

Vietnam Security Police Association

Presents

A Publication for all Vietnam/Thailand  
Air Police and Security Police



# Guardmount

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October, 1998



## Tan Son Nhut's Rocket Spotters

*Security Control . . . Tango 10 . . . Incoming Rockets  
from the Northwest!!!*

*377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Become Target Acquirers in  
Tan Son Nhut's elite Tango Sector.*

*Security Control Tango 10. We have incoming rockets  
from the north, northwest - sound the sirens. A vertical launch  
- possible 122 Mike Mikes. Mill reading 3430. Tango Alpha  
Tango, call in your readings.*

During my three years at Tan Son Nhut I spent almost 30 months in the three rocket spotting towers which were in Alpha, Charlie and Delta sectors of Tan Son Nhut's Charlie Flight (midnight shift). I remember those radio messages vividly today, thirty years later!

In 1969 we became Tango sector and had 10 to 12 men assigned to the three towers permanently. SSgt. James Harbert of Pensacola, Florida was the first NCOIC. I trained because of my long in-country status. I was angry when he was given command as a new in-country SSgt. But we became friends and still stay in touch today.

To my knowledge no one ever recognized our strenuous, exciting and stressful but highly important duties. How many lives did we save at Tan Son Nhut? Tango 10's orders read, "The single most important security post on Tan Son Nhut." On many occasions we had the sirens going long before the 107 mm Chinese and 122 mm Russian rockets hit. We had return fire going out on a couple of occasions before the incoming rockets impacted on Tan Son Nhut and surrounding areas. On one occasion we had secondary explosions at a launch site!

It all started in late February and early March 1968 (according to my illegal diary which I maintained and kept for three years). I was on Tango 14 with SSgt Autrey (first name forgotten). We saw these huge flare-like objects going up from the ground off the western perimeter by the old French Catholic Church where we had receive sniper fire during Tet in February earlier in the year. We called it the North Church. It was the first rocket attack. Fifty plus Russian 122's hit Tan Son Nhut. Everyone was shocked when these 122's impacted with great destruction of lives and property and we were now under a new set of rules to be established by OJT, experience and acute vigilance on the night shift (later called Tiger Flight).

For a couple of weeks I spotted the rocket launches from small Tango 14 in the diesel filled pit of Alpha Sector's extreme northern perimeter of Tan Son Nhut. I got so good at it that I was transferred to Tango 10 and learned how to use the artillery scopes from Sgt. Dave Tolley of Maryland. Sgt. Mike Page of Rocky Mount, North Carolina joined me later in the year as did many others during my three-year tour. I wish I could remember all of their names.

None of my men were hurt during their long months but the stress of constant vigilance and the knowledge that others could die if we failed our mission was stressful and few of our hand-picked group ask to be transferred out - some because they could not stay awake or handle the stress. We got the best S.P.'s who volunteered or were chosen because of their reputation on perimeter duty as the best and most professional of Tan Son Nhut's 377<sup>th</sup> SPS Charlie flight.

In late '69 I was given command of the group as a 22-year-old sergeant. I was promoted to Staff Sergeant in December 1969 when I extended my tour again and length of service by six months. Now I had to leave Tango 10, my home for 16 months, to go to Tango 1. Tango 1 was the 160-foot tall red and white checkered water tank in the ARVN Ranger Compound visible from the SPS barracks area, down the road

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# VSPA Points of



# President's Corner



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John Langley is recovering from heart by-pass surgery and would love to hear from you:

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Notice: Reunion for Tuy Hoa RVN, all persons interested contact Douglas Gardner at

[Dagardner@earthlink.net](mailto:Dagardner@earthlink.net)

for further information.

I have sat down three times to write my final article for Guardmount. I just could not get the words to come out right. I want to say it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your President this past year, so many things have happened both good and not so good. Let me take a moment to reflect on the not so good; first, as you all are aware we lost a fellow Security Policemen this past summer - J.J. Chestnut, who was tragically gunned down while on duty as a member of the Capital Police Department in Washington D.C. He will be missed, although many of us did not know him personally he was part of our association family. He had talked to Steve Ray a few weeks before he was killed and had sent his check in for the reunion and was looking forward to us coming to DC. Again to the Chestnut family our condolences. We will miss you Brother.

