

AUGUST 2008



**A Memorial to the American Experience
In Vietnam**

"All included, none excluded"

REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association



GOOOOOOOD MORNING VIETNAM!!

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION 2008 REUNION ST. LOUIS, MO

It definitely was a good morning and a great time at this year's reunion. 62 members, potential members, spouses, and friends were in attendance.

Before going any further with this, I want to say Thank You to everyone who attended, and to everyone who had anything to do with the success of this reunion. I will not even attempt to name everyone for fear of missing someone. You know who you are, and we thank you.

And I would be negligent if I didn't thank the staff of the Renaissance Grand and Suites Hotel, in particular Tracy Pendleton, our event manager, for their efforts to make everything run as smooth as possible.

On the following pages, I will attempt to take you through this great event by giving a run down of things approximately in the order they happened, along with as many pictures as we can cram into this issue. I hope you can enjoy seeing what all went on as much as those who were there enjoyed it.

HOSPITALITY ROOM:

The center of attention starting on Thursday the 31st was the Parkview/Aubert Rooms at the hotel.

There was plenty of food and drink, and as is usual for a TSNA reunion, there was PLENTY of introductions, hand-shaking, back slapping, laughter, stories exchanged, and some good ol' TSNA "BS".



Bob Laymon and Charles Penley had their memorabilia areas set up; there was another table for other memorabilia; there was a table devoted to the "silent auction" items; and Johnnie Jernigan had his usual fine display of BX/PX items for sale.



On Saturday afternoon, our guest speaker also joined in the fun!



HOTEL ROOMS

The rooms were nice, and the service was good. Some of us were lucky enough to at least see a part of "The Arch" from our window!



And did anyone notice the sign that you were not to put hangers on the sprinkler? And the sign was well over 9 feet off the ground?! (I had to use the telephoto lens to read what it said!)



And at least two of our folks took time to take a special horse drawn ride around the downtown area.



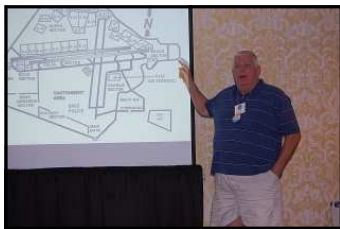
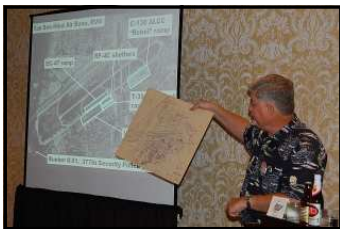
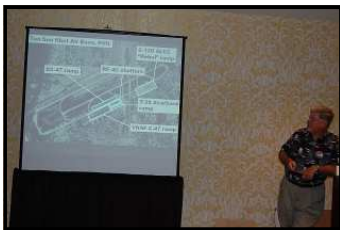
Our "night owl" members managed to keep the room open until the wee hours on Friday and Saturday evenings, with some special slide and movie shows provided by members being shown at various times.

And the room remained open on Friday during the time that the seminars were being held in another part of the hotel. See the next page!

TET '68

A mini-symposium by Bob Laymon and Charles Penley

Friday at 10 AM, 38 attendees enjoyed a very good talk on the Battle for Tan Son Nhut, January 31, 1968. I know that I have seen many articles and emails about this, but this is the first time it came into even greater perspective for me thanks to the two leaders and to all those who took part in the audience participation portion of the program. And oh, there were also sound effects—EFFECTIVE (And Loud) sound effects!!



RITS Civil Action Project

At 1 PM on Friday, Rich Carvell gave a very informative and interesting talk about his involvement in helping the Phu My Sanctuary and Orphanage in Saigon. It was great to hear of our service folks' involvement with this organization, and of the many efforts, ingenuity, and commitment that our Tan Son Nhut residents put into helping. My count was 28 folks in attendance at this session!



VIETNAM TODAY OVERVIEW

At 2 PM on Friday, U. S. Army (Ret.) Lt. Col. John Powell gave a presentation on Vietnam today, and on the possibility of members of TSNA being able to "go back" and tour the country.



ALSO IN THE

HOSPITALITY ROOM

Thanks to Gary Redlinski, we have a permanent addition to our Reunion paraphernalia—a beautiful 30" by 40" "poster" showing our logo and the "Missing Man" table and the last flag to fly over Tan Son Nhut



We were also privileged to see the large 377th Combat Support Group and 7th Air Force rugs which have been on loan to us from the late Col. Farley Peebles' family.



