



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



OCTOBER 2020

Chaplain's Corner-Call Out for Insight

If you are like me there have been times in your life when you needed more wisdom or insight. It might have been trying to figure out a problem doing a repair, planning the future for your family or business or just figuring out a relationship.

Some of these occurrences might have been relatively small events and others may have been a really big event such as doing a long term expansion plan for your business or trying to fix that family relationship.

The book of Proverbs covers many subjects and has been quoted many times and in many places, even in a Rock and Roll song which I am sure we all remember (*Turn, Turn, Turn* written by Pete Seeger). So what should we do when we need insight, especially when we are talking about a serious life concern?

Proverbs 2:3-5 tells us . . . *if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.*

I had never thought of looking for insight or answers to life questions as you would search for silver or treasure. During my life and career I have had some tough times, just like all of you. Seeking wisdom from God has been very helpful. Of course we need to wait for God's timing not make God fit into our timing. Waiting can be very difficult, but sometimes the wait just makes everything fit together.

Call out to God as you search for insight and wisdom, Proverbs 2:10 tells us: *For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.* That is a very comforting thought when we are in the middle of the big decisions in our lives.

TSNA Associate Chaplain-Andy Csordas

SECOND TET IN MAY

By Gary Edwards
377th CES Bulk Fuels Storage

I got to TSN April 27, 1968.

On the final approach into TSN we could look down watching helos attacking a position right below us.

When we got off the plane at the Main Terminal, I am looking around wondering what are all these civilians doing here????

For the first let's say about a week and a half, I was housed as I remember over towards the Main terminal.

I remember we were housed next to the South Korean's barracks, if anyone remembers where they were located.

During that time we went to the base supply to get our issue of in-country clothing; boots, helmet, flak vest and other supply for my year long vacation!!!!

For a week and a half they had us doing odd jobs until I was finally assigned to the 377th Civil Engineer Sq., in the 800 barracks area.

The first morning I woke up at the CES 800 area to gunfire, bombing and looking overhead at an A-6 Skyraider diving on to the French Cemetery, outside the perimeter fence, plus helos attacking, just outside the perimeter of the base, near the Main Gate.

I went to the bomb shelter in front of the bathroom-showers for awhile. Nice way to start off my second week in country.

When the second Tet started they did not allow any civilians on base, so we had to do some of the jobs the civilians were doing.

I had to also do some guard duty, once on a truck going to Long Binh.

Another time another guy and I had to do guard duty in a pagoda that was outside the main road in front of the main gate to the left if you were coming into the base.

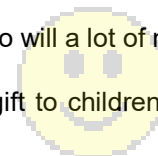
One time we had an extreme storm come through with lightning and thunder extremely low. It was so low that I was shaking in my boots.

Never been in anything like that. It seemed like it was at roof top height and we were going to be hit by it.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Life Member Gary for this article—from the October 2008 Revetments!

Boys will be boys, and so will a lot of middle-aged men.
~K. Hubbard~

CURIOSITY: Nature's gift to children by which they learn how little parents know.



Experiences of a New Guy in Saigon

By Hal Hunt
Oct 66 - Feb 74
Civilian Contractor

Not long after my arrival in the Republic of Vietnam, I overheard a conversation at work in which I was referred to as the “effengy”. At first the term puzzled me – I didn’t know what an “effengy” might be but then I realized it was just the abbreviation “FNG”. After a bit of thought I concluded it must mean “friendly new guy” so from here on we’ll go with that.

On Wednesday, October 12, 1966, I arrived in Saigon on a 90-day temporary duty (TDY) assignment as a civilian contractor to work with a team automating the scheduling and progress reporting of all of the U.S. Navy Officer-in-Charge of Construction Republic of Vietnam (OICC RVN) construction projects. Unlike most U.S. military personnel and civilian employees who at that time were arriving on Military Airlift Command (MAC) flights, my employer ticketed me on commercial carriers. I departed from the CONUS on a flight with a brief stopover in Anchorage, another in Tokyo, and arrival in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong I boarded an Air Vietnam aircraft for the direct flight to Saigon’s Tan-Son-Nhut International Airport. For that final leg of the trip we were passengers in Air Vietnam’s “pride of the fleet”, a Sud Aviation SE-210 Caravelle I. Although we were given a snack by the flight attendants, we weren’t served any hot meals or beverages. I didn’t think much about that until while exiting the aircraft upon arrival I noticed that the galleys were jammed from floor to ceiling with television sets, stereo equipment and other items that must have been very profitable to import without navigating the customs duty process.

