons, Kansas. His comments are not just for the serious photographic student, they are for all of us. Many of our members have cameras and delight in using them. *Revetments* is full of your contributions. It is a pleasure to publish Rick's interesting commentary and share it with you.)

* * *

All my life the favorite art form has been the humble picture postcard. As a child, hours were spent turning their racks studying subject matter and learning about the world while, at the same time, unconsciously imprinting composition techniques.

Those "nickel" images (now fifty cents!) taught me the impact of lines of force — connecting the dots, so to speak, of primary and secondary optical points — and have greatly influenced development and style of my own photographic work.

For now half a century, a camera has



Office Party Tan Son Nhut 1968
by Richard Fulton

never been far from my hands, in peace and war, and I have used these devices, professionally, educationally and even recreationally, to explain, to teach, to instruct, to train — and, most of all, to learn.

My presentation includes 11" by 14" samples to demonstrate not only shooting competence, but also film processing and darkroom skills.

Yet most of this exhibit, however, consists of smaller, commercially machine-processed prints. These pictures aim at an optimum moment capture of the reflection of light, rather than to be a darkroom manipulation. Kind of "What you see is what you get!" approach.

And, regardless of setting, be it Vietnam, Korea or Kansas, they are images accomplished using ordinary cameras. If there is a commonality of this twenty-year body of work, it is best summed up by the strongest acknowledgment of the stylistic influence of so many anonymous postcard shooters who showed unique was to "see light" while emphasizing the virtue of patience as applied to approach and technique values.

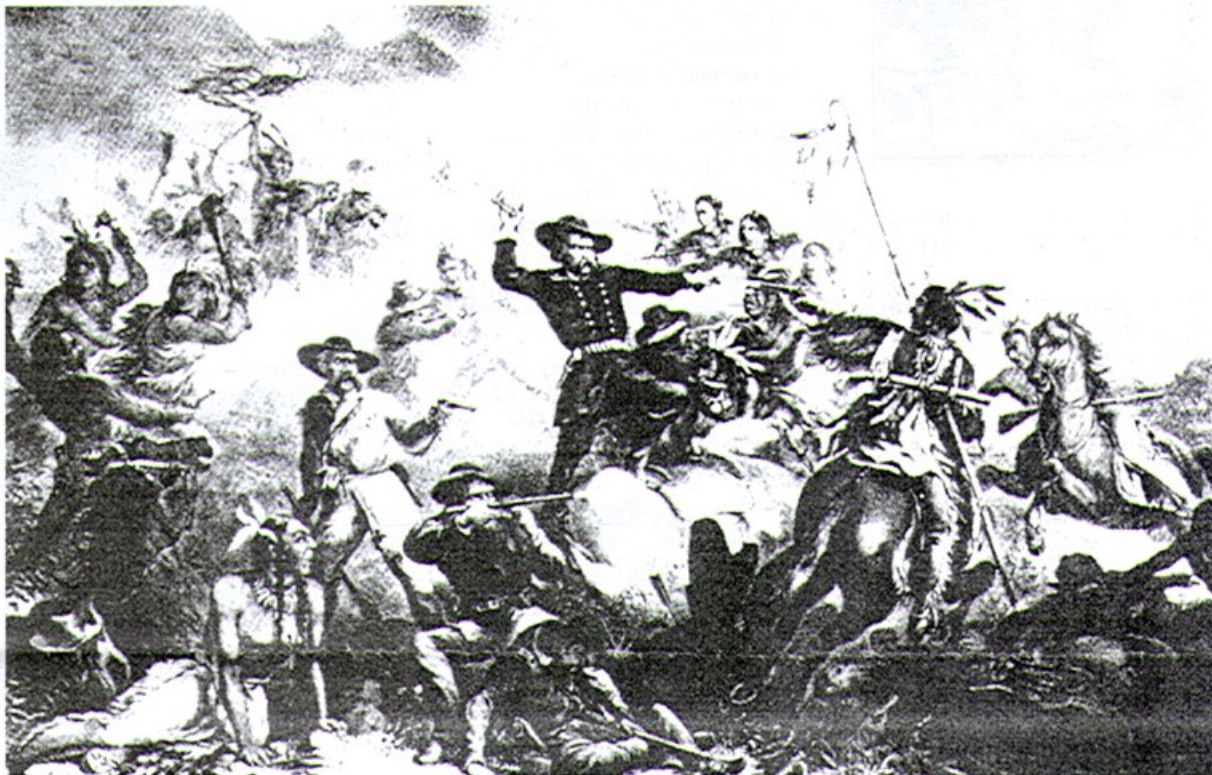
As you look about this exhibit, please think "postcards" and what they have meant to me, personally, in terms of mentoring, inspiration and motivation.