A special thanks to Steve Ray for handling all the arrangements for us. Making sure that flowers and memorials were sent to the family. And thanks to every one of you that sent your respects. We will honor J.J. at the reunion by placing a wreath at his grave side in Arlington National Cemetery. Once again thank you to everyone for your concern. Now for some positive things that have happened, membership has increased, want to say thanks to the guys out in California for all their hard work in promoting the association. To the guys down in Florida for their hard work at the Melbourne Vietnam Veterans Reunion. To the gang up in the Midwest who set up in Kokomo, Indiana and to all of you that have spread the word about the association. With out all of you we would not be growing strong. I have received many phone calls, letters and E-mails from many of you telling me about your time and where you were over the pond. And how glad you were that we had an association and the things that we were doing were positive Many of you have ideas on things that we can do and some of you have told me there are things we should not do. This is what makes us strong and you need to continue to give us your input. I am looking forward to getting together with all of you that will be attending the reunion, it should be a great time. And for those of you that can't make it you will be in our thoughts and prayers that weekend.

In closing there are some special people I would like to say thanks to for making my year a lot easier. Steve Ray, what can I say about this guy he is the heart of this organization, he takes care of the everyday business and more - Steve, thanks. Terry Morris one hell of a job with membership, you were just a phone call for E-mail away when I needed something - thank you Terry. Dave Dobson, out Guardmount Editor, terrific newsletter Dave - thanks for everything you have done to get the word out.

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# FINI VIETNAM

## Part II

I went in the terminal. It was a huge place. Looked for the "out bound" desk, found it and got in a line about 10 deep. All services were represented: Army, Air Force, Marines and Navy. Orders in hand, I reached the desk. I handed my orders to the airman, he checked them, looked at a clipboard ran down the names then asked me for my ID card. I gave it to him. He looked at me and said, "Your not supposed to be here till tomorrow." He gave me back my ID card and started writing, then he gave me a boarding pass on a plane leaving at 1400 hrs the next day. Then he gave me the lecture. "You'll be responsible for your luggage till one hour before your plane leaves. At that time you can bring it to the departure counter and have it checked in. You will be responsible for your luggage and keep it in your possession at all times. If you leave it unguarded the Security Police will have it picked up and treat it as if it were a bomb. You can not travel in that uniform, you'll have to change into class "A" before getting on board the aircraft. Do you understand everything I just told you?" I shook my head "yes" and asked if there were shower facilities available. He made a remark about this not being a barracks and that there were several latrines in the building.

I took my boarding pass, turned around and looked for a bench to camp out on. I saw a space and drug my B-4 over to it. I looked around and it looked like there were more then a 100 G Is sitting, laying on benches or walking around. It seems all the Army people were traveling in their fatigue uniforms. Some of them looked horrible. Their boots were dirty and scratched and some of their uniforms looked like they had slept in them. Then I noticed an A1C (that's the old AF E-4) walking down the aisle. His fatigues were clean and starched. His boots were spit shined. The strange thing about him was, he was wearing one of those floppy go-to-hell hats. In it he had 5 or 6 grenade pins and some spent M-16 shells. In his boot laces he had more grenade pins and a dog tag. He swaggered when he walked, like he was king of the jungle. He walked down the aisle then across the terminal and back up the far aisle. He made sure every one saw him. And every one did see him. Those who didn't see him at first had him pointed out by the ones who did. Most of them just shook their heads in wonderment, as I did.

Well I had almost 24 hours to kill. What could I do? I sure wasn't going to walk around dragging my B-4 bag. I couldn't check it in, so I guess I was stuck in one place with it. I put it up on the bench and laid down using it as a pillow. Maybe I could sleep till it was time to change uniforms and board the plane. Naw, can't sleep for 24 hours. So I laid there and I did fall asleep.

I woke up with someone tapping me on the bottom of my foot and calling my name. When I opened my eyes there were two of

the friendliest faces looking down at me, and wearing cammies with the QC patch. I got up, smiled and asked what's happening? They asked where I was coming from and where I was going. I told them the story about me getting there a day early and showed them my boarding pass. Then they asked if I was hungry and if I would like to get rid of my bag for a while. These guys were great. I not only said yes, but hell yes. They were Law Enforcement checking out the terminal. They knew how it was with the bag and all. In the ride to the club they told me how they picked up stray cops coming in or going out.

We went to CSC and stuck my bag in a closet. They took me to the club, dropped me off and said they would pick me up in about 30 minutes. Or if they couldn't make it I could walk to CSC and get a ride back to the terminal. I had a good dinner and a couple of 7 & 7s and was ready for that Freedom Bird. They came in and took me back to CSC for my bag. I asked if I could sit around in CSC for awhile and just BS. Of course they said yes. We told war stories for several hours, the day shift got off and the night shift came on. It was getting late and I was getting sleepy. I told them I was ready to get back to the terminal. One of the sergeants asked if I was going to sleep in the terminal. I told him there wasn't anyplace else to sleep. He said yes there is, and you won't have to be afraid of being robbed. I said, "Lets go!" I grabbed my bag and got in the jeep. He took me to the SP barracks. His room had two bunks in it. He told me to take the empty one. He pulled some sheets and a blanket out of a locker and said, "Ill wake you in the morning for breakfast."