After a long wait in the hot afternoon sun lined up outside the entrance to the international arrival terminal, we were called into the terminal one-by-one when it was our turn for arrival processing.

I was one of the fortunate new arrivals who was met and greeted by a representative from my employer. There were others who on their departure from CONUS had been given an address in Saigon to go to by taxi or a phone number to call for a pickup. Those were told to just go to the nearest payphone booth at the arrival terminal to do that, right?

After I was delivered to the company office villa at 129-a Truong Minh Giang Street I was ushered up to the roof where there was a servant’s room with two bunk beds that served as temporary quarters for new employees and employees visiting Saigon from various other job sites.

I started work the next morning in the office space on the first floor. The Country Manager and Business Manager with their household help occupied air-conditioned suites on the second floor.

At noon break, I was invited to lunch in the villa dining room. Lunch consisted of canned ham and canned cheese with sliced cucumber sandwiches on French bread and iced tea.

At the end of lunch, the Country Manager grasped the edge of the table with both hands, pushed his chair back, looked at me, and remarked: “Well Hal, welcome to Vietnam. We invited you to join us for lunch today because it’s your first day but normally this is for managers only. You should be able to get together with the other guys wherever they have lunch.” Also, now that you’re here, have you found a place to live yet?

The company’s front desk receptionist was a young Vietnamese lady who was fluent in English. She also was the company typist and used two pencils to type, striking the keys with the eraser ends so that she wouldn’t crack her well cared for fingernails. After lunch I asked her how someone could find a place to live in Saigon. She told me that I could check the housing rental ads in the Saigon Post, the daily English language newspaper. However, she said, I would waste my time to do that because by the time the ad appeared, unless the housing was unlivable for a westerner, it would have been rented by the U.S. Embassy for one of their civilian employees. Her recommendation was to find an area in town where I would like to live and look for houses or apartments with “For Rent” signs. Of course, the “For Rent” signs would be in Vietnamese so the first three words in the Vietnamese language that I learned were “nhà cho thuê” (house for rent).

Well, following the clever strategy of walking through muddy alleys in the monsoon rains looking for rental signs found me a place to live. I understand from another member of the TSNA that we share a common experience in Vietnam. After moving into my new quarters, I was soaped up in the middle of a shower when the water stopped running. No matter what

I tried I couldn't get it started again. It turned out that neither my new landlord or any of the neighbors let me know that the house had a rooftop water tank that had emptied and had to be refilled by a street vendor who sold water in our alley. As I wasn't home during the daytime, I wasn't able to arrange refilling the tank, but a helpful neighbor agreed to have their maid do that for me.

But let's get real. Whatever inconveniences or problems I experienced when arriving in Vietnam weren't even remotely comparable to what our guys went through on the fire bases and in the field. Then and now they earned and deserve all the appreciation and respect we can offer them. Thanks guys and Welcome Home!

Oh, and regarding my 90-day TDY assignment to Vietnam, one thing led to another that led to another, etc. until I finally departed from Saigon in February 1974. accompanied by my wife. and our four children, all born in Vietnam. but that's another story.

**3rd RADIO RESEARCH UNIT/224TH AVIATION BN. RR
TAN SON NHUT (SAIGON, VIETNAM)**

Walter Duke Jr.
USA LTC/Retired
Jun 65 - Jun 66

The 3rd Radio Research Unit (3 rd. RRU) was one of the first unit to be deployed to Vietnam, 13 May 1961, they were advisors to the ARVN.

They were using fixed stations and portable equipment on patrol, the results were not very accurate due to the terrain and the type of equipment the VC were using, also it exposed the operators to enemy action. On 22 Dec. 1961 the first American casualty was SP4 James T. Davis and nine (9) ARVN were killed while on patrol.

