



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam

FEBRUARY 2011



Special COMSEC Support Detachment-Tan Son Nhut

By Andy Csordas, Spec 5
Special COMSEC Support Det.
Jun 70—Dec 70

I entered the Army after a deferred enlistment during the Tet offensive of 68. I had become 1A and knew it was just a matter of time until I was drafted, so I enlisted to pick an MOS. After many weeks of training I finished with an MOS of 31S30, Field General Crypto Repairman, depot level. I spent some time in Detroit and about a year in Cleveland before receiving orders for Vietnam. Through some unusual circumstances I was led to believe that I was going to Vietnam on a special assignment and fully expected to live in a hotel and wear civilian clothes. I will never forget the belly laugh by the E7 when I approached him after I arrived in country and asked about my "special assignment". Needless to say mine was no more special than anyone else's assignment.

I processed into my battalion level outfit at Long Bien June 1, 1970 with only nine months left on my enlistment and ended up at Tan Son Nhut where a friend from school had one month left in country. At the time we lived in the upstairs of a barracks at MACV Annex. The AFVN guys all lived downstairs. About a month later we moved into our repair compound in the H3 Heliport across from the Post Exchange. We repaired classified gear and our repair compound had to be manned 24/7. Our troop strength was steadily being reduced and we did not have enough manpower to man 24/7 unless we lived in the repair compound, which was one medium sized building, a bunker and two sand bagged conexes with a locked fence around the perimeter.

We were surrounded by the heliport, a lot with helicopter part containers, Camp Alpha and the road to the H3 Terminal.

We mostly repaired crypto gear for other countries troops including ARVN, Australia, and Korea, but by far the largest work load was from the ARVN's. Some equipment just showed up, we were not sure where it came from so it may have been from US outfits. Our battalion level unit was located in Long Bien and there were detachments like ours, Special Comsec Support Detachment, from the "Delta to the DMZ" as they used to say. Ours was one of the larger units with approximately 18 people assigned when I arrived in country which was reduced over time to approximately 9-10 when I came home at Christmas 1970. That included one guy who lived at the ARVN KL-7 operator training base at Vung Tau. He brought his tanned body, along with broken KL-7's, back to our compound once a month on pay day. Some of the other detachments were only one guy working in a trailer at a base camp.

Most of the gear we repaired was older equipment including more KL-7's than we ever wanted to repair from the ARVN's. The ARVN's were not given access to modern Crypto gear. We did work on newer equipment like KW-7's, KY-28's, KY-38's and older but still much newer than anything the ARVN's used the KY-8.

Jerry Proc has a good Crypto site at <http://www.jproc.ca/crypto/menu.html>, which includes lots of great information and pictures of the gear we repaired and many other items and articles.

The KW-7's were used for teletype transmission, typed on a keyboard at

the point of origin, which provided a paper print out and a punched paper tape at the receiving end. I am told the KW-7 was used for radio traffic as well in other situations but our application was strictly teletype through land lines. These units generally came from the Aussies and other allies.

The KY-8, KY-28 and KY-38 were all used to encipher radio traffic and were all compatible if set to the same settings. A KY-8 was transistor technology and quite large, approximately the size of a counter model microwave oven of today, and was typically Jeep or truck mounted.

The KY-28 was typically installed in a helicopter; you may have seen it as a grey box mounted under the pedals on the left seat of a Huey approximately 6" x 8" x 12". The KY-38 was carried on the back of the grunt radio man. The unit with the battery attached was approximately the size of three cartons of cigarettes.

All of these units used analog technology, whereas the KW-7 used digital technology. If listening on the same frequency being used with these units all you would hear is static and noise unless you were using a compatible unit with the same setup. These units were able to save lives on a daily basis by keeping our plans and movements out of the other side's hands.

The KY-28 and KY-38 had quite sophisticated technology for the time. They used six or eight layer circuit boards and IC chips which were not at all common at that period of time. The units had individual electronic components including transistors, capacitors, resistors, etc. But there were a number of chips that provided much of the enabling circuitry. These

By: Bob Chaffee
TSNA Chaplain

chips were very basic and quite large by today's standards, 8 or 12 legs, 3/8" square and perhaps 2" long, but were very sophisticated for the time. It took lots of deliberate care to properly solder a chip through all circuit board layers and not end up with a cold solder joint. After soldering a chip in place we would mix epoxy and attach the new chip to the circuit board to minimize movement, particularly on the KY-38 which received a lot of shock and movement on the back of the grunt in his normal course of the day.