I went to sleep thinking that I will be home in a couple of days. Home, the good ol' US of A, the land of the big BX, back to the ZI. Fini Vietnam!

The sergeant didn't wake me when he got off work, he waited till 0800 hrs. He loaned me a clean towel and I went and took a shower and shave. Came back to the room and shook out my 1505 uniform. It was wrinkled but I knew they wouldn't show because the uniform was form fitted. I hadn't worn them in a year. I put it on and found that I had lost weight. Oh well, I would still look better then those Army guys in the terminal.

The snack bar was within walking distance and we went to have some breakfast. It took a while to get use to walking in low quarters again. After breakfast we went to CSC and I said my good byes to every one and a big thanks for being good hosts. They called in a jeep and I was driven back to the barracks to pick up my bag and then to the terminal. In the terminal, I found some space on a bench and sat down with my feet on my bag. I thought, 2 o'clock departure. Turn in my bag at 1 o'clock. That left me with about 3 hours tied to this damned bench and my B-4 bag.

I looked around and found most of the Army looked just as ragged as yesterday. I got so I could pick out the new people

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*(Continued from page 1) Rocket Spotters*

from Hotel 3, the arriving helicopter landing zone on Tan Son Nhut.

I worked as NCOIC of the three towers: 1, 10 and Alpha. On Tango 1, I coordinated our efforts with two Army NCOIC's on the tower and two to four ARVN target Acquisitoners and for one year, an ARVN airborne ranger assigned to radio duty on the tower. The tower was about 40 feet across at the top and about 60 feet wide on the second level with an inside room protected by 4 foot steel reinforced concrete. The ladders to climb up were almost vertical. Of course the period of weeks just following Tet was the worst test of our endurance, courage, discipline and vigilance but the constant knowledge that Charlie could lob in a few unannounced rounds of H and I and pure terrorist rounds against the civilian populace of greater Saigon kept us ever vigilant long after Tet.

A sad part of our Vietnam experience was the loss of contact with guys we ate with, slept with, sat back-to-back with for months watching for those enemy launches. Not one person was ever commended for this high priority duty. I am proud of my three years and proud of all the guys who went out every night committed to warn our fellow airmen, other military and civilian American and the friendly forces of Vietnam and other countries which participated in various military duties around Tan Son Nhut and Saigon. I want to thank the officers who probably don't remember me but who left me to command a very select group of Target Acquisitoners on those towers. Capt. Forde and Capt. Tripp were gracious and respectful of my experience when they became OIC of Charlie Flight and our unit. They agreed to allow me to command and report only by performance. Yes, we missed a couple of launches but overall our ratio was about ten sightings to one missed. I still have nightmares of missing a sighting. I still mildly suffer from the effects of three years of vigilance (Vigilance Syndrome). I still think of my duties and can recall the long nights and the sounds and smells as though they were today, not 30 years ago. When I am out at night camping or just watching the stars, I remember the view of the constellations in the sky over there that we don't have here. I remember briefing the troops, asking them to commit to excellence every night before posting. Who were they? Where are they now? Do they share these feelings?

I recently revisited the Vietnam Memorial again, The Wall. I've been to all the major dedications: 1982, 1984 and the Women's Memorial in 1993. I cry every time I go. I cry when I read books on Vietnam. I am saddened when I think of all the guys who died, especially the four guys killed in Echo Bunker on January 31, 1968, TET, when our west end was breached and their bunker overrun. And whatever happened to my Vietnamese counterpart, Sgt. Tran Dinh Khien? I received my last letter from him in 1973, three years after I came home.

For me, the three years were a growing up experience. I

was a shy, quiet fellow who when I got there and I left a confident leader of men. My experience at Tan Son Nhut, especially as NCOIC of the Tango Sector Towers, made a man and a leader out of me. That leadership is with me today. I own and operate one of the most successful financial planning practices in New Hampshire and my leadership skills have allowed me to lead many civic, charitable educational and professional organizations over the past twenty years. I left Vietnam and went directly to college, earning a Bachelors Degree in Accounting.

I give credit to the Air Force, the Security Police field and the people who mentored me during my 4 ½ years SP career. Little did I know when I graduated from basic training at Lackland and was shockingly assigned to Air Police School that my life turned for the better at that point forever. I would not change a thing if I had the opportunity. I am so proud to be a former SP and now a proud member of AFSPA, VSPA and the Tan Son Nhut Association. Some day I'll complete the book I started to write on my way home on August 5, 1970.

If you recognize my name and story from Tan Son Nhut, please call me collect at 1-603-880-1630. Thank you all for what you did during your AF SP careers.

