



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

TET'68

By Mark Reveaux
377th Supply Squadron

I was at TSN from May 20, 1967 to May 20, 1968 and was the administrative sergeant at the supply squadron. The chief's office, where I worked, was on the second floor of the warehouse on a road that led to the officer's cabins and the flight line.

If you walked from the warehouse across the road and past the mortuary, you would work your way through alleys and sidewalks; one led to a Vietnamese luncheonette and another to the barber shop. A hundred yards further and you were on the road where the BX and other buildings were located. It led to the revetments on the right, and in the opposite direction intersected with the road to the main gate located about a mile on the left. That was the road which had heavy traffic by Pedi cabs filled with Vietnamese civilians on the way to their work stations. The road to our warehouse intersected with the main gate road, and a couple hundred yards on the right was a fenced in compound where the RVN kept tanks and half tracks. If you walked in the opposite direction from the warehouse, there were sidewalks that took you into the

hooch compounds. They were lined up in rows, opposite each other with a narrow road between. On certain days you'd see the Mama Sans doing laundry. The night before TET was quiet and uneventful. The only noise that happened during the previous two weeks was activity from the airfield.

Most of us were in our bunks by 0100 Hours. It was sometime after 0300 that we heard two short reports from a police whistle, the kind used by Viet Cong squad leaders. A few seconds later there was automatic weapons fire from the Gate 2 area. Then impact sounds from the flight line and sirens began to sound. We scrambled out of our bunks, dressed and turned off all lights.

About two weeks earlier we were given training where M-16s were taken out of a Conex and distributed to us. They then had us form lines of defense on a concrete pad that seemed to be in a recreation area. We were instructed to aim our weapons at a point where enemy infiltration could come in from in the event they got that far into the base. However, I'm not aware of any arrangements, where weapons would be distributed to us, should an attack actually occur. Therefore, we had no weapons in the hooch.

Sometime during the early morning, one of us got hit in the ankle by a bullet. We made our way outside and into the field facing the East perimeter, when automatic weapons fire was directed towards our position. Two Huey's passed overhead and fired rockets towards the East perimeter road. At dawn, Air Police in full battle dress were sweeping the area. I don't recall too much after that, except for when I helped the wounded person get his boot off. He said the round felt like a bee sting, and that he didn't know he had been shot until he saw blood coming out of his heel. Later in the morning, VNAF A-1 Skyraiders were flying low overhead. On the next day, the Colonel set up a command post for Supply. Later in the week, a MSGT told me that several battalions of VC had been deployed for striking targets that included the flight line and the command centers. I also heard that a squad of VC had also overrun the fuel depot where I had been stationed for a few weeks.

There was a liquid oxygen tank next to that building. VC mortar teams were targeting the area. Lucky it hadn't taken a direct hit.

A few years ago, I saw a book about Vietnam and it covered the TET offensive in detail. The writer got hold of the attack plan

for Tan Son Nhut and included a chart with arrows of the assault routes. I don't recall the title.

Within minutes of the attack, the Air Police responded with efficiency and professionalism. They not only used their limited numbers to full effect, but also coordinated the defense mobilization by the VNAF and RVN.

The VC were on orders to keep moving and to take no prisoners. Were it not for the Air Police and their sacrifices, many of us would not have made it back and I thank them every time I visit the Wall.



VIETNAM 1973

By Jim Dugan
178th Replacement Battalion

I found an Encarta article on what 1973 in Vietnam was like. It mentions that the North Vietnamese communist delegation to South Vietnam was confined "to meager quarters at Tan Son Nhut." In actuality, from what I've heard, they stayed at Camp Alpha which must have seemed like The Hilton Hotel to them. The new U.S. construction at Camp Alpha had been completed by then. We, who served there from 1965 up to late 1969, only remember the compound as either a tent city, or hastily constructed wood and tin hooch's. We moved into the new quarters while I was still there in late 1969 and early 1970. The construction continued through the remainder of 1970 and into 1972. By 1973, Camp Alpha resembled a state-side Army base. While it wasn't home, it was not too bad either. We left Vietnam with usable housing for troops. The Vietnamese looted the compound after we departed, so there is no telling how much was left.

I would like to find someone who can talk about the interaction between the American troops still there at Camp Alpha in 1973, and the North Vietnamese delegation. I'm pretty sure it was very limited, if not non-existent.



VETERAN'S DAY 2008

November 11 is coming soon.

The Tan Son Nhut Association will be again placing a beautiful wreath at the wall in memory of those who gave their all for our freedom.

Below is a picture from Earl Cary from last year's parade and activities.