The KL-7, used by the ARVN's, was technology left over from the Korean War and was introduced in 1953. It was a stand alone portable unit enclosed in a fiber glass case. It printed an encrypted message on a paper tape in five letter groups. After every five letters the unit placed a space on the paper tape. Encryption was provided by a series of eight rotors that were set to a specific code by the operator. When the encrypted message was typed into the KL-7 with rotors set to the same code a clear message was printed. This unit also used four vacuum tubes, with two extra tubes plugged in the board for spares. As I said it was old technology and was quite similar to the enigma machines used by the Germans in WWII. There is a great book, *A Man Called Intrepid*, which includes WWII crypto intrigue and information about the Enigma Machine by William Stevenson.

The KL-7 base board had a series of posts on the bottom side which had a wiring harness soldered to the posts, not printed circuits. These units were thrown in the back of trucks, dropped all the time and generally had a pretty rough life which resulted in damaged vacuum tubes and lots of cold solder joints on the main board. They also came into the shop covered in Agent Orange. Frequently we could not find a failed component so we just resoldered all of the connections on the wiring harness posts which would fix the problem. The continuously rotating print wheel had critical timing

which sometimes required a speed adjustment on the motor to print the correct letters.

Another constant problem with the unit was corrosion on the rotor contacts. After every character was typed into the unit the rotors would step one notch. If there was corrosion, however minor, on the contacts which prevented a complete circuit through the rotors and unit the rotors would stop stepping. The normal operator kit included contact cleaners, can you say an erasure, for this problem. When the rotors stopped stepping on the units we were repairing in the shop we would sometimes strike the rotor basket with the handle of a large screwdriver and it would start working again. It had to be difficult for the operators working under duress.

The KL-7 had a bridge rectifier that used twelve diodes to convert AC power into DC power. Most bridge rectifiers use four diodes, but these older diodes required three on each leg and were notorious for their failure rate. At one time we had over 100 KL-7s's on the shelf waiting for diodes, the diodes were always on back order. One day we received all of the diodes we had on backorder and more. The newer diodes only required four for the entire bridge rectifier and were part of a retrofit any time we had a unit in the shop. Bad diodes or not, every unit got the new diodes from that time forward.

We then got to work some pretty long hours, 12-16 hour shifts seven days a week until the back log of repairs got back to almost nothing. We worked almost exclusively on the KL-7s during that time period and even got help from other techs who arrived from the other detachments to help.

I may add some other details in another post, but suffice to say I received an early out to come home and start school in January 1971. I was fortunate enough to be home to have Christmas with my bride of one year who still puts up with me!

One of these days I must change my reading habits, the part where I take notes from an article and write it on a "post it" but not note where I got the quote. This time it's a quote from Martha Stewart that says "I have a short memory for painful things". That statement triggered a lot of thoughts for me as I am sure it does for you. The 1960's and early 70's are not a part of us to create short memories and many of those memories were in fact very painful. Our separation from families and loved ones, the loss of comrades, maybe painful wounds, none of these are to be taken as acceptable for a short memory.

The current conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan has produced a consciousness of the effect of memory on our very beings. Some of those who carry painful memories of their service time, like some of us today, need the care and concern of the brotherhood of those who shared the events and times that caused the memories.

To me, we share good memories but only to those who understand the past will truly hear the call for help of the painful ones.

The month of February is often referred to as the month of love, symbolized with a heart. It is but 28 days long but could we not devote a few moments of this little month to stand with those whose painful memories need our caring and yes, our prayers. I'm sorry Martha, but there are a lot of us who don't have short memories for painful things but thank God we have friends who will help us live with those very memories.



We have two new BX items (See items T-37 and T-38 at bottom of PX/BX Web Page)

The first is a **"Vietnam Ribbon Dog Tag Decal"** for your car or truck.