*Thomas N. Tessier, SSgt. USAF 1/66 to 8/70  
NCOIC Tango Sector  
Tan Son Nhut - Republic of Vietnam 10/67 to 8/70*

*(Continued from page 2)*

A special thanks to Steve Janke, our Chaplain, for his words of encouragement. Don Poss, for one hell of a web-site on the Internet. And Vaughn Hull, our historian for all his hard work on compiling information on our career field and the association. Last but not least Ted Janiak our Vice President, Ted moved to Arizona this past year - between his new job and setting up a new place to live he has been pretty busy but he has been there for us. And he will take over as President after the October reunion. Please give Ted all the support you have given me. And that special thanks again to our founding father John Sparky Langley, without that dream John we would not be here. I think that I have said enough, it has been great guys - WELCOME HOME.

*Mike Daoust  
12<sup>th</sup> SPS  
Cam Ranh Bay 68-69*

Harold Thorne, a VSPA member from NJ has a cruise agency that offers special prices to PO's and PD's around the country, he would like to extend these services to VSPA members. Phone 800 788-8690

Notice: Pictures sent to me for the Guardmount must have sharp contrast in order to be printed in the publication. The printers require this. Hope to have a new printer for better reproduction in the future. Editor

## Attack on Phan Rang AB, Rvn 26 January 69

I was NCOIC, Security Section B-1, 821<sup>st</sup> Combat Security Police Squadron, attached to the 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing. On this date, I was also Duty Officer for 821<sup>st</sup> CSP Squadron.

I held Guardmount as usual for my combat section of 30 NCO's and Airmen. Our base camp was located at the south end of Phan Rang Air Base. A 6x6 truck was used to post the men. Our shift covered all hours of darkness, beginning on the 26<sup>th</sup> and ending on the 27<sup>th</sup>. I was responsible for two aircraft revetment areas that contained loaded combat ready aircraft on the flight line approximately one mile from the Juliet Sector of the base perimeter which was also my assigned responsibility. All Juliet guard towers, eight M-60 machine-gun bunkers, one 50 caliber machine-gun bunker 2 jeep mounted Combat Security Police SATs and three 35<sup>th</sup> SPS K-9 Sentry Dog teams that patrolled the Juliet Sector perimeter fence.

Until just after midnight everything had been routine. In the past several weeks we had several mortar and rocket attacks and penetrations that we had caught exiting the base through the wire near Juliet Tower 5. They escaped during the fire-fight. On another occasion infiltrators were spotted south of the revetments, running to back-water at the end of the runways. I had been alerted and was in the area. I gave chase with several of my men, we went into waist deep back-water at the end of the runways. We searched the bottom for the infiltrators with our feet. They escaped again. (We learned later from the statements of North Vietnam Army sappers we captured that they were holding on to grass on the bottom while breathing through reeds. He stated that we had almost stepped on them.)

Just after midnight I was near CSC on the flight line when I heard a radio transmission from Juliet 4 to CSC, "We just spotted three individuals between Juliet 4 and Juliet 3 running in from the wire, they were crouched and it looked like they were carrying packs and weapons." I knew immediately what we had and sped to the revetment area, picked up Sgt. Bobby Day, to watch my back, then sped to Juliet 4 arriving within 3 to 5 minutes after I heard the radio transmission. The sky was lit-up with flares; a 35<sup>th</sup> SPS Armored Car, a jeep with a mounted M-60 mini-gun and 90 mm recoilless rifle and SSgt. Kirk, of the 35<sup>th</sup> SPS were deployed between Juliet 4 tower and Juliet 4 bunker. Major William Powell, Jr. was kneeled down behind his jeep near the perimeter fence at the left front of their armored car with two 35<sup>th</sup> SP's on top. There was a

wounded K-9 handler on the ground at the wire in front of the armored car two medics were attending the wounded handler and one of my 3-man SAT teams were standing by the wounded man and medics. I called out, "Get the wounded man behind the armored car, and out of the line of fire," as I ran toward them from the right side of the armored car with my left hand and finger on the trigger (I'm left and right handed). The grass in that area was about 10 inches high and I almost ran over an NVA sapper armed with an AK-50 assault weapon (7.62 mm). I was on his left side as he was flanking the Major, medics SAT team and wounded K-9 handler. The sapper and I made eye contact as the ground was light as day - he looked over his shoulder at me and rolled to his right as he started firing and swung his AK-50 in my direction. My M-16 rifle barrel lit-up as I grabbed my .357 revolver with my right hand. The sapper was killed almost instantly. (When a South-Korean soldier and I checked the dead NVA soldier after daylight, he was laying on top of his AK-50. He had fired only 5 rounds from his 30 round magazine. He had several other loaded magazines, grenades and rations on his person. He also had 9 M-16 wounds.) The Juliet 4 tower CSP announced just as I heard a loud explosion outside the wire that, he got a secondary explosion when he shot a NVA sapper. A number of dead sappers were hanging in the wire at J4.

