

JUNE 2009



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

"All included, none excluded"

2009 REUNION

**PIGEON FORGE, TN
OCTOBER 15-18
MAINSTAY SUITES
SEE PAGE 7**

REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

2009 REUNION

**PIGEON FORGE, TN
OCTOBER 15-18
MAINSTAY SUITES
SEE PAGE 7**

Did You See Many Snakes?

By: Joe Cartafalsa
7th AF/5VNAF Air Div.

At the beginning of spring, 1972, I stopped staying on base at TSN. I had one of the BOQ rooms assigned to me on base but it was getting smaller and smaller as the weeks went by. I think it was about 10 feet by 6 feet or so. There was an old military wire single bed and a small wooden bureau. I could almost touch the opposite walls if I stretched.

The showers and latrines were across the street. Around 9 or 10 am the Vietnamese maids would come on base and begin washing clothes, shining boots, etc. Since I worked many nights and didn't get to my bunk until after breakfast, when it came time to get a shower, the room was always full of talking/laughing Vietnamese females of all ages. They would cover their mouths to talk and giggle as they squatted on the shower room floor - and they would point at the private parts of whoever was showering at the time. From these morning showers I picked up some interesting Vietnamese slang.

Don't worry; I'll get to the snake part soon.

My life has been full of twists and turns. Before being asked to go to Vietnam, I was studying Mandarin Chinese, both written and spoken. I was also taking flying lessons. All of

this stopped.

Anyway, I was seeing the sister of the assistant province chief of Bac Lieu Province and we got married in Gia Dinh City Hall. Our government gave me an hour off to get the ceremony done.

I am getting closer to the part about the snake!

My wife and I rented a room in the old "Montana" BOQ on Pho Hoa Street off of Plantation Road. This was an unused US Army building turned over to the South Vietnamese, who rented the rooms out to anyone with money.

The building was four stories (I think) and made of concrete, with balconies in front of the rooms on each floor. We would go up to the roof at night. On a good night we would watch the parachute flares, gunships, and bomb bursts to the north of Saigon, while sipping a Black Label beer (cost \$1.00 per case).

I would stay on base in my BOQ when I worked late, figuring that why go home when I would need to return in a few hours. I actually got home to my off base home in the afternoon one day. Here comes the part with the snake. I got undressed and went to the shower stall and opened the shower door.

As I opened the door I saw this monster of a snake raise up (see, I told you that I would get to the snake) and

spread his hood. The snake looked about 10 feet long and probably weighed as much as I did (5.5 ft tall and 110 lbs).

I closed the door rapidly, asking my wife if she owned the snake. She said "no" as she just got home also. The drain was covered with wire as were those little windows. The only weapons I had were a cut-down 12 gauge shotgun and one frag grenade. What a mess that would have made! My wife had a great idea: go downstairs and ask our maid if she wanted it.

Our maid, Lan, was a 15 year old country girl from Tay Ninh Province. My wife and I went around the corner to eat and when we returned both Lan and the snake were gone. The next day she told us that her family enjoyed the snake.

How did the snake get in? I never found out but Lan did not put it there, even though she was a VC. Lan liked my wife and I because we were nice to her. She would warn me not to go here or there at specific times. She would say that I was not like the other "long nosed" troops.

Maybe later I'll write about the VC tax collector I used to drink beer with in the bar around the corner on Plantation Road.

The snake was a RAN HO MANG (without accent marks).



The Josh McCart/TSNA Story

By: George Plunkett
TSNA Director of Membership Development

In late 2007 I became aware of a non-profit organization that was created to provide recently wounded veterans of the United States military with a free week of lodgings donated by a vacation homeowner. The name of this organization is Vacations for Veterans (vacationsforveterans.org). It is a civilian organization that relies solely on donations to support our wounded heroes.

Vacations for Veterans was founded in 2007 by Chris and Peggy Carr, two former Marine Officers. Donations to this very worthwhile cause can take the form of donating time at your vacation home, donating funds, or volunteering your time.

Trish and I have a large log cabin in Pigeon Forge, TN (cpmtncabins.com) that we rent as often as possible. However, during the time period of Jan-May each year, the cabin is vacant most of the time. We decided to offer two weeks during this period to Vacations for Veterans and signed up as donors in late 2008.