Thanks to Bob Laymon and Charles Penley for their efforts in obtaining and returning these items.

CREDITS

The pictures you are viewing are through the courtesy and photographic skills of Sue Ellen Parker, Gary Redlinski, Rich Carvell, Lois Fry, and Larry Fry.

With around 400 pictures to view and figure out what to use, I have not attempted to label who is responsible for each picture. But I do want to acknowledge and say thanks to all of them.

TOURING THE ANHEUSER- BUSCH BREWERY

At 1:30 PM on Saturday, the school bus left the hotel for a short drive to the Brewery. 28 were in attendance and they returned around 4:30 PM. Our thanks to Dick Boyer for his help in securing the transportation, and for "taking charge" of the trip.



2008 REUNION BANQUET

With a cash bar starting at 6 PM, the main event began at 6:30.

We were honored to have 8 members of the Scott Air Force Base Joint Service Color Guard, Present The Colors.



President Bob Gales then began with the following prayer:

"Oh LORD--God of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jew--the light who guides mankind to everlasting salvation, protect those on the field of battle who offer their lives in defense of our national security; lessen the pain of those who have already sacrificed in our behalf; free those who remain prisoners of the godless enemy; locate the remains of those heroes who have already paid the ultimate sacrifice and return them to us; and provide solace to our loved ones; and grant us all the blessed warriors and their descendants and loved ones--serenity, tranquility, gratification, health, prosperity, and contentment.

Let us have a moment of silence for those who have passed away since our last reunion, including my friend and former colleague Major General David Morehouse, former Judge Advocate General of the Air Force, who served with distinction at Bien Hoa Air Base.

Thank you for the continuing fellowship of our brothers and sisters here tonight and for providing us with this wonderful bounty which we are about to share. Amen."



We were privileged to have the Color Guard members sit at separate tables so we could all get to talk to some active duty personnel. It was a joy to meet these fine members of our military!

Special Introduction

At this point, I was scheduled to introduce a special guest, the nephew of TSNA member Lt. Col. Jack Wimer. Unfortunately, both Jack and his nephew became ill and had to leave just before the banquet started. So I am now going to introduce Lieutenant Commander Brian Wilson, U. S. Navy, stationed with the U. S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base. Brian is a graduate of North Carolina State University, has been in the military since 1993, and while trained as a helicopter pilot, he is now on the airborne battle staff, on the "looking glass".



I know we all enjoyed meeting and talking with Brian. Thanks for coming and lending your active duty experiences with the ol' geezers!

MISSING MAN

CEREMONY

We are indebted to Johnnie and Sharon Jernigan for their efforts in conducting this beautiful, solemn ceremony, and we also thank Sue Ellen Parker for her reading the following words:

"This table is set for the members of our military that are missing from our mist. These missing brothers and sisters may be absent because they are prisoners of war, missing in action, being held hostage or because they have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep us free. They are unable to be with us, so we remember them and their circumstances.

The table cloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their intentions in responding to their country's call so their children could remain free.



The one candle symbolizes the frailty of one individual – alone, against his oppressors.

The black ribbon on the candle reminds us of those who will not be coming home.



The single rose, in the vase, reminds us of the families and loved ones that keep the faith, awaiting their return.



The rose itself is red, signifying the blood shed by our comrades in the defense of freedom. They are not with us today.

The red, white and blue ribbon is tied to the vase by a yellow ribbon, reminiscent of the ribbons worn on the lapels and breasts of thousands who bear witness to their un-yielding determination to demand a proper accounting of our missing, and for the safe return of those held hostage or engaged in our defense.

A slice of lemon is placed on a plate to remind us of their bitter fate.

There is salt on the plate, symbolic of the family's tears as they wait and remember.

"Hero" is written in the grains of their family's tears – because "hero" is what each man and woman is who serves America.



The glass is inverted to remind us that they will not be here tonight.



The picture on the table is a reminder that they are missed very much and are remembered by their family and friends.



The chair is empty, signifying their absence and our constant hope that they will return to us some day and signifying that when they do return there is and always has been a place set aside for them in our hearts and minds.

(Continued on Page 6)



As we look upon this empty table, do not remember ghosts from the past, remember our comrades. Remember our family and friends. Please honor and remember them”.



THE MEAL



After a delicious and plentiful buffet dinner and dessert, it was time for President Bob Gales to introduce our speaker for the evening, Adrian Cronauer.