It is 3 inches by 6 inches in size and nicely designed on clear decal paper. It looks very nice next to the new TSNA decal that I will send with it. It will readily identify you as a Vietnam Veteran and is only \$4.50 including postage and handling.

The second item is a beautiful **Vietnam Warrior Bracelet**.



It is designed and hand made by TSNA Life Member, **Gary Redlinski**. The current in-stock size will fit a wrist size of 8 inches in diameter. Other sizes, either larger or smaller, can be special ordered and it will be made and shipped to you as soon as possible (normally within two weeks).

Each Bracelet is hand made using double strand, extra strong monofilament, magnetic clasp, magnetic hematite beads, gold plated spacer beads and glass seed beads, in Vietnam Green, Yellow, Red and black and white POW/MIA colors. The bead patterns vary slightly, making each one unique. The cost of \$20.00 includes postage and handling.

Please read the Usage Warning for use of magnetic items.

These items as well as many others can be ordered using the PX/BX Order Form available on the BX web page at <http://www.tsna.org/tsnapxbx/index.html>. BTW, if you have suggestions for our BX store, please let me know and I will look into including it in the store.

Thanks
Johnnie Jernigan
Director of Marketing
Jernigan1@ameritech.net

Included in this Edition of Revetments is an updated version of our PX/BX Order Form for your use.



TAN SON NHUT ASSOCIATION PX/BX MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____ E-Mail: _____
 City: _____ St.: _____ Zip: _____ Member? Yes ___ No ___

Item #	Product Description	Type or Size	Price	Qty Order	Total
T1	TSNA Challenge Coin	3-D 1 5/8"	\$11.50		
T2	TSNA Challenge Coin in Velvet Box		\$14.50		
T3	Velvet Coin Display Box		\$ 4.50		
T4	TSNA Lapel Pin	1"	\$ 8.00		
T5	TSNA Key Fob (no Ribbon)		\$ 4.50		
T6	TSNA Key Fob with Ribbon		\$ 4.50		
T7	TSNA Ball Cap	Black	\$16.00		
T8	TSNA License Plate Frame		\$12.50		
T9	TSNA Pictorial Project CD	1 CD	\$15.00		
T10	TSNA 2006 Pictorial CD	1 CD	\$20.00		
T11	TSNA 2006 Revetments Archive CD	1 CD	\$20.00		
T12	TSNA 2006 Pictorial & Revetments Combo CD	2 CD set	\$35.00		
T13	TSNA 2008 Pictorial CD	1 CD	\$16.00		
T14	TSNA Patch	3"	\$ 6.00		
T15		4"	\$ 6.00		
T16		8"	\$20.00		
T17	"The Victors" CD	1 CD	\$10.00		
T18	"Victors II/TET-68" CD Set	2 CD set	\$10.00		
T19	Round TSNA Logo Magnets	5 3/4 "	\$4 each		
T20			\$7 for 2		
T21			10 for 3		
T22	POW-MIA Tail Light Decal Set	3 1/2" by 5"	\$6.00		
T23	Ball Cap Doober		\$ 4.50		
T24	"Vietnam Ribbon" Patch.	1 1/2" by 4 1/2"	\$ 4.50		
T25	Vietnam Veteran w/ Ribbon Patch	3" by 6"	\$6.00		
T26	"In Memory of ..." Vietnam Patch	2 1/2" by 4 1/4"	\$ 4.50		
T27	Vietnam Veteran w/ Ribbon Key Fob		\$ 4.50		
T28	USA / Vietnam Crossed Flag Lapel Pin		\$ 4.50		
T29	Vietnam Veteran 1959-1975 Lapel Pin		\$ 4.50		
T30	Vietnam Veteran w/ Ribbon License Plate		\$9.00		
T31	Vietnam Veteran Lanyard	22" long	\$ 4.50		
T32	Vietnam Veteran Oval Auto Magnet		\$ 4.50		
T33	POW * MIA Auto Magnet	5"	\$ 4.50		
T34	TSNA 2010 Pictorial CD with free gift	1CD plus gift	\$17.00		
T35	TSNA Laser-cut 3-D Logo Circle	12"	\$50.00		
T36	TSNA Laser-cut Picture Frame (Black or Brown)	10" by 12"	\$40.00		
T37	Vietnam Ribbon Dog Tag Decal		\$ 4.50		
T38	Warrior Bracelet	8"	\$20.00		
Note: All prices include shipping and handling.				Total Purchases	\$