On January 26 of this year we received an inquiry from VforV asking if the cabin was available in March. It was. I gave VforV the good news and the same day I received the following email:

"Hello, my name is Amber McCart. My husband, Josh, was injured by an IED in Iraq in Feb of 2007. His right hand was badly injured, leaving 2 fingers, half a pinky and his thumb. We've been through a ton of surgeries including amputating his ring finger to use the bone for his hand. But so far still no use. So tomorrow we leave for FT. Gordon, GA(we are stationed at Ft. Benning, but my husband is still attached to his old unit at Ft. Bragg, 82nd Airborne) and my husband is going to have his hand amputated. It

is the only way he'll ever get any use out of it, at least we hope so. This vacation will be during our son's spring break and right when Josh's rehab at Ft. Gordon will be ending. He will be away from us for 45 days then we'll get to go on a wonderful vacation all together. I also wanted to invite our parents to come one weekend to be with us. I saw that pets are allowed, we have a couple of well behaved dogs but if you would prefer we do not have to bring them (we just love 'em). Thank you so very much for this opportunity, as you can see it does mean a lot to us. Thanks again A. McCart."

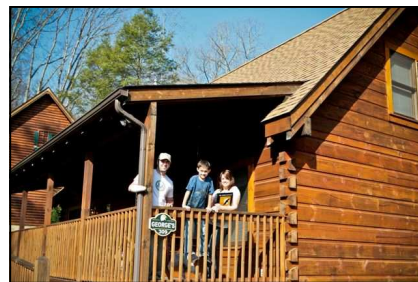
The actual vacation went as planned and the extended McCart family had a wonderful time. I solicited monetary contributions to help the McCarts with their travel expenses. Some members of the Board of Directors of TSNA, TSNA, and a local CPA firm all responded affirmatively. Several days later, Josh was featured on NBC Nightly News being interviewed at the Augusta, VA Hospital by U.S. Army Colonel (retired) Jack Jacobs, a Vietnam MOH recipient. Josh's right hand had been amputated and he was in rehab, preparing to be fitted for a prosthesis.

Here is a note from Amber, after their trip:

"Hi! I have been meaning to tell you thank you so much for the cabin. We had a great time. Josh is still up at the VA hospital, and that week is the longest we've had together in a few months. I have some pictures but my computer has been acting funny and won't download the pics. As soon as I get them downloaded I'll send them. We really did appreciate everything and it was a great vacation.

Thanks so much,
Amber McCart"

Following are pictures taken by the resort staff:



Josh, Nathan, and Amber on the porch of George Plunkett's 309



Josh, Nathan, and Amber on the porch of George Plunkett's 309 Cabin. John and Nathan are holding the TSNA Challenge Coin



Josh, Nathan, and Amber on the porch of George Plunkett's 309 Cabin, with Halley on Josh's lap, and Gator with Amber.

Note the beautiful Welcome Basket presented to the McCarts by TSNA.



More —————→

In preparation for this article, I have written to Amber for an update, and on May 23rd, received this reply:

"Hi, sorry it took so long to reply, family emergency. Josh is ok, he is still living up at the VA and it's becoming very stressful on us both. We have one son, Nathan 8 almost 9 years old. Nathan and Josh are best friends. Nathan has written in school projects that Josh is his hero. The big tan hound in the picture is Gator; he's a mamas boy. And the pointer is Halle, she is daddy's girl. Josh has gone bike riding, kayaking, horseback riding...he doesn't have pain like he used to, so if he could just come home everything would be wonderful.

I guess that's about it, could you send us copies of any pics you had? And I thank you very much once again.

Amber McCart

P.S. Josh is supposed to be on the news again tonight. On regular Fox at like 5 or 6 pm under a story done by an old baseball player."



REUNION 09 ACTIVITIES REPORT

There is no exact schedule for Reunion activities yet except for the bus tour on Friday morning, and the Banquet on Saturday evening.

Other things are "in the works", but we have not yet set up the final schedule. Those activities are: A talk about the VA and treatment for PTSD by George Plunkett's daughter-in-law and a follow-up regarding TET 68 by Charles Penley and Bob Laymon.

Also being worked on is possibly hearing from someone about the USAF Air Refueling Wing in Knoxville, TN, and the possibility of some of us visiting a VA Hospital about 90 minutes away.