Sgt. Kirk, was firing the M-60 mini-gun, 90 mm recoilless rifle and throwing m-26 hand-grenades. (He was a one-man squad himself.) I don't know how the 35<sup>th</sup> SPS personnel got to the Juliet Sector before I did unless they had advance intelligence information that was not passed on to me as it should have been. (My Combat Scty Police, Juliet bunker 4, called CSC and gave the alarm as soon as the enemy was spotted.)

When the area at Juliet 4 was under control I checked the whole Sector where the attack was concentrated. I learned that the 3 infiltrators first spotted by Juliet 4 were first engaged by a 35<sup>th</sup> SPS K-9 handler: his dog reared up as a hand-grenade was thrown by one of the sappers and was killed as he took the blast, and his handler fell to the ground unhurt. The sapper then fired a RPG-2 rocket hitting one of the 35<sup>th</sup> SPS armored cars wounding the driver and knocking the SSgt. gunner off the 50 caliber machine-gun to the ground. He then climbed back on top of the armored car, manned his 50 and killed all 3 NVA sappers.

I found Capt. Garth Wright near Juliet 3, where he and one of their K-9 handlers, Sgt. Ronald Logan had finished off another three man NVA sapper team. The sapper team had first fired an RPG-2 rocket hitting an armored car I had parked at Juliet 3 as a decoy, because it was broken down and we didn't have parts to repair it. The idea worked and my Combat Security Policeman in the J-3 tower opened fire on the sappers with his M-16, killing one of the sappers and wounding

*(Continued on page 9)*



Larry Breazcale, a member from California at the VSPA display. He attended the AFSPA convention in California where he recruited for VSPA. He even met some U.S. Customs people who were eligible for membership while on a tour with the convention. He learned another interesting bit of information about J.J. Chestnut. It had been J.J.'s wish to be buried in his SP uniform with a shield. His brothers approached Lt. Col. Bullock, Chief of Security Forces at Andrews AFB, informing him of JJ's wishes. The Lt. Col. Bullock took off his shield and gave it to his brothers for JJ to wear.

### 1998 Kokomo Vietnam Vet Reunion

#### Vietnam Security Police Association Vietnam / Thailand USAF



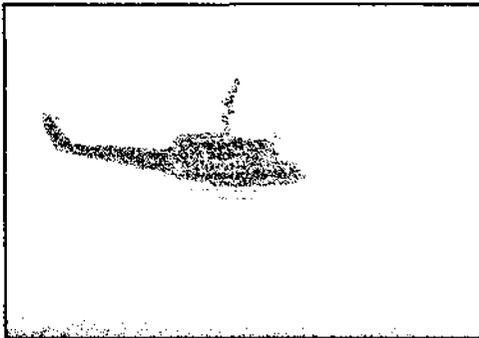
Tan Son Nhut  
Phu Bai  
Ben Hoa  
Phu Bai  
Cu Chi  
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Phu Bai

Da Nang  
Korat  
Canton  
Tachien  
Lien  
Mekong  
Phu Bai



It sounded much like Vietnam with the dustoff choppers flying people around the area. Here people met for the first time someone they had known all their life as they sat around swapping "war stories" and enjoyed the company of other brothers who know how they felt, someone who had experienced the same war that he knew. Sitting around the table and eating brot and enjoying a drink. Anyone who has not experienced this camaraderie needs to find at least one reunion and meet with others who were also there. As you move around the area no one really cares what service you were with only that you are there. The greeting "Welcome Home" can be heard over and over. When you do run into another AF member it adds to the feeling but when you run into another SP it is a GREAT feeling. I have had the pleasure of attending Kokomo and Melbourne, the feeling I come away with can not be described. Try to make one some day.

WELCOME HOME



Terry Morris, Thomas Johnson, Jose Sandoval, John McKenna, John Zolonda, Ivan Wilson, Ron Martin, Tony Morris and Dave Dobson are a few who enjoyed this day. This Jeep is a 1950 model, looks better than the one I drove in Nam.



Where there are cops there is always food, no exception here



Jose Sandoval, demonstrates an activity he learned in Nam.

*(Continued from page 3) Fini Vietnam*

coming in. Their uniforms look good and their boots were polished and most of all they had no sun tan. I wondered where that left me? Working nights as I did, you didn't get much sun. But I must have gotten some, I was tanner than the new "meat" coming in.

