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

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Bien Hoa After Tet 1968

July, 1999

A while back Larry Breazeale wrote an article about his time at Bien Hoa AB(Apr 97). After reading it, I thought I should write a follow-up since it turns out we were there at the same time, although we worked different areas and didn't know each other.

But first, let's back up a few months before I arrived in-country. Imagine a bright, sunny day in the high-desert at George AFB, California, in January 1969. I'm on leave helping my wife get settled at home with our daughter who was just three days old. After running errands, I got home to find my wife with our baby in her arms and tears in her eyes. She says, "You'd better call Sgt. Miller, you got orders."

At first I thought I couldn't be going anywhere. I'd been at George so long; I told everyone I was "homesteading." Sgt. Miller told me I was going to the 3^{rd} SPS at Bien Hoa A. B., RVN, and had to report on May 1. So, after taking more leave time and to AZR schools back at Lackland, the next three months went by in a flash. Before I knew it, I was saying goodbye to my family and getting on a plane at Travis AFB... next stop Bien Hoa and the start of my Vietnam adventure.

I arrived at Bien Hoa in the middle of the day with the sun shining through an overcast sky. I felt somewhat at home with the heat (after spending two and a half years in the Mojave Desert of California). Of course, that only lasted until I realized there was no air moving and the humidity level was close to 100 percent. It didn't take long before I was complaining, like everyone else, about it being cold when it got down in the 70's at night. That was cold compared to the 110° + heat and 90+ percent humidity of the daytime.

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My first weeks in-country as a FNG were fairly routine and uneventful. They were filled with the usual base orientation including the SP compound, tour of the perimeter and several days of additional weapons training with the .50 cal., 90 mm, Claymore, etc.

Although it seemed routine after a while, it wasn't until my twelfth day in-country that Charlie welcomed me. This welcome(of course) came in the form of five 122-mm rockets slamming into the base at 1:22 in the morning. They were only slightly preceded by that siren that I still hate to this day, and people running through the hootch yelling, "incoming, incoming." Did you ever notice how that damn siren always wailed for what seemed like hours after the last rocket hit?

Even after I came home, I was reminded of these times in Vietnam. The Marysville Volunteer Fire Department near Beale AFB, California provided my first reminder. They used the local air raid system to alert the fire fighters. We laughed about it later, but at first my wife couldn't figure out what I was doing when I rolled out of bed and tried to get under it at about 3 a. m. one morning. When she heard the siren in the distance, she told me it was okay and explained what was happening. Even in all my years in law enforcement since then police, fire or ambulance sirens have never bothered me. However, I still flinch when I hear an air

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Cold War Certificates

WASHINGTON -- Between 18 million and 22 million former and current service members and DoD civilians can start applying April 5 for certificates honoring them for their parts in winning the Cold War.

Those qualifying for the certificates can apply via the Internet at http://coldwar.army.mil, e-mail at cwrs@Fairfax-emh1.army.mil, or fax at (703) 275-6749.

Applicants can also mail requests to:

Cold War Recognition 4035 Ridge Top Road, Suite 400 Fairfax, VA 22030.

Applicants must present proof of service. Army officials caution applicants not to send original documents because they cannot be returned. Applicants must use fax or mail to submit (Continued on page 3)



President's Corner



This has been, for me at least, one of the fastest, exciting, sad and happy years in some time - and it's only half over.

First, we mourn the loss of our President, Ted Janiak. Ted was a friend and brother. He was wounded at Tan Son Nhut during the attack of December 4th, 1966. Ted had actually only just signed in to the base and 377th SPS. What a welcome. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Ted's wife Lisa and his daughter during this time of loss.

I had the honor to be present in San Antonio, Texas with Steve Ray for Sgt. Coggins' reception of the Silver Star. His honor spilled over into a tribute to the 377th SPS, that unit still serves USAF in New Mexico. To me it should demonstrate to all non-Security Police, but especially to us older vets and of course young uniformed, active SPS what our history involves and the price so many of our comrades paid in every unit we served in Vietnam and in other recent conflicts and terrorist attacks.