If you wish you can make a tax deductible donation to one of the following funds.		
Legacy/Endowment Fund	These funds are intended to insure the long-term viability of the Association	
General Fund	These funds are intended for day-to-day operations, collection acquisitions, and program development	
TSNA is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Donations to TSNA are deductible to the extent allowed by law.		Total Donation \$

Make Check/Money Order to: Tan Son Nhut Association and mail with a completed order form to:

Tan Son Nhut Association
 Attn: Johnnie Jernigan
 956 Donham Drive
 Beavercreek, OH 45434

Note: Order form can be included with your membership application/renewal.

TSNA 2011 BUDGET--FINAL

	2010 BUDGET	2010 ACTUAL	2011 BUDGET
<u>CASH INFLOW</u>			
BX Income	4,000	3,581	3,000
Donations			
General Fund	950	665	500
Endowment (Legacy)	350	265	150
Interest	100	---	100
Membership Dues	4,300	4,548	4,400
Dues Transferred from Membership Reserve	----	2,300	2,420
Reunion Income	24,000	13,879	11,875
 Total Inflow	 33,700	 25,238	 22,445

Note:
\$3,808 of 2010 multi-year dues payments placed in Membership Reserve account. These funds will be transferred as "Income" in future years on a pro-rated basis. Estimated figure for 2011 multi-year dues to Membership Reserve: \$2,868.

CASH OUTFLOW

Administrative/Discretionary Expenses	700	1,635	1,500
BX Expenses	1,400	1,574	900
Other Organizations	1,000	40	120
Membership Administration	2,100	1,607	1,600
Legal	1,500	2,435	2,400
Reunion Expenses	19,000	20,515	10,800
Revetments	1,100	1,027	1,200
 Total Outflow	 26,800	 28,833	 18,520

TSNA NET WORTH—AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2010

Operating Funds	\$9,144
Awards Fund	1,000
Legacy Fund	1,243
Membership Reserves	7,584
Reunion Expense Reserve	3,000
CD	5,000
 TOTAL 12/31/10	 \$26,971
 TOTAL 12/31/09	 \$28,719



On January 18, 2010, the Board approved the 2011 Budget for TSNA. It is provided here, along with the 2010 Financial Report, for the information of the membership. A major financial consideration is on the horizon: design and execution of a TSNA Memorial at the National Museum of the US Air Force at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. Target date for its dedication is the 2012 reunion. A committee is being formed, preliminary coordination has been accomplished, and the Board is dedicated to accomplishing this mission, on schedule. This will be reflected in the 2012 budget.

Carol Bessette
TSNA Treasurer



The Major Mom Story--A Suitable Archive

By: Carol Bessette
TSNA Treasurer

Some of you may remember the very involved story in the December 2009 and February 2010 Revetments about Major Mom, the nurse at TSN who waved to the SPs as they rode by her BOQ on their shift change.

As has been earlier reported, Major Mom, who was really Lt. Colonel Ruth K. Sidisin, USAF (Ret), passed way in October.

A few weeks ago, at a social function in the Washington area, I was chatting with Brig. General Wilma Vaught, USAF (Ret), who is the President of the Board of Directors of the Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

(To learn more about the Memorial, check out this web site:

www.thewomensmemorial.org; you may well know someone who should be registered there. In particular, I have found that WWII female veterans tend to downplay their service: "I was just doing what was needed." An aunt of my husband's never considered herself a veteran, although she was an Army nurse who waded ashore in southern France, etc.)

I mentioned to General Vaught that I have a copy of Major Mom's obituary (and, of course, I had to recount the whole story of nurses waving to the SPs), and I asked if it would be appropriate to send this to the Memorial. She responded affirmatively, so Lt. Colonel Sidisin's obituary, plus all the pages from the Revetment issues a year ago, recounting so many memories from the TSNA members, will be filed in The Women's Memorial.