Then there "he" was, walking down the aisle. Combat Kelley, with his grenade pins and M-16 casings in his hat. Grenade pins and dog tag in his boots. Strutting down one side of the terminal and up the other. I guess he really impressed the new people arriving from state side.

I carried my bag to a bench closer to the check in counter. The area was beginning to fill up. I still had an hour and a half tied down to my B-4 bag. It was hot and sticky and all of us were sweating. So much for my clean 1505 uniform. Couldn't figure out why the Air Force made us wear a Class A uniform and the other services could wear fatigues. It was the same way five years ago when I came to Nam from Clark Air Base. Only that time we carried our weapons with us. The excuse then was, we were flying in a civilian aircraft. Well here we are 5 years later and still flying in a civilian aircraft, but the other services could wear fatigues. Must have been one of those one or two star general decisions. "To hell with comfort, my boys are going to look good when they fly in a civilian airplane." (Any general reading this, I'm just kidding, the class A uniform is comfortable too. It just doesn't look too good when its covered with sweat.)

I saw some top three NCOs checking in their bags at the counter, and by the looks of their boarding pass they were going on the same flight as me. So I just walked up in line, bag in tow and when it came my turn, stuck it on the scale. The airman took my boarding pass, wrote out a ticket, tagged my B-4 and put a claim check in with the boarding pass envelope. No problems, no back talk, just took my bag, smiled and said, "Have a good trip home." Two hours to plane time. Two hours to kill. Two hours with no bag to hang on to.

I walked around the terminal, went into the latrines a half dozen times to wash my face in cold water. I walked outside and saw my two friendly Law Enforcement people who I had met the day before. They were talking to some Army guys. I yelled at them and they looked up, as if to say, "What the hell does he want?" Then they recognized me. They laughed and said, "Didn't know you in those stateside clothes Sarge." The Army guys asked if I was coming or going. I said, "Going!" They were too. I found out from them that the Army didn't let them keep class "A" uniforms in Nam. That's why they could wear fatigues on the plane.

It was getting close to boarding time. The Security Police had left and the two army guys and myself spent the time talking about our services. "Combat Kelley" had to make one more appearance and do his usual walk up one side and down the other.

We laughed and wondered if he ever actually pulled the pin of a grenade and threw it.

Then the announcement was made! "Passengers boarding for the flight to McCord Air Force Base, Washington, please have your boarding pass available at gate number one." Our freedom bird was being loaded. This was it, going home, fini Vietnam!

The two army guys and myself got seats together on the plane. The stewardesses were all smiles and joking with each GI as they came down the aisle. They had ALL the attention on that plane. Then the army guy sitting next to the window said, "Look it here!" and pointed out the window. We all looked out, and lo and behold, there was "Combat Kelley". He was fighting one hell of a battle. He would grab a duffel bag off a cart and throw it on the conveyer belt that would lift it into the plane. Then he would turn and throw another one on the belt. I saw my B-4 bag thrown on the belt then I sat down in my seat. We adjusted those little knobs on the overhead to blow cool air over us but it was still awful hot in that plane.

The engines whined, and we could feel the thrust building up, then the pilot let off the brakes. We started rolling down the runway gaining speed as we went. Then the plane lifted and a huge yell went out from every GI in the plane. Some of them shook hands and said, "We made it. We made it." Yes, we made it. This was the Freedom Bird we talked about getting for a whole year. This was the Freedom Bird that some talked about but never got a ticket for. Some got another kind of ticket. Some got a ticket tied to a button hole in their shirt. Some had it around their big toe. But we made it!

The flight was uneventful. We talked about the "hippies" and how they treated the military when they came home. Some of them said they would kill any hippie that spit on them. I felt the same way.

We ate, drank and slept. Before we knew it we were landing in Anchorage, Alaska USA. The plane had to refuel. We got off the plane and walked through a long hallway covered with plywood. On the plywood was a lot of graffiti. A lot of it was the letters FTA. It was cold in that hall way and there was frost on the windows. Yes we were in Alaska. We came out into the airport waiting room. Those of us in Air Force short sleeve 1505s must have looked strange. It was the beginning of Fall back home, but Winter here. After refueling we boarded the plane again. Next stop, McCord AFB.

The army guys asked where I was going and I told them to my next duty station in Texas. I was going to check in and then take 30 days leave. They had to go to Ft. Lewis, get new uniforms and process out before they could go on leave. Other army had to go to Ft. Lewis, get a new uniform and process out for good. That was it, fini army.