As we survivors age, we cannot be sure of our future. I urge everyone to at least register at the nearest VA Med Center. The VA system may not be the best it could be, but it's ours, and if we ever needed it, our being "on the books" will help justify programs and the supporting budget in Washington. Many asked me about the program I work for in conjunction with the Nashville VA Med Center. For information write to: The Campus for Human Development VA - Guest House Program 532 8th Ave S. Nashville, TN 37203. We have information on "Project Return" and "Operation 'Stand Down'" as well.

It is time to get ready for our annual reunion and meeting in Las Vegas in October. I hope this is one of the best we have had. It should benefit (we hope) membership on the west coast. For the millennium, of course, we will return to Lackland AFB . . . where we all started our adventure and journey.

> Until next time - God Bless! Kevin Fitzgerald, President Tan Son Nhut, 66-67

DISMOUNT

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of VSPA President Ted Janiak. Ted was known to many of you as a friend. He was also a brother war veteran, a war hero, and a supporter of the VSPA. Ted served with the 377th APS/SPS at Tan Son Nhut AB. Republic of Vietnam in 1966/67. During a battle on the base that took place 4 & 5 December 1966. Ted was wounded in action which necessitated a hospital stav of approximately ten days. Ted was awarded the Purple Heart Medal and the Air Force Commendation Medal for heroic actions. Ted was diagnosed with cancer in October 1998. At the time, he and his wife Lisa, were living in Arizona. Because of his cancer, Ted moved to his Mother's residence in Indiana in February 1999. Ted left us on 30 May 1999 at 0400. Ted is survived by his wife Lisa, one daughter, and his Mother. He was indeed a good friend and will be missed by all.

Steve Ray

(Continued from page 2) supporting documents.

Persons are eligible for the recognition certificate if they have military or civilian service with the War. Navy or Defense departments between Sept. 2, 1945, and Dec. 26, 1991.

Military personnel can use any of the following documents as proof of service: DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release/Discharge from Active Duty); WD AGO Form 53-55 (War Department Separation Document); or Oath of Office --Military Personnel or Letter of Appointment. Copies of these records can obtained by writing to:

> National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records) 9700 Page Ave. St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.

Due to the remarkable success of this program, turnaround time for mailing certificates may take as long as 4 months. The CWRS Operations Team is working as fast as possible to clear the backlog. Please do not request feedback prior to 4 months from the request date.

> By Jim Garamone American Forces Press Service

Mayaguez Retreat

On May 14, 1999, VSPA members Larry Breazeale, Gary Colbert and Kermit Payton met at Luke AFB, Arizona, at the invitation of the 56th Security Forces Squadron to participate in the Mayaguez retreat. This retreat is held annually at Luke AFB to honor the Air Force Security Police who gave their lives in a rescue attempt of the S.S. Mayaguez on May 14, 1975.

During the retreat ceremony a lone Security Forces Trooper rang a brass bell when the name of each Security Policeman, killed in the mishap, was called out by CMSgt. Coles. There was an enlarged picture of the deceased Security Police taken moments after they boarded a CH53C, Knife Helicopter, at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand. In front of this display were M-16's, with bayonets, stuck in the ground pointing downward. One M-16 had a flight helmet on top, representing the flight crew, another M-16 had a bush hat and the third M-16 had a Blue Beret on top of it to honor the Security Policemen killed.

When the helicopter was out at sea just a few miles from the Mayaguez, it experienced engine trouble. Some believe the helicopter managed to fly back over a wooded area before crashing. All on board - 18 Security Police, 1 Linguist and 4 air crew members were killed. The S.S. Mayaguez, was a sitting duck in the water in the Gulf of Thailand with Americans on board. Kahmer Rouge, Cambodian Communist terrorist, boarded and took the ship over. Later, on May 15, 1975, U.S. Marines boarded the ship expecting light resistance, instead they encountered 200 of the enemy.