Later, as you look through your own viewfinders, pause a moment before you shoot and think about them yourselves. Look again. Postcards. Will this shot I am about to take be improved if I step up on a chair — or kneel — or even lay down? Where is the lighting coming from? What is its intensity? How do I have the elements arranged? Should I move closer or go back? Will my finished product be of the quality to compete and to sell in a souvenir store's postcard rack?

Think your own picture in this unique and special way — as "postcards" — before you snap the shutter, and I think you will be really pleased with the result!



Enthusiastic Response to Last Month's Issue!



Participants Left to Right: Need, Ybarbo, Fulton, Joyce, Penley, Tessier, Insley, Nolan, Blackburn, Bolton, Koopman, McKinnon, et al.

Last month's issue of *Revetments* cover story "What If" turned out to be a real barn burner. Speculating on what the results would be if Tan Son Nhut Air Base had fallen to the enemy in the Tet '68 Offensive, the McKinnon-Need article sparked an intense flow of e-mail messages among not only TSNA members but from non-members also. For over two weeks intense messages bounced off of satellites, many of the messages containing interesting new information about the attack. Some spiced the interchange with dialogues concerning whose battle was the most important and whose enemy was the toughest. A number of members said it was the "best" issue of *Revetments* yet published. I am deeply grateful to all those who responded.

Bob Need, Editor, *Revetments*.



Light Up For Unity!

Member Lance Coar, Penllyn, Pennsylvania, has forwarded an appeal that is currently making the rounds in e-mails on the internet.

"We are asked to join our fellow citizen on September 11 and get the word out now all across this great land we love and call the United States of America. Let's see how powerful we can be!"

"On Wednesday, September 11th, everyone who will be driving a motor vehicle is asked to drive with their headlights on during the daylight hours. Though no explanation is needed as to why we are commemorating September 11, we hope more importantly to pay respect to the victims of that day, show our nation's solidarity and show support for our men and women of the Armed Forces.

"You can help by sending this message on to others!"

"Also, don't forget to wear your red, white and blue!"

Join Your Seabee Friends in Hampton, Virginia

George McDanel, Public Relations for the Vietnam Era Seabees (Ph: (618) 259-4694) announces their annual reunion to be held in Hampton, Virginia on January 31 through February 2, 2003. Interested parties should go to the internet www.tet68.org (they are the overall host of the event) and download reunion registration forms and instructions for attendance.

Interest individuals can also contact Dave Schill, Newsletter Editor, *Vietnam Era Seabee*, P.O. Box 36781, Richmond, Virginia 23235, or call (856) 234-2273, e-mail: dwschill@aol.com for more details.

The following Seabee units will also have their reunions in conjunction with the Vietnam Era Seabee event:

NMCB-4	NMCB-12	NMCB-58
NMCB-62	NMCB-133	CBMU-302
NSA DaNang (and all detachments)		





Pledge for the printer and get "The Victors" free!

These great members have already brought us over the half way point in our \$7,000 drive for pledges for a new printer. They are all receiving a copy of Taylor B. McKinnon's moving tribute to military veterans and the 377th Security Police Squadron, the CD "The Victors." We are extremely grateful to McKinnon for this impressive contribution. You'll receive yours as soon as you join all these great people with your pledge. Please send in your pledge as soon as you can. Printing our membership forms, other

administrative documents and our monthly *Revetments* is getting more and more difficult. **JUST SEND PLEDGES AT THIS TIME, NO MONEY!**

The Current Pledge List -

Thomas Tessier -	Wayne Salisbury -	Richard Fulton -	Mark Fleisher -
Bill & Mary Carlson -	Richard Skea -	Robert J. McDonald -	Mike Pelt -
Walter J. D'Ambrosio -	Julian Mills -	Buck Zehringer -	Dean Gard -
David Koopman -	Steve Carter -	Robbie Robertson -	Richard Starke -
Kenneth Moll -	Albert Keeler -	Johnnie Jernigan -	Edie Straw -
Michael Monteith -	Rebecca Clark -	Frank Bracken -	Linda Billings -
Richard Skea -	Charles Woods -	Christopher Joyner -	William Blackmon -
Charles Penley -	James Smith -	Ben White -	

The 2522 with ARN, Quid/San
and 2,000-Share LCT




For further information call Bob Need, (757) 627-7746 or Fax: (757) 672-0878

Mail pledges to: Suite 709, 330 W. Brambleton Ave., Norfolk, VA 23510

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

The Tan Son Nhut Association
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Renewal Date 

Think, Decide, Plan for
- Reunion 2003!