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The "NO SMOKING" light came on and the pilot came in on the loud speaker. "Please observe the no smoking sign. We will be landing in approximately 30 minutes at McCord Air Force Base. The temperature is 70 degrees and the time is 4 o'clock in the afternoon Pacific Standard Time." Then the stewardess came on. "Please observe the no smoking light. Please fasten your seat belts." and she pointed at the seat belt sign. We started our descent, we felt the thump of the wheels going down and locking. We made a turn and leveled out. We could see the ground, buildings and traffic. No cyalos, no motor scooters or motor bikes, no grass shacks, just your everyday automobiles and houses.

I thought back to when I was 12 years old. I remembered the ships coming into New York Harbor, bringing the G Is home from Europe after WW II. The celebrations and parades down 5th Avenue. Tons of ticker tape falling on the marching soldiers. And when they got home from New York City, there were other parades in their home towns. Many of my relatives were in those parades. Gee, another generation and another war. My brother came back from Nam two years ago. He didn't get to march in any parade. Well, I guess I won't get to march in one either.

The plane bumped on the runway and a big cheer went up from all of us. The stewardess came on the speaker. "Please stay seated until the plane comes to a complete stop. Check the overhead compartments for any of your belongings." Then she said something I didn't expect. She said, "Thank you for what you did in Vietnam and welcome home." Another cheer went up.

We filed out of the plane and were greeted by three customs inspectors. They led us into a glassed in area attached to the terminal. They told us to sit down on the benches and to keep quiet. One of them said, the sooner you'er quiet, the sooner we can get this over with and you can leave. We all wondered what the hell he was talking about. Then he said, "Your luggage will be coming in at that small door." and he pointed to a 4 foot by 4 foot opening in the rear of the room. "As soon as you see your luggage pick it up and put it on the table." There was a long table that reached from the small door to the front of the room. Then he gave us a lecture on bringing in marijuana, heroin and other narcotics into the United States. This went on for a good 15 minutes. Then we got a lecture about bringing in explosives, and weapons of any kind into the country. He rattled off how many years we could get for the different offenses for bringing in contraband. Then to top it all off, he points to a 55 gallon drum at the back of the room, next to the latrine. He says, "Any one who has any of the articles I've mentioned has a last chance before we search you. You can put any of those articles in the barrel and we will say nothing about it. That is your last chance to get rid of it and not be charged with a violation. When your luggage arrives you may take it to the barrel and get rid of any thing you may think would be classified as contraband. Be sure

to check your pockets." About that time the first cart with luggage on it arrived at the little door. Our "welcome home you dope heads" custom agent then gave us permission to get up and get our bags. I saw no one go to the barrel. A few went to the latrine as did I. My bag was on about the third cart. I picked it up and placed it on the table. I felt sorry for the guys with duffel bags. They had to take everything out and repack it. Quite a task when you'er in a hurry and want to get out of there. Then it was my turn. I opened all the zippers and he ran his hands down the side pockets. Then he ran his hands through the main part of the bag. Then said, "OK." I zipped it up and pulled it off the table. I saw my two army buddies and waved good-bye. They waved back at me. I went out the door and into the main part of the terminal. I was angry and the others ahead of me were angry too. About an hour ago we were being thanked and given a "welcome home" by a beautiful stewardess. Then we end up with lectures and threatened with jail. *To hell with them! I'm home! Fini Vietnam!*

## DISMOUNT

Once again we have a formation to honor another of our fallen brothers. I am sure you all were shocked to hear of the shooting in the Capitol Building in Washington D.C. It became a further shock as I learned that it was one of our own who was killed. It is best said by someone who knew him.

Jacob J. Chestnut, MSgt, USAF (Ret), Pleiku Air Base Security Police, 68-69 was killed in the line of duty with the Capitol Police. Sgt Chestnut, J.J. Chestnut as we called him, served at Pleiku as a team leader of the Security Alert Teams that ran around the flightline and tower areas in the jeep checking on us and delivering much needed coffee. He was very well liked by all of us that served with him. Honest, fair and dedicated to his service to the Air Force. He was the kind of person and leader you could sit and talk to about what was on your mind and you always felt that he really cared about you had to say. Some of you may remember his saying over the radio to CSC that "C Flight is Chestnutty." Our hearts and thoughts go out to the family of Sgt. Chestnut. May he rest in peace.

*Tom Rushnock, President  
Pleiku Air Base Association  
SPS 68-69*

Sgt. Chestnut also served a tour at Cam Ranh Bay.

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another. Capt. Wright and I talked about the action at the scene. He told me, "The sapper hesitated for just a second, and I shot first; it was so easy to kill him, I just do not understand it, why did he hesitate? It got him killed and probably saved our lives."

There were 7 NVA sappers killed inside the wire between J-3 and J-4. Several were dead and hanging in the wire at J-4. At daylight, I took a team outside the perimeter fence after I had checked the Juliet Sector and revetment area on the flight line. I had no wounded Combat Security Police. The 35<sup>th</sup> SPS had 2 wounded Security Police and 1 sentry dog killed.