Based on these problems they started looking for another method of gathering their data, and came up with using airborne vehicles, first a CH19 helicopter, but it proved unusable due to vibrations. Next came the U6 "Beaver" three (3) were furnished from in country assets and modified and the first ARDF (Airborne Radio Direction Finder) aircraft were in the air collecting data.

Over time addition aircraft type's i.e U8's, U1A, CV2 & P2V's and improved equipment was developed.

My involvement began in April 1965 I had applied for the " Army Bootstrap Program" and after a visit to our great benefactors in the Pentagon, my branch had agreed to send me, but upon completion I would be on my way to Vietnam, I returned to dear old Fort Benning and the 2nd Aviation Bn. A few days later the Adjutant called me to tell me he had received orders on me for Vietnam, I asked him where I going enroute, he informed me that I was going to Greenville, TX. to an outfit called Ling-Tempco Vought. Having no idea what that was I was immediately on telephone to DA, at which time they informed me that Bootstrap was on hold and that I had been detailed to the Army Security Agency.

Upon arriving at Greenville, myself and several other aviators (9) I believe were ushered into a conference room, (William Cox, Lawrence Stone, John Parham, Elliott Polcene, Ray Renegar, Roy Rhodes, Thomas Holland, Myself and Merwin McCoy) explained why we were there and that there were seven (7) aircraft being modified at this plant (Code named Seven Roses) and that we were going to fly them to California to be shipped to Vietnam. After setting there for two weeks, the powers to be decided to allow us to go on leave and prepare our families to move and prepare for our trip to Vietnam.

We arrived in Vietnam in late June and were met at the Airplane and taken to a hotel type BOQ, quartered and left to get settled.

The next day we were taken to the ASA Compound for orientation and briefings, read several volumes of regulation pertaining to security, and were basically told that if we told anyone what we were doing they would cut our tongues out.

They told us if anyone asked what our job was, we were to tell them we were Clerk Typist. Apparently there were a lot of Majors and Captains in the ASA that worked as Clerk Typist.

The next day we went to the Aviation Section office and turned in our flight records and were briefed on how the various systems worked and set up a training schedule to start training us in the operation.

I don't remember how many aviators were there when we arrived, but there was only six aircraft, 3 Beavers and a U8F located at Tan Son Nhut, and 2 U8D's at Dan Nang. The commander was Major Stanley J. Frick.

After a few days of training we started reorganizing the section with various job assignments (We had majors everywhere) Major John Rieser was senior he became the Commander, Stanley Frick as Executive Officer, Guy Claybourn Operations and myself (Walter Duke) as Maintenance & Supply, thus the chain of command had been established.

Shortly after getting things under way, we were notified that the first batch (4) of the Seven Roses would be off loaded in the Philippines (Subic Bay) shortly and we needed to send a crew to process them and fly them to Vietnam. The reason they could not be off loaded in Vietnam, the wings could not be removed due to a balanced antenna system in them and there was no Port in Vietnam that could handle them. Cam Ranh Bay came later.

The Crew was to be 8 Aviators and 4 Crew Chiefs. The Aviators were Major Stanley Frick OIC, Major Walter Duke, Major Will Parham, Captain Robert Kopecky, Captain Ray Renegar, Captain Jerry Holiday, Warrant Officer Michael Katz and Warrant Officer Mervin McCoy. I'm sorry I don't have the names of the enlisted crew.

We departed early in the morning from Tan Son Nhut and landed in Clark AFB in the Philippines and were met by the ASA people stationed there and fed a meal; put on a bus to take us to Cubic Naval Air Station don't remember how long it took, but was a long ride on a GI Bus. Major Frick took care of getting the enlisted billeted then joined the rest of us billeted in the Navy's closed mess. By this time it was close to lights out, fortuitously there was a bar located within the Mess.