(Jim Stewart second from the left in full camo)



(Graphic by Charles Penley)

JOSHUA L TORRENCE

By George Plunkett
TSNA Director of Membership Development

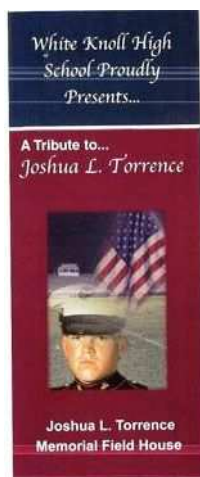
On Friday, November 2, 2007, White Knoll High School in Lexington, SC began a final two day push to raise \$150,000. to name their new field house in memory of one of their graduates who was KIA in Iraq, Marine Lance Corporal Joshua L Torrence. U.S. Senator John McCain, a military hero in his own right, graciously donated 2 hours of his time that night to speak to donors and have his picture taken with them. A football game followed McCain's meeting and there was a Marine FA-18 flyover. Unbeknownst to the crowd, Joshua's football jersey was carried in the cockpit of one of the birds. The Devil Dogs landed at Columbia airport (CAE) and presented the jersey to Joshua's parents at half-time. Tears and goose bumps abounded.

The evening of the following day a silent auction and concurrent display of first responders and others was held at the school campus. I was asked to display my favorite military memorabilia, and took posters and prints featuring the Tuskegee Airmen, the Doolittle Raiders, and a framed print of an F-16 surrounded by other birds manufactured at the General Dynamics plant in Texas, such as the B-24, B-36, B-57, B-58 and F-111. This print was signed by the workers at the plant. I also brought a framed Purple Heart awarded posthumously to my wife's uncle who was killed during WWII, along with his shipmates, when their ship was torpedoed in the North Atlantic. Telegrams from the War Department notifying the family were also framed and displayed. To the silent auction I donated a

large purpleheart wood bowl that I turned on a lathe several years ago. This wood is extremely dense, heavy and hard to turn, so I was reluctant to part with it. But this was a good cause and we thought it very meaningful – a purpleheart bowl to raise money for a Purple Heart Marine. It was purchased by an anonymous party who donated it to Joshua's parents. What a generous gesture that was!

Bottom Line: The \$150,000. goal was reached and exceeded, thanks primarily to two large donors who wish to remain anonymous. Ironically, both donors are former sailors who served in Vietnam, one in the Delta and the other one in the Gulf of Tonkin. No names please.

From Columbia, SC – where victory begins at Fort Jackson.



TSNA 2009 REUNION

Pigeon Forge, TN

We know what city, and we are working out which hotel and the exact timing—sometime in October/November.

Let us know if you are planning on coming. More later!!

My Tan Son Nhut

Experience

By Harlan Hatfield

I was assigned to Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Viet Nam from January 28, 1967 to January 26, 1968. I was in the 460th AEMS PMEL. I was very lucky in the respect that nothing much happened while I was there, war wise that is. But I do have to tell this one on me:

While processing in at TSN we were being briefed on where we were going in country. Since I was staying at TSN I was not paying much attention to the briefer. I was more interested in why there was so much thunder and yet not a cloud was in the sky. I was wondering what sort of country this was, when it dawned on me that you are in Viet Nam and there is a war out there dummy!

I was sent to Tachikawa AB (Tokyo) Japan for a class on optics. That was a nice break and I took it as my R&R. Once back in Viet Nam things went normally pretty much.

At night Spooky, the AC47 Gun ships would drop flares and keep the base lit up all night long. Occasionally they would be seen spewing out a stream of red tracers headed down to some area on the perimeter of the base. I enjoyed the great meals we had down town on our day off, and the bargaining with the merchants. I did make one trip with our courier plane delivering equipment and picking up more equipment to calibrate or repair. As we came into Ca Mau I thought we were going to crash because the pilot suddenly poured the coals to the C47 we were in. He made a go around

and landed normally the next time in. I found out once on the ground that we had apparently taken some ground fire and there was a couple of holes in the bird. After unloading the equipment, we loaded some Vietnamese civilians who were dependants of VNAF officers I think, to transport to Bien Hoa. We then went on to Bien Hoa, where we were going to repair some scales used to weigh cargo on the cargo planes.

Unfortunately the scales were rusted beyond repair, so we then bussed back to TSN.

Some of my fondest memories are of the Zoo, the museum at the Zoo, and those great meals we had at the Victory Restaurant. And one meal we had at a Vietnamese restaurant escorted by Sgt Ba. He was a good friend of TSgt. Rose from our Lab. The "small lunch" took about 3 hours to eat and was very relaxing.

One last interesting thing happened to me at TSN, on the day I departed for the states. I had not been allowed to have a weapon the whole time I had been there, but as I was waiting in line to board the freedom bird.

I was called back to ATCO, where I was given a K38, 38 caliber pistol and ammunition and told I was the armed guard on a classified shipment. But I was not to put the ammo into the gun. Yea Right !!!