But for sure, we have the Hospitality Suite open much of the time, for you to "Meet and Greet" your old and new friends.

So please plan on attending, fill out the form, and let us know your intentions.



WHOSE FUTURE

By: Charles E. Penley
377th SPS
Webmaster, TSNA

Charlie, I clearly remember the first time I saw you on the other side of the twenty kilometer, defensive perimeter fencing, that surrounded Tan Son Nhut Air Base, on the Northwest outskirts of the capital city of Saigon. Even though it was thirty years ago, January 31, 1968, and the TET Lunar New Year Peace Accord was in effect. To me, it really was, only yesterday. You were mostly a shadow, moving about in a manner that indicated to me that you were very determined. By keeping yourself behind various structures, trees and bushes, it was clear that you did not want us to know of your presence. You were looking for the element of surprise. Under the rules of engagement we had to determine first if you were friend or foe. You stopped about 100 meters off our west perimeter of Tan Son Nhut. At that distance no verbal challenge of, "Halt -- Dung Lai," could have or would have been given. In my mind, I determined that you were indeed, FOE, the Enemy, Charlie, Viet Cong, VC, NVA. Even though I did not know precisely what you were doing as an individual, I did know what your goal was. You were with thousands of your friends and comrades.

The master plan for the TET offensive, code named "Tong Cong Kich - Tong Khoi Nghia," (TCK-TKN)(General Offensive - General Uprising) had begun. We observed you setting up your 81mm mortars and then firing them. Of seeing your comrades blowing up the O-51 Gate with bungalow type charges. Observing you and hearing you over-taking the O-51 Bunker, containing five of my Security Police friends (SGT's Coggins, Cyr, Fischer, Hebron and Mills, with only Coggins

coming out alive after nearly eight hours of you being in the bunker with him.), being attacked with RPG-2 and RPG-7 rocket propelled grenades and AK-47's. The dreadful killing had begun and just as much as you were going to kill me, I was going to kill you. With a hatred!!! I was going to kill you! Coming directly at you with such a hatred in my heart. I had never seen you before but my friends and I knew what you had in mind. You were here to disperse on us your version of Death and Destruction.

You did not know it at the time, but we knew for several hours that you might be coming that day. We had captured several of your comrades the day before and believe me, when I say they were talking. Most of the mama-sans on post had not come to work that day. Several of them also told us, "Tonight would be a bad place." Then we knew it officially, at 1730 hours, when the 377th Combat Security Police Squadron was placed in Security Condition Red, that you probably were coming that fateful night! Around 0322 hours, February 1, 1968, you began your assault on the Eastern perimeter and Northern perimeter of Tan Son Nhut's fortified boundaries.

With your NVA and Viet Cong's massive TET offensive, specifically with the multi-battalions that attacked Tan Son Nhut on our Western perimeter, I believed that anyone of us, of the American forces, could die that night. Most of us were very young, eighteen and nineteen years old. I was only twenty-two. I was considered the old man, in my sector. Some of us were single and some were married with children. We looked forward to a FUTURE, what-ever it may bring us! For the single men, it might be to get married, have children, to experience our sons and daughters first handshake in life is the greatest of all; the clasp of an infants fist around a parents finger, raise a family, go to college, to better ourselves and our families. To see our children grow up and become good adults. In due time, for our children to have our grand-children. Looking back

to yesterday, plus thirty years, maybe you might have had such aspirations as we did. Knowing that you too, must have had loved ones, who cared for you. As you see, in a way, you and I were not that much different when it came to our personal home life.

You see, for me to have my FUTURE, I must deny you, your FUTURE!!! I didn't have a choice; you made my choice for me when you attacked Tan Son Nhut. As a result of your actions, you died for your country and your beliefs. You made us, the Judge, Jury and Executioner. The Judge said, "Charlie, stand up. You have had a trial by combat and have been found guilty, and that the court takes positive delight in sentencing you, to Death!!! You are a young man in good health, and the time of the year is wonderful. It's your New Year, the holiday spirit is alive with music and love is in the air, soon grass and other plants will be pushing their fresh green heads out, birds will be singing of love and mating, flowers will be dressing up the valleys. But, you will not see all this, for you will dead and more than six feet under. In the deep trench made by a bulldozer on the West end of the runway. Covered with lime and then followed by tons of the good earth." My decision and resulting reaction was made in a split second. The very instant that the first mortar round was fired by you and having it land inside the defensive perimeter. With that explosion that surely sounded like lightning and thunder.