(At this point, I am going to quote from an email copy sent to me by Sue Ellen Parker, who describes what we heard much better than I could ever hope to, as she wrote in an email to a friend)

“At this year's reunion, the guest speaker was Adrian Cronauer -- think Robin Williams in *Good Morning, Viet Nam*. He is now Special Assistant to the Director, Office of the Secretary of Defense, in the Defense POW/ Missing Personnel Office.

I thought the diminutive man would make a great Santa's helper with his snow white hair and beard, but I could imagine him saying, "Ho, ho, hooooooooooooooooooooo, little boy/girl," and that made me smile.

Cronauer's speech included a few anecdotes about how he began using his signature sign-on -- "you have to stretch out the opening when you are running late and trying to find your headphones, cue up records and put in your contacts" -- and how, if he had done half of the things Robin Williams portrayed in the movie, he would still be in Leavenworth!

The majority of his speech was taken in the explanation of how bones and other remains are found, retrieved, examined and returned to families, sometimes decades after the military he-

roes have died.

It was a moving speech that followed a wonderful weekend of aging warriors meeting and greeting. Some had attended every reunion. Others were there for the first time, vowing to come the next time. Some brought their wives or significant others. Some came alone. All knew they were welcome”.



Following his speech, which was informative, moving, and particularly funny at the end as he described how to stretch out "Goooooooood Morning Vietnam" while desperately trying to get everything ready for his show, President Bob Gales presented Adrian with a Commemorative St. Louis Plaque, and also a Lifetime Membership to the Tan Son Nhut Association.



ADRIAN, WELCOME TO TSNA, and thank you for your speech and for joining with us in our activities.

President Bob Gales then read the following:

**Tan Son Nhut
Military
Order of the Dragon**

"Late last year, the Board of Directors approved the establishment of an Award to recognize extraordinary performance and activities by a member of the Tan Son Nhut Association which advances the stated purposes of the Association. Those purposes, distilled from Article I, Section 3, of our Bylaws, are: (1) perpetuate the history of Tan Son Nhut Air Base, especially as it existed from 1959 to 1975; (2) to recognize and honor those who served at or

were affiliated with the base; and (3) to conduct benevolent, cultural, educational, and social programs of benefit to the Association's members and others.

The Award, called the Tan Son Nhut Military Order of the Dragon, was so named because the Dragon symbolizes power and excellence, valor and audacity, heroism and perseverance, nobility and divinity. A Dragon defeats all obstacles until achieving success. It is energetic, decisive, optimistic, intelligent, and ambitious. In Vietnam, the Dragon is considered the most important and sacred symbol and the universe, the life, the existence, and the growth.

The recipients chosen for induction in August 2008, the inaugural induction class, consists of Don Parker and John Peele, Presidents Emeriti and co-founders of the Association (without whose tireless efforts this Association would not have been created and set on the road to success); Wayne Salisbury, President Emeritus of the Association (whose tireless efforts have helped this Association grow strong); Larry Fry, Vice President of the Association and Editor of *Revetments* (whose tireless and volunteer efforts saved the *Revetments* from oblivion and made it a strong monthly voice for the exchange of Association information and ideas); and Charles Penley, Director of Communications, Historian, and Web Master of the Association (without whose tireless and brave efforts Tan Son Nhut Air Base might have been overrun during Tet-1968 and who maintains the public face of the Association on the Web). Our hearty congratulations to each recipient.

Written nominations for the Award, setting forth specific jus-

tification in support of the nomination, are submitted either to the President (for members of the Board) or to the Board (for everyone else). If anyone believes a person is worthy and should be nominated for the Award, do not hesitate to take action!"

President Emeritus Don Parker assisted President Gales in presenting the awards.



President Bob Gales then presented a Commemorative St. Louis Plaque to George Plunkett, in grateful thanks for his multi-task work as the official 2008 TSNA Reunion "POC".



Oops! I got a little out of sequence here and forgot to mention that after Adrian received his Plaque and Membership, Johnnie Jernigan also presented him with a TSNA Challenge Coin.



Prior to Retiring The Colors, each of the Color Guard were also presented with a TSNA Challenge Coin, and Gary Redlinski managed to get them together for a photo.



The Colors are Retired, and another great TSNA Reunion Banquet comes to a close!



OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

As a result of actions taken at the Saturday morning Board meeting and approved by acclimation at the Banquet, Rich Carvell is now a new Board member and the Director of Public Relations.



And since the Reunion, via an email process, Bob Laymon has been asked and accepted the position of Director At Large, Pro Tempore.