The next day we were escorted to the flight line where the Aircraft were parked all covered in shipping plastic. The Navy personnel explained how to remove the plastic, furnished us with the necessary items to help and left us to our task. We started to work officers and enlisted alike, peeling plastic in the open under a tropical sun. As most of us were suffering from a little too much San Miguel the night before, the sweat was flowing very freely and everyone's outer garment was soaked. A Navy Chief walked by seeing our plight, stopped and told us there was a canteen just over the side of our work area that was open and sold beer. It is now break time.

Our plan was to get one plane stripped and let the mechanics check it out and then we would test fly it. After we were satisfied that it was ready for flight one of the flight crew would top off the tanks and do a fuel consumption test. These aircraft were nothing like the ones we had flown before, with all the new external antenna's there was a lot more drag on it, the normal U8D at cruise power settings would indicate around 150 Knots, on the first test flight I found that at cruise power indicated airspeed was between 125 and 130 Knots.

After several days of following this plan we were working on striping #4 and #3 was ready for test flight. One of the other members of the group was scheduled to do this one, as he had just been checked out in the aircraft before getting to Vietnam. He had less than 30 hours experience in the U8 type aircraft, so we briefed him on what to do and how to go about it, the one item specifically engine shutdown and prop feathering. We instructed for him to go to 10,000 feet directly over the airfield before shutting down an engine, that way if he couldn't get it restarted he had plenty of time to set up for a single engine landing. Apparently he followed our instructions, but when he tried to restart the engine it overloaded the electrical system and popped the circuit breakers. Being unfamiliar with the total aircraft system he reset the one in the dash panel, but didn't reset the main one in the floor. With the electrical system down he couldn't lower the landing gear. He had paid some attention to his check pilot during training, he remembered that it took approximately 150 strokes of the hand pump to lower the gear, he started pumping the gear down counting the strokes and stopped at 150, continued his landing approach with the gear not fully down and locked and failed once the full weight of the aircraft was on the gear. Scratch #3.

We got number 4 ready and after the test flight everything went fine after all the fuel consumption tests were completed we started planning the trip across the pond. We had six hours of fuel and we figured it would take between 4 and 5 hours from Sangley Point to Qui Nhon, Vietnam.

On 15 July we moved the airplanes to Sangley Point NAS as this was the closest point to Qui Nhon. We will depart from here tomorrow weather permitting. The Air Force is providing a SA 16 to fly cover and assist with navigation, we will spend the night in Manila. July 16, 1965 weather is fine flight is on, we all arrive at the flight line ready to go, after some final checks and, topping of tank the word is go. We will take off one at a time and group up with the SA 16. The first two aircraft get off no problem, I happened to be in #3, and just as we broke ground the emergency escape window popped open. As you can't close it in flight we returned and landed. As McCoy was flying I jumped in the back and closed it, we

were back on the runway rolling. After liftoff McCoy started a right turn and I looked out the right side and noticed fuel syphoning out of the right outboard fuel tank. Back to Sangley. As soon as we stopped I reset the fuel cap and off we go again. I turned to McCoy and said one more thing wrong and we are staying in the Philippines. We married up with the rest of the flight and headed for Vietnam. We were depending on the SA 16 for navigation - none of our Doppler Radars were working and were too far out to pick up any of the NDB Stations in Vietnam, although we kept trying about two and half to three hours in flight. I picked up Qui Nhon Beacon on the ADF, relaxed a little, we arrived at Qui Nhon in just short of five hours, we had been over water 4.5 hours. After refueling we headed on down to Saigon. We were in the air 7.4 hours that day. All three made it, sure was glad to be home.

We turned the Airplanes into our field maintenance support for acceptance inspections. They were returned to us in a few days.

The first mission the airplane McCoy and I ferried across the pond, lost an engine shortly after takeoff, which was bad enough, but the chip detector on the other engine came on. Fortunately, the chip detectors had been cross wired and the one on was to the bad engine, and the pilot was able to maneuver the aircraft to a safe landing back at Tan Son Nhut without any other damage.

Next we received another shipment of aircraft called CHECKMATE. There were seventeen aircraft (17) in this group, seven (7) U-6's and ten (10) RU-8D's. We now had a total of 23 aircraft and we had been getting additional personnel as well. I mentioned earlier that we had an aviation section at Da Nang and Saigon, we now established one at Nha Trang and Canto.