As it was reported in the March 11, 1968, issue of Newsweek Magazine, page 64-65, you were so confident of winning the Battle of Tan Son Nhut and the Battle of Saigon, that shortly before the offensive began, you placed an order at a renowned Chinese restaurant in Cholon for 400 meals, to celebrate your victory. Cholon, being the Chinese sector of Saigon and a large VC stronghold. In addition, you invited the Vietnamese émigrés' living in Paris to return to Saigon in order to participate in a coalition government. You also invited the

Russian media to accompany you into battle, in Saigon, so as to write first person articles about your anticipated glorious victory over the Americans. Expecting to find ARVN armored tanks at the armor school, to capture the U.S. Embassy, to seize the Saigon radio station (wanting to play a tape-recorded message from Ho Chi Minh). Further, expecting to capture Premier Nguyen Van Loc and force him to order a cease-fire over the said radio station. To free several thousand prisoners in prison, arm them and turn them loose on the population. To overtake an ARVN post and finding that their artillery weapons had the breech mechanism removed, to capture American warplanes and further use them against Tan Son Nhut and the capital city of Saigon! In these endeavors, you were never successful.

Even though many of us came away from "Nam" with wounds that would heal with time, there is one wound that seems to never heal. The wound that is in my mind, of memories of those terrible days gone by, of friends good and brave, whose names appear on The Wall. The despicable times that we had to endure. My friends were Security Policemen and most were K-9 Sentry Dog Handlers. Most of us had not begun to live our life to its fullest. Today, my previous security police friends are doctors, lawyers, dentists, optometrists, writers, policemen, postmen, laborers and such.

If they are like me, they have reached middle age, gained weight and still have their FUTURES!!! Some are members of the Vietnam Dog Handlers Association, Vietnam Security Police Association, Tan Son Nhut Association, 1st Cavalry Division Association, 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Association, and the Military Police Corps Association, and Son's of the American Revolution.



MEMORIAL DAY

By: The Reverend Dr. Billy T. Lowe,
Chaplain, Tan Son Nhut Association

Yesterday was Memorial Day. It was a day for me that was filled with reflection and thought. There is and always remains a stirring in the heart and soul of those who honor the commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill". Is there any justification for war? Please, read on.

Memorial Day was first recognized as Declaration Day in 1868, honoring those who had lost their lives in the Civil War. It has become a sacred day to pay tribute to all those who died in service to our Nation at war and peace.

Dr. Roger Shinn, professor of Christian Ethics at New York's Union Seminary, helps us to understand the conscience of the American servicewoman and serviceman when he saluted his comrades in arms with the most pungent words ever written regarding the personal and intimate courage of standing up for what one believes is right. "Grim as war was, it appeared to them a little better choice than standing by while aggressors conquered, exterminated, and poisoned the minds of children...In our world, how do responsible people act responsibly when in a senseless world; how do men act rationally in an incomprehensible era; how do they act morally in a demonic conflict; some of those who entered the war, entered with a prayer of repentance for their participation in the sins of the world that made war the best choice they could see. The wiser made no claims to perfection for their own cause. They were resolved to fight it with half-truths. They made choices when no choice was right. They sought to rid the world of its filth with no expectations of keeping themselves clean. Rarely do any of us really accept the cost of our beliefs, but times do come when they demand accountability." More—→

On this Memorial Day weekend past, I honored those who paid the ultimate price to preserve our freedom and democracy; and who gave their all for the rights and freedoms of others in foreign lands who have and are facing oppression from a wicked regime. And this I know, that there comes a time when we must sin in order to avoid evil. I am just one of the grateful people all over our nation who offered a prayer to God for those who made the ultimate sacrifice. God will bless us and our Nation for it.



**THANK YOU
TO ALL WHO
HAVE SERVED**

JAMES BROGDON'S STORY

By: James T. Brogdon

I enjoyed reading the newsletters on the site.