(Harlan Hatfield)

Tan Son Nhut Association

Military Order of the Dragon
By Janice Jones
TSNA Cheerleader

On a warm fall day with the leaves changing colors, I took a trip with my brother, Charles Penley, to visit our very dear friends, Wayne and Tobey Salisbury. In addition to having the pleasure of seeing them, the main purpose of the trip was to present Wayne with his TSNA "Military Order Of The Dragon" Award.

We were welcomed into their home and after hugs and laughter and good conversation, we ate lunch. Wayne's famous scratch chili just hit the right spot. I took some photos and we talked some more. Wayne and Tobey make this world a better place just because they are in it.

We parted for the day with more kisses and an invitation to return again and stay longer the next time.

It was the best of days! My personal battery got such a charge from sharing a part of their time with us. Thank You, Wayne and Tobey.



(Janice Jones, Wayne Salisbury, and Charles Penley)

Get Out and Vote

By Dale Bryan, TSNA Secretary
"Pray that all politicians and voters seek wisdom during these trying times and election season."

Receiving a Ticket

By Wayne Salisbury
TSNA President Emeritus

On a very hot day in 1967 I was standing on a Tan Son Nhut Air Base street corner talking to a friend. I was wearing fatigues. Because of the heat I had removed my cap.

Mistake!

A jeep, with a very big Air Policeman stopped next to us. I quickly put my hat on.

Too late!

He busted me. As he wrote the citation I thought to myself – "This is a combat zone and I am getting a ticket for not wearing my hat?"

But I took it in stride. I probably thanked the Air Policeman for doing his duty. I was a Staff Sergeant. He was an Airman Second Class.

I cite this incident as one example of the duties performed by Tan Son Nhut Security Police.

But that was not the prime duty of the Security Police. They had a bigger task – KEEPING US SAFE!

We all were very familiar with the Security Police jeep – a driver and gunner with a mounted M-60 machine gun. I never took them for granted. I knew full well what they were prepared to do. I knew they were my ticket home.

But I only saw the jeeps during the day time. Security Police were all over Tan Son Nhut, not only in jeeps, but manning bunkers, walking sentry post, some with their sentry dog.

Let me take you back to December 4th 1966.

About 1 am the sound of explosions and small arm fire filled the air. I was in a barracks by the NCO Club. Many headed for the bunker. Not me. At the last second I decided not to enter the bunker. I stayed in the barracks.

Standing at the side door of the barracks I could see two young Security Policemen on the ground manning an M-60 machine gun. They were between the barracks and the heliport – Hotel 3.

We received word that the Viet Cong were in the area of the mortuary and headed in our direction. It was comforting to know the Security Police were there, but they were facing the wrong direction. I thought of going out and telling them of what we had heard. But I knew they had a radio so I just wished for the best. As it ended up it was just a rumor.

The explosions continued. Small arms fire punctuated the air. The security forces were doing their job.

Later the next day we heard 3 young security policemen had been killed. A few days later a memorial service was held at the base chapel. The chapel was packed. I remember sitting there wondering who had to tell their mothers.

The security police were our heroes. I'll never forget that night in December 1966.

Favorite Sayings

The handwriting on the wall often means you should keep a memo pad by the telephone.

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{Graphic by Charles Penley}

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Books about Tan Son Nhut:
Compiled by Charles Penley
TSNA Webmaster

1. Battle For Saigon, by William Keith Nolan. The first six chapters are about the 377th Security Police Squadron during TET 1968.

2. Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam 1961 - 1973 written for the USAF by Maj Roger P. Fox. It has tons of official information on the ten (10) USAF Bases in Vietnam.

It is online at URL:
http://www.scribd.com/full/1446931?access_key=key-2du3bvcael9ywu706k33

3. Bloods, An Oral History of

the Vietnam War by Black Veterans, by Wallace Terry. There is a story in it written by SSgt Don F. Brown, page 155 - 170. It is about the eleven (11) 377th Security Police Squadron personnel who worked at the Saigon, US Embassy, during the TET Offensive 1968.

4. Attacks On Tan Son Nhut are listed at my security police web page

At URL: <http://webpages.charter.net/cepenley/vcnva/index.html>

5. 377th Security Police Squadron, After Action Report after TET 1968 is on the Tan Son Nhut Association web page at URL:

<http://www.tsna.org/afteraction/>

[jan311968.html](#)

6. MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962 - 1967.

General information about that book is at URL:

<http://www.history.army.mil/catalog/pubs/91/91-1thru91-13.html#91-7>

7. Last Flight From Saigon, USAF Southeast Asia Monograph Series, Volume IV, Monograph 6, written for the USAF by Maj A.J.C. Lavalley.

It can be down loaded at URL:
<http://stinet.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA439990&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>