We continued to receive additional personnel and aircraft, the next group was code named WINEBOTTLE, with 41 aircraft. I don't have a breakdown, but mostly RU-8D's, bringing our total aircraft to 70.

Our operation was somewhat different than the Air Force EC 47. Our crew in most cases consisted of three (3) a pilot, co-pilot/navigator and an equipment operator, we would update our Doppler Navigation System on takeoff as we crossed the intersection of the two runways at Tan Son Nhut, in some cases we knew who we were looking for and the frequencies they would be operating on.

Our aircraft were equipped with some of the same items as the EC47's, the C12 Compass which read out in tenth of a degree as opposed to a degree. One advantage we had was that if the target operator spotted us as we turned toward him and quit transmitting, the next time he started transmitting we could turn away and take our bearing off the tail of the aircraft, we were just a big loop Antenna.

The equipment operator was equipped with two Collins receivers and would search until he had a target. At that time he would patch the signal into the pilots headset and he would start a flat rudder only turn until he had a " NULL "

He would call out the bearing to the target and the navigator would record the Doppler position and bearing. The pilot would head for another location for the next shot. Normally we look for three (3) bearing for triangulation, with 3 good shots we could plot Charlie's location within 50 meters.

We would stay in our assigned area for 3.5 to 4 hours. We had 6 hours of fuel on board, we had to have 30 minutes of reserve when we returned to Tan Son Nhut.

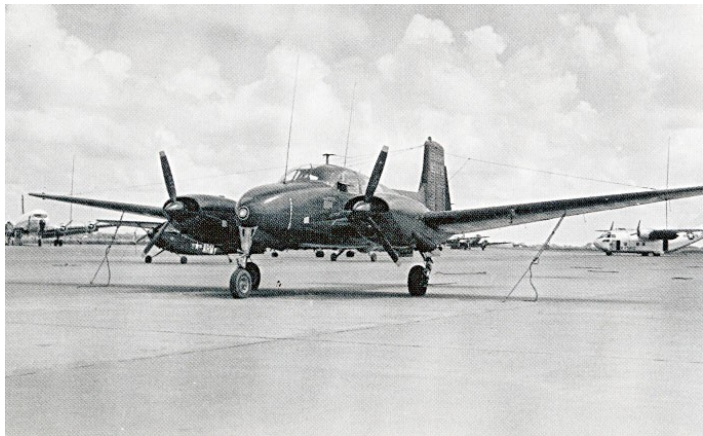
In January 1966 we received word that our Caribou was to be offloaded at Subic Bay, and I was the lucky one who got to go help them get it ready for the trip across the water. So on the 13th of January, SP6 Carl Pellasce and I headed to Subic Bay, the Aircraft and Crew (CWO 3 John Brazil and Capt. George Roney) were already there. This time they had a crew of local laborers to strip the plastic covering. It only took a couple of days and they were ready to fly. They made the crossing with no trouble and were worked into the Unit operations.

The unit continued to operate as Aviation Sections until 1 June 1966, when they were activated as the 224th Aviation Battalion RR, Hq. & Hq. Co. and the 146th Aviation Company in Saigon, the 138th Aviation Company in Da Nang, the 144th Aviation Company in Nha Trang, and the 156th Aviation Company in Canto.

Major John Rieser was the first Battalion Commander 1 June to 15 July, 1966 Major Donn Taylor took over when Major Reiser rotated. I rotated out at the same time, it had been an interesting and learning experience for me.



SUBIC BAY



U-8



CARIBOU 2

FROM THE SECRETARY

The Vice President of your association was reelected and was supposed to be administered the oath of office at the 2020 Reunion. Unfortunately, the reunion was cancelled due to the Corona Virus Pandemic.

The above stated, it was necessary for our Treasurer, Andy Csordas, to fill his additional role as Associate Chaplain and administer the oath remotely to Vice President Rich Carvell for a third term. This was a TSNA first.