Thank you, Rich and Bob, for your willingness to join the Board of this great organization.

FROM OUR SECRETARY

Dale Bryan, TSNA Secretary, and the Board of Directors, would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Weidenbacher for his efforts on behalf of TSNA while serving as our "Agent" in Wisconsin, where we are incorporated. Paul has moved to neighboring Iowa, and we would also like to thank Richard Lindbeck for taking over the position.

AND NOW FOR A COMMERCIAL BREAK!

377 Security Police Squadron
Reunion (U.S. Air Force, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN)
February 5-8, 2009
Tampa, FL
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311 N. Saginaw St.
Montrose, MI 48457
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CREATIVE CONFLICT

By Chaplain James M Warrington
TSNA Chaplain

One of the duties which ministers perform regularly these days is counseling those who are about to be married. In

some congregations this is a required procedure, and it has proved of great value. During the counseling period many subjects are covered, but one of the important ones concerns the inevitable disagreements and conflicts which will arise between any two persons long and closely associated together.

It is my personal conviction that people everywhere need to understand that such human conflicts need not be destructive, but can be made creative. It all depends on how we face them. Here are three rules I have found helpful:

1. Accept the fact that differences will occur and that life can be enriched by our varying points of view. How dull it would be if we all were compelled to agree about both the major and minor issues of life. We are bound to see situations differently, because we are different in temperament, background, training, and philosophy of life. I have always thought that the words on a silver dollar "E pluri-bus Unum" not only refer to the fact that many states became one union, but it also means that in America that can be diversity to help bring about unity. Often the best possible decisions can be reached if differing points of view are brought together within the frame work of good will and frank discussion.

2. Respect the person who disagrees with you. Remember that it is his or her perfect right to do so in a free country – and thank God for that freedom! Give the other person credit for the same degree of sincerity, honesty and intelligence that you have. Give him time to state his position as clearly as you wish to state your own. Listen to him as carefully and at-

tentively as you wish him to listen to you. Prepare ahead by reading, studying and considering the material that might be available on the other side.

3. Recognize that the full and complete truth is seldom all on one side of the argument. Differences are not usually between red or green, but rather they represent yellow signifying caution. To reach a compromise is not a form of weakness or surrender, but may re-present a new and deeper insight for all concerned.

(From the Editor)

I had just finished cutting and pasting the above Chaplain's article into this issue, when an email arrived from a friend. I thought I just had to insert it here. Enjoy!

INNOCENCE IS PRICELESS

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex standing in the foyer of the church staring up at a large plaque. It was covered with names and small American flags mounted on either side of it. The six-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the little boy, and said quietly, 'Good morning Alex. "Good morning Pastor," he replied, still focused on the plaque. 'Pastor, what is this?'

The pastor said, 'Well son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service.' Soberly, they just stood together, staring at the large plaque. Finally, little Alex's voice, barely audible and trembling with fear asked, 'Which service, the 8:30 or the 10:45?'

OTHER REUNION PICTURES!



Tan Son Nhut Association

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Five Year Membership: \$80.00
Life Membership: \$180.00

AMERICA'S GREATEST GENERATION

By George Plunkett, 1st Mobile and 1961st Communications Groups, 1962-63-64-66-67

In mid December, 2007 my wife and I attended a funeral in the Bowman, SC area. After the service was finished, we were introduced to a member of the deceased's family, Grady Murray. As I turned to face Grady, I extended my hand and greeted him, noticing immediately that he wore a WWII gold lapel pin. I then thanked him for his service. He smiled broadly, and having been told by my wife that I was a Vietnam Vet, he thanked me for my service. Sensing that he was in no rush to leave, I asked Grady where he served. He said that he was a proud member of the 101st Airborne Division and had seen much of Europe under combat conditions. I told him that I had read "Strike and Hold" a memoir of the 82nd Airborne in WWII, written by T Moffat Burris of Columbia, SC. Moffat had graciously autographed my copy of his book. Grady asked if I had ever heard of Operation Market Garden. When I replied that most of Moffat's book went into great detail about this airborne assault behind enemy lines, he squeezed my hand and said that he had seen things that he could never forget. Having said that, he released my hand and said goodbye. I knew that I had been in the presence of a real American hero and could only guess as to what this distinguished gentlemen was thinking about as he walked away...

REUNION 2009

Please let us know your thoughts as to where we could have our next Reunion.

Write to any Officer or Director with your thoughts. Thanks!