On my sweep outside the fence I was assisted by S. Korea soldiers, my own CSP and medics. We found body parts near the wire in front of J-4 and blood trails where they had dragged off their dead and wounded. One sapper who was seriously wounded, his right leg was almost shot off below his knee, was found hanging on the side of the drainage ditch approximately 100 yards outside the perimeter fence. Someone asked me, "Do you want us to just let him die or give him first aid?" The question made me angry. I ordered them to call in a helicopter immediately to med-evac the wounded soldier. I told them (the medics) to, "Treat him like a VIP, his war is over, and besides, we need him alive." The bone of the sapper's leg was protruding through his flesh he had lost so much blood he was not bleeding anymore. I learned later that he lost his leg but lived to tell how they had penetrated the base and planned their attack. He stated, "Our Commander was killed, he went down beside me. We underestimated your fire power."

NOTE: How did the 35<sup>th</sup> SPS personnel get to Juliet before I did? Their heavy weapons team was located much further from Juliet than I was and I rushed to J-4 when I heard the call to CSC from J-4 bunker.

Did they have advanced intelligence information that was not passed on to me?

The Juliet Sector was the assigned responsibility of the 821<sup>st</sup> Combat Security Police Squadron, and I was NCOIC and Duty Officer for the 821<sup>st</sup> CSPA on 26 January 1969. The area where the attack came was my responsibility. Why didn't Lt. Al Rock, 35<sup>th</sup> SPS Intelligence Officer contact me or send me a warning when he was contacting Capt. Wright at his quarters to inform him that he, Rock, had information that there were infiltrators on the base perimeter?

Further, there was no mention in the citation I received in the U.S. for the Bronze Star medal about my assigned duties or my organization.

Also after returning to the U.S. I saw Capt. Joseph A. Nardino (now Lt. Col Ret) and he inquired, "Did you receive the Silver

Star decoration I recommended you for at Phan Rang, AB, Vietnam in January 1969?" When I told him I didn't receive the medal he was disappointed.

*(I am still awakened by this incident at 2, 3, or 4:00 am on many a morning.)*

*Olbert H. Hiatt  
822<sup>nd</sup> Cmbt Scty Police Sq*

## Mail Call

I found the recent issue of Guardmount very interesting, especially the reminiscences of several members. For reasons I have yet to discover, my own memories of Vietnam service became quite vivid a few years ago. Perhaps it was the twenty-five year internal clock, some sort of mid-life crisis, or simply that I had a sustained period of time to reflect, but I felt absolutely compelled to contact the family of a friend and fellow Security Policeman who was killed during the 1968 Tet offensive - Charles E. "Chuck" Hebron.

On the first try, I reached his mother by telephone in Bryan, Texas and learned that I was only the second person she had heard from who served with her son. Before her husband died some years earlier, the family had heard some distressing rumors about the circumstances surrounding Chuck's death. Even though Chuck was awarded the Silver Star posthumously, his parents still wondered whether the rumor that their son may have been asleep on duty shortly before his death was true. Their sorrow over their only son's death was deepened by the prospect that he might not have faithfully performed his last duties.

At Mrs. Hebron's request, I prepared a cassette tape detailing all of my recollections about her son and the Tet Offensive that took his life. During our subsequent two-year correspondence, she has told me that the tape answered some questions and helped her family members cope with their loss. My only regret is that Chuck's father died perhaps doubting his son's heroism.

Sgt. Charles Hebron was in charge of a concrete bunker guarding the west perimeter of Tan Son Nhut Air Base during the evening watch before the Tet Offensive. He and his four men were armed with one M-60 machine gun, five M-16 rifles, one side arm and one bayonet. Chuck and I carried bayonets because we had experienced two attacks at Bien Hoa Air Base while TDY there in 1967 and reasoned that if the VC or NVA overran our post, we wanted to have one last weapon. Strangely, we were not routinely issued bayonets, so we

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David Dobson  
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had to buy them from someone preparing to return to the States. I did not see my friend die but I learned from some of our troops who retok his bunker from the VC that Chuck killed at least three of the enemy with his bayonet.

I do not know why Chuck Hebron's parents were not told by the Air Force about how their son died. Surely, that information was readily available as there were hundreds of troops who participated in re-taking that bunker and recovering bodies. But because such omissions seem to occur at all, I think it is our obligation to offer our recollections to the families of

those who died.

We never know when the facts we possess may help bring closure and peace. We owe nothing less to the cherished memories of our friends than to try to help those who loved them. I wish that I had tried sooner.

*Robert A. Lester  
Bien Hoa /TSN 3/67-68*

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