VIET NAM 67/68: 12th RITS / 7th AF

I was stationed there Dec 67-Dec 68 and worked in the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron (12th RITS) next to 7th AF HQ. My job was to support the pilots with reconnaissance photos to support bombing missions by Fighter/Bomber aircraft. The three photos of varying scale were provided to each pilot: 1. Target, 2. Aim (for getting aiming points), and 3. Area (large scale photo of area).

When the TET Offensive kicked off, I took my camera outside and photographed using available light. Well, after seeing the damage later at daylight, no more stand in the open to photograph a rocket attack. I can confirm the story about the commanders not issuing M-16's to the troops and they were either locked in a Conex or Arms room and that is where they stayed.

I received two injuries during the rocket attacks, the first in February when a 122mm Rocket flew overhead and landed 50 feet away in the Helicopter area (soon thereafter another rocket hit the new Beverage Building Red Horse had built at the BX). I dove to the ground when I heard the whoosh overhead. Well the BVD's I was wearing did not protect me from the hard pack and gravel we called dirt at 3AM in the morning. None of the rocket hit me but my belly slide into the ground took a lot of skin off. Well, by noon, my uniform had attached to the wounds and I was off to the AF Medical Clinic next to the Mortuary where I was offered a Purple Heart (I refused and they serviced my needs). The river of blood in the drainage ditch next to the mortuary was a sobering reality of the cost of war.

The second injury was exiting the upstairs to get to the ground floor during the May offensive. Well as soon as I made it to the landing on the stairs outside of the building, a blinding flash of light was my key to jump the hand rail and get on the ground ASAP. Well, that was 30 days walking with crutches.

During the May Offensive as the attacks continued near the BX area, four of us were on the top landing watching the aircraft drop bombs and strafe enemy in the cemetery near the perimeter and listen to the massive gun battle. Well, to our surprise, spent rounds hit the jet engine containers along the helicopter compound and slammed into the building missing all four of us. Immediate retreat to locate helmet and flak vest and put more barriers between the spent incoming rounds and my warm body.

SECURITY POLICE AND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER COMMUNICATIONS:

In the 12th RITS, we had a hand held radio that allowed our unit to monitor Security Police radio traffic. Well, I will always remember the Airman manning the main gate calling in a situation report and then asking advice.

MAIN GATE: Main gate is being engaged by enemy fire.

CONTROL: How many, how far away, can you get a clear shot?

MAIN GATE: See one man firing automatic weapon on our position, individual is 200 yards away, no I cannot return fire without hitting the woman and child the VC is using as a shield. What are your orders Sarge?

CONTROL: How far away are they now, can you get a clear shot?

MAIN GATE: About 150 yards, no clear shot, Sarge can I return fire?

CONTROL: No, however when they are within 100 yards, take out the target and try not to kill the woman and child.

MAIN GATE: OK, (and, with mike keyed, he hollered RETURN FIRE).

MAIN GATE: All are down. Woman

Well in Aug 72-Feb73 I was back at TSN and initially assigned to the 12th RITS until they found out I was Air Intelligence versus Photo Intelligence. Well it took them 30 days and then I started the long ride daily to MACV HQ where I served as the NCOIC of the TACAIR Targeting Shop. Additional duties included MACV Perimeter Defense Force more often than I can remember. The issue was drawing my weapon from the Air Force Conex during normal duty hours so I could pull my guard duty in one of the towers around MACV HQ. Well after the AF Commander of the unit did his barracks inspection of the Ponderosa Barracks, north of the helicopter compound (BX was on south side of Helicopter compound), I was told an M-16 was not to be stored in my wall locker and to turn it in immediately after the inspection. I explained the issue with my MACV Perimeter Defense Force duties required easy access to a weapon if the base is at-

After closing the MACV complex in Feb 73 and setting up operations in Thailand at NKP in the USAG HQ, I was soon thereafter put on a plane and sent to Cambodia for 70 days. The civilian clothes was a nice change of attire but the fine local food resulted in a loss of 46 pounds. Well upon returning and nearing the end of my year tour in SEA, I was put in for a Bronze Star for my time in Cambodia (when we weren't there). Major Borts received the award application back with a comment that unless he could tell where I went and what I did, he would have to downgrade the award to a JSCM for what I did at MACV / USAG HQ. Have tried to locate the two LT's and the Major to readdress the issue so I can get the award I deserved for service rendered. Still trying to locate the service members I worked with but since I branched

James T. Brogdon



NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

John A. Lenhardt
7th AF SAC SARPF (Strategic Air
Photo Recon. Facility)
April 66—September 66

Kevin Lee Danner, Sr.
1876th Comm. Sqdn.
September 70—September 71

Our Army base was general maintenance and supply for all Hawk Missiles (Army and Marines) in Vietnam.