Yes, Major Mom left her mark--first in our memories, and now in a very appropriate archive.



AGENT ORANGE: The Gift That Keeps on Giving

AGENT ORANGE. As Vietnam veterans, we all know what it is and what it was used for in Vietnam. But unless you have actually been affected by an ailment connected to it, you may tend to brush the thought of Agent Orange aside. As a veteran who served anywhere in-country, that might be a very serious mistake.

In the early days when the news of how Agent Orange could cause serious problems in the later years of Vietnam veterans broke, we were led to think that it didn't concern us. We had no direct contact with the stuff. Heck, those are cautionary stories for infantryman and Marines who spent every waking day in the boonies of Vietnam. We were at Tan Son Nhut...Saigon...Long Binh...Bien Hoa, and any number of places in III Corps lending support to combat units. And that's the problem, we were in III Corps, the most heavily sprayed tactical zone of the Vietnam War. It makes good sense why that was, III Corps was the heart of the United States war effort. Everything was there, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the world's busiest airport at the time, and Long Binh, the largest U.S. military installation in the world in the same time period. It is obvious why those areas of Vietnam would be sprayed more than some other areas.

Being a member of the U.S. Army, I came to Vietnam through Bien Hoa, and spent several days processing through the 90th Replacement Battalion at Long Binh. My first thought on seeing Long Binh was how sparse in trees and other vegetation it was. When we would experience a flash monsoon rain storm, the place was one big mud hole. There was nothing else but the bare clay soil to hold the rain. In recent years, I understand that Long Binh experienced an accidental spill of upward to 50,000 gallons of the Agent Orange chemical in 1966. This was mixed with the soil and often used to pave roads

Many have described the smell of the chemical as having an oily or diesel fuel smell. That may be an accurate description. I worked at an open window at Camp Alpha, and I would often sense that smell in the air, especially at night. The smell even came from the insecticide cans the Vietnamese papa-sans used to spray for bugs at Camp Alpha.

When I left Vietnam and separated from the Army upon arrival at Oakland, I had the usual military separation physical given to all personnel and a briefing in which we were asked if we had any physical complaints. Naturally, at the time there were none. I felt healthy and great, and I had that feeling all through the 70s and early 80s. Then, in March of 1988, I began to show problems of heart failure. I had a chronic ache across my shoulders, a persistent cough, and for the first time, a shortness of breath whenever I walked short distances. In the final stages, I had a swelling of my ankles and wrists. This forced me to see my doctor.

Entering my doctor's office, he took one look at me and told me that he didn't even have to examine me to tell me what was wrong...I was in severe heart failure. Luckily, the hospital was right across the parking lot and he sent me there immediately. As I walked across the parking lot, the doctor had alerted the ER that I was coming and what he thought my diagnosis was going to be. By the time I walked through the doors of the ER, they had summoned a cardiologist who confirmed the diagnosis, severe heart failure complicated by stroke level high blood pressure.

I was admitted to an ICU immediately, examined, and medications prescribed to alleviate the symptoms. My new found cardiologist checked on me several times a day talking to me to determine what may have brought on my condition. I was only 42 at the time, and he thought me too young to have a sudden onset of heart failure. After a week to stabilize my condition,

he had me transferred to a city hospital in Philadelphia to be seen by the cardiologist there.

In Philadelphia, they performed a catheterization and determined that I had four blocked arteries, three of which, were almost blocked completely. They scheduled me for an angioplasty which I had two days later. The following day, they released me, and I felt great once again. That week, following their advice, I saw my cardiologist at home again. Over the next year and a half, he scheduled numerous stress tests to insure my condition improved. He also said that I had high blood pressure and said he could not tell if it was the heart problem that had caused it, or whether it had caused the heart problem. It was the old which came first, the chicken or the egg story. His nurse had a sister who had served as a nurse in Vietnam. As I left his office for the last time she said, and I'll never forget her words to me now, "Watch your health very carefully. You're a walking time bomb." I didn't think much of it then. I had briefly mentioned that I had been in Vietnam. I thought the comment had fallen on deaf ears. It hadn't.

I returned to work and didn't have any problems or relapses for seven years.