An interesting aspect of the oath “ceremony” is that it was conducted via telephone on September 11. At 1758 hours eastern time, Rich was in Jonesboro, AR, and Andy was just north of Gastonia, NC driving down US 321. Were you hands free for safety, Andy?

Rich, thank you for continuing to serve.

IMPORTANT DAYS THIS MONTH
OCTOBER 12 COLUMBUS DAY; OCTOBER 13, 1775 US NAVY ESTABLISHED;
OCTOBER 16 CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS BEGAN; OCTOBER 24 UNITED NATIONS DAY

ON THE GROUND
AT TAN SON NHUT

By Morton M. Rumberg
Hq. 7th AF, 377th Combat Supp. Grp.
Jun 66 - Jun 67

Since I was a support troop, the closest I got to battle was in December 1966, when TSN came under attack by VC. The Air Police and their wonderful guard dogs foiled it, and I remember one dog and his handler were heroes.

I worked in the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) and had been working a very long shift when the base came under attack. The TACC was constructed out of reinforced concrete and was windowless. I was concentrating on setting up databases and reporting procedures and didn't realize we were under attack. Taking a much needed break, I pushed open the rear door and stepped outside for a breath of fresh air. Two Air Policemen were behind sandbags, their weapons loaded and ready, not a particularly unusual sight, but I was taken up short being so close to them.

The light spilling from the open door behind me told them I was there. Soon as they saw me I was ordered back inside. I could see them shaking their heads at the idiot Lieutenant wandering around, not knowing what the hell was going on. Under those conditions I felt they did a good job of apprising me of the situation in no uncertain terms.

The next morning, the body bags of the VC attackers were lined up prior to being taken away. Later that day, I went to the officers barbershop for a haircut, only to find it closed. Strange, until I found out why: Several of the barbers had been in on the attack and were now in body bags. I sure was proud of base security and their dogs.

You would think I'd become familiar with B-52 aircraft during the course of my Air force service, but when you ride a desk and a computer, well, B-52's are not what you get to intimately know. However, I did get to feel some of the devastating power B-52's can unleash. Working in TACC, I could look at the large Plexiglas and see where combat was taking place. There was a B-52 bomb drop about 15 miles away and when I stepped outside, I could feel the vibration and wind concussion as it beat against my legs. I've never forgotten that awesome power.

I was on the roof of a five story building one evening in Saigon with some buddies from work. We were celebrating either an arrival, departure, or promotion, when another part of the war was unveiled. We could see a Gooney Bird, the incredible AC-47 with Gatling guns, strafing the countryside to the south of Saigon. The enormous firepower could easily churn up every square foot of turf on a football field. I watched as it poured out it's lethal rain. It looked like a red ribbon was trailing from the aircraft due to the phosphorous verifying where the ammo hit. Suddenly, the party atmosphere dimmed and our eyes were wide and respectful. No wonder the gunships were called "Puff the Magic Dragon."

Before I left South Vietnam for my next assignment, as the only officer in my unit, I signed a month's supply of blank in-country combat reporting forms in advance, since my replacement had not yet arrived. For some reason, the forms required an officer's signature. A week later, I arrived at the Pentagon (as punishment, I imagine), assigned to the very desk where the signed-in-advance reporting forms arrived. I had to explain, repeatedly, why my name appeared in the Approved box and the Received box. Some Generals didn't take kindly to this break in protocol. I came to understand that such concerns were important to paper pushers in the Pentagon. After three weeks the ass chewing eased as my replacements signature began showing up.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks, Morton. This article from the July 2008 issue of Revetments!

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Working on taxiway for 8th Aerial Port
Photo from Fred Benda
Sep 70—Sep 71
823rd & 544th Red Horse Combat Engineers

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Ronald Hill has renewed for another year.

George R. Starks has renewed his membership.

James M. Thayer has renewed for another year.

Bob Treiber has renewed for another year.

Jimmie C. Zimmerman has renewed for another year.

Kenneth W. Leslie has renewed for another year.

Robert C. Scott, Sr. has renewed for another year and has made a Donation to the Memorial Fund.

Andy Vaquera has renewed for 5 years!

Thomas J Wooddell has renewed for another year.

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