Loren G. Peterson
79th Ordnance Det. Security Platoon.

[illegible]

Tan Son Nhut Association 2009 Reunion Registration

October 15—18, 2009

Pigeon Forge TN

OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY AND LEGACY OF TAN SON NHUT AND THE
VIETNAM CONFLICT

YES, SIGN ME UP FOR THE REUNION!

NAME _____ BRANCH OF SERVICE _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

NAME OF YOUR GUEST(S): _____

PLEASE LIST ANY SPECIAL NEEDS: _____

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY NOTIFY: _____

IS THIS YOUR FIRST REUNION?: _____ (IF NO, WHAT YEAR(S) DID YOU ATTEND TSNA
REUNIONS? _____

REGISTRATION FEES:

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING REUNION _____ X \$130= _____

OPTIONAL BUS TOUR :

Smoky Mountain Special 9:00AM – 12:30PM Friday October 16

Enjoy a three hour journey to the upper reaches of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. As you tour on the Smoky Mountain Special you will experience some of the most spectacular panoramic views of the Smokies. Visit the Sugarland's Visitor Center, beautiful mountain overlooks and Newfound Gap, where President Franklin Roosevelt dedicated the National Park in 1940. Your guide will give you the history of the park along with information about the area wildlife and legends of the region.

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING TOUR _____ X \$27. _____

TOTAL REMITTANCE \$. _____

PAYMENT MUST BE MAILED NO LATER THAN October 1st, 2009

PLEASE MAKE PAYMENTS PAYABLE TO THE **TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION** AND MAIL TO:

TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION

C/O GEORGE PLUNKETT

587 WILLIAMS CIRCLE

WEST COLUMBIA, SC 29172

**SEE THE
REUNION ACTIVITIES
REPORT ON PAGE 3**



SO COME ON DOWN

AND

“FORGE” NEW

FRIENDSHIPS

AND

RENEW

OLD ONES!

Tan Son Nhut Association
P. O. Box 236
Penryn PA 17564

Revetments is an official publication of the
Tan Son Nhut Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 236, Penryn, PA 17564-0236
The Association is a non-profit fraternal organization
chartered under the appropriate statutes and law.

President: Robert Robinson Gales
Vice President/Revetments Editor: Larry E. Fry
Treasurer: Carol Bessette
Secretary: Dale Bryan
Dir. of Communications/Webmaster: Charles Penley
Director of Marketing: Johnnie Jernigan
Dir. of Membership Development: George Plunkett
Director of Public Relations: Richard Carvell
Director At Large Pro Tempore: Bob Laymon
Chaplains: Rev. Dr. James M. Warrington and
Rev. Dr. Billy T. Lowe
Co-Founders/Presidents Emeriti: Don Parker and
John Peele
President Emeritus: Wayne Salisbury

Web Site: www.tsna.org

Annual Membership: \$20.00
Five Year Membership: \$80.00
Life Membership: \$180.00



REVETMENTS ARTICLES

Once again, your editor is at the point of not having a whole lot of items for Revetments—like maybe two months worth! One member, Harold Boone, has suggested a number of topics that could be written about, and I am putting them out now for ALL OF YOU to think about, and then sit down and write about!! Some of the topics suggested are:

My best day at TSN (not including going home)

Things I did that were stupid (and got away with).

I saw it but still don't believe it.

Rules that had no place in war.

A gift you received.

Do you remember this happening, or this person?

What is your fondest memory of Tan Son Nhut (again, NOT your last day!)

What "unusual" TSN organization do you know about or want to know more about?

Did your post TSN career, or post military career, wind up being the same thing you did at TSN?

SEND TO: LFRY2@DEJAZZD.COM. . Please include a "Title" that I can use! Or handwrite and send to me at PO BOX 236, Penryn PA 17564. Thanks! Larry Fry