On the night of November 9 into the 10th, 1995, I had a stroke in my sleep. I didn't feel a thing when it happened. I woke up on the morning of the 10th with right side paralysis. The EMT squad took me to the same hospital where I had been treated seven years before with the heart problem. Again I was diagnosed, my condition made stable, then transferred to a second hospital in the area that did stroke rehabilitation. I spent three months there and was released at the end of January 1996.

This time, my condition was determined to be permanent and I could not return to work. So, involuntarily retired, I spent my days reading. Now I had had two serious incidents within the space of seven years, and I was

REVETMENTS

only 49. I couldn't help but wonder why.

One day early in my new status as a retiree, I was reading a copy of Vietnam magazine and happened across an article on Agent Orange. The article said that the VA now considered anyone who had stepped foot in the country of Vietnam to have been exposed and to look for certain health problems. This is when I first became aware of the VA's famous "ailment list." I closed my eyes and rolled back a thousand or so experiences in my mind to those years. Finally I arrived at the conclusion that it had to be. I didn't smoke and was not too drastically overweight.

For the past fourteen years since the stroke, I have read everything I could find on Agent Orange. I listened to every story anyone would tell about their experience. I now accept the fact that every Vietnam veteran is a victim of Agent Orange whether he has an ailment or not. It's just waiting to claim another victim.

In October, General Eric Shinseki, the Secretary of Veteran Affairs, announced three new ailments connected to Agent Orange exposure, one is ischemic heart disease. Finally, I had an opening to file my first VA medical claim. Heart disease with stroke as a secondary ailment. My wait may be over. Now my war with the VA may be just starting.

Jim Dugan, Life Member
178th Repl Co, 90th Repl Bn
Camp Alpha 1969-1970

April 11, 2010

TET 1968

Jan 26, 2011

Comments: The 43rd anniversary of the Tet Offensive of Jan. 31, 1968 is approaching us. It was and still is a most important date for the Tan Son Nhut Association. The Viet Cong laid it all out in an effort to destroy us and

to finally get rid of us.

Thanks to each and every military Brother and Sister on the ground and in the air and water, we survived and we endured. The Viet Cong were stopped and repelled and we had the Victory.

Bravo to our TSNA Brothers and Sisters!

Salute,

TSNA Sister - Janice Jones



NOTATIONS FROM APPLICATIONS

As a liaison I was assigned to represent the 765th in Saigon to the Aviation Material Management Center (AMMC) which was part of the 34th Group. Duties involved seeing aircraft parts were on our choppers (StraightArrows) as they made their daily "round robin" to meet me at "Hotel 3." Also it was one of my duties to pick up the Lt. Col. when he made his monthly Commanders meeting at 34th Group Headquarters.

Also, I lived in the barracks just down from a company of MP's. My barracks was next to the Saigon Golf Club and not more than 1/2 mile from MACV Headquarters where Gen. Creighton Abrams lived inside the compound.

Sp/5 Garry G. Burson
765th Transportation Battalion
Dec 69—Dec 70

While at TSN was A2C and worked Law Enforcement which covered a whole host of duties. Worked out of Building #19. Was on patrol the night of April 13, 1966 during attack at TSN.

William G. Doster
377th Air Police Squadron
Oct 65—Nov 66

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

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



NEW MEMBERS 

Mr. Harry B. Clark	PA	harryclark@comcast.net	May 65 - Feb 66	HHD 39th Signal Battalion U. S. Army
Mrs. Patricia Plunkett	SC	pamp teach@aol.com	N/A	Wife of TSNA VP George Plunkett
Mr. Raybon L. Windham	MS	disabledAme30622@bellsouth.net.	Jul 68 - Oct 70	460th A & E
Mr. Joseph Fettig	WA	joe_fettig@q.com	Jan 69 - Jan 70	377th SPS
Mr. Carl J. Ransom	NC		Dec 66 - Dec 67	OL1508 USAF Pacific Postal Courier
MSgt. Rex A. Carnes	CO	rexycar@comcast.net	Jan 62 - Jan 63	6440 Air Base Squadron
Mr. John Burns	MA	jjburns@comcast.net.	Sep 68 Sep 69	460th FMS;45th TAC Recon Sq

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