The Security Police and crew that died en route to the Mayaguez were with the 56th Combat Support Group. The 56th SFS at Luke AFB, feels a very strong link to these heroes. They feel the Security Police who died, "to try and save others," deserve a lasting tribute every year on May 14. VSPA members displayed the VSPA Memorial Wreath at the retreat ceremony and were proud to be a part of the ceremony.

> Larry Breazeale Bien Hoa

Poet's

Corner

Cam Ranh Bay

Each night another part of the outer base we take. And watch for Charlie and simply wait. Your mind can play tricks when you're in such a state. You're alone, afraid, far from home and it's late. Shadows seem like men and movement coming my way. Does the next battle include me at Cam Ranh North Bay? It's silly, it's nothing at all you see. It's only my imagination, my fear, it's just me. I've never seen a snorkle tube in the water...what's this?

How long should I watch, or just fire at will.

That tube is now blocked by a tree, now a hill.

Does he get away, are there many or just a few.

I wonder, what, just exactly what should I do?

A platoon now may be forming, out of the water and ready to fight.

Any moment now they all could be in my sight. What to do. I know. I'll pop a flare in the direction. I do and the man at (radio) control asks what is your location.

All secure I routinely say as many a time before, But I'm wondering if soon fighting will be at the door. Was it a shadow or really a sighting,

Was it the wire or only the lighting?

Maybe somewhere an old Vietnamese soldier reflects and is writing about me,

When he probed the American base in his country, And a flare was sent up that changed his direction, As he writes his war journal and shares his reflections.

By Steve Janke 3/25/99

Freedom Isn't Free

They say I'm short and homeward bound.

Then why is there no happiness found?

One long year here will soon be ore..

And I'll walk to that Freedom Bird door.

But I can't relax, no letting down.. why?

Because to let down may mean to die.

It's like a dream, can it really be, everyone cheers as we fly bye.

But thinking of friends below just makes me sigh. God be with you, I know your fears..

(Continued on page 8)

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raid type siren start to wail. Minor case of PTSD I guess.

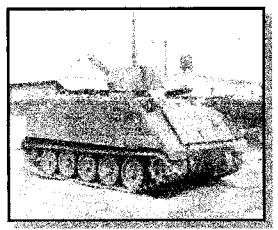
Before I got there I had heard the stories about Bien Hoa, the '68 Tet Offensive, Bunker Hill 10 and Captain Reginald V. Maisey, who was killed by an RPG at that old French bunker on January 31, 1968. So, if there was anyplace that I knew I wanted to avoid, that was the place.

However, when I think of it there were several things I wanted to avoid, not the least of which was being in Vietnam, much less at Bien Hoa, AB. When I was a FNG, I thought it would be better to work during the day, so I could see what I was fighting. I knew I didn't want to work nights (Charlie Flight); I didn't want to work the east perimeter (Charlie Area); I certainly didn't want to work Bunker Hill 10. Well, my first night on post I really thought someone was out to get me (besides Charlie). If you haven't guessed . . . my first assignment was Charlie Flight, Charlie Area, Bunker Hill 10. As it turned out I spent quiet a bit of time there during my first couple of months in-country. I also found that I really preferred being awake when the rockets came.

From Bunker Hill 10, I graduated to SATs. While the primary duty of our SATs was to be mobile patrol and response force, I'm sure like many other bases; we spent most of our time playing "Winchell's on Wheels." We always went to the Army's 145th Aviation Battalion mess hall to scrounge what we could for the troops working the bunkers and towers because we seemed to have an easier time getting food from the army cooks.

When I first got to Bien Hoa, the 3rd SPS had a fleet of seven Ducks (V-100s) and one old gas powered M-113 APC. During the summer of '69, we received four new diesel powered APCs. Shortly after, we gave the old "gasser" to the army. We later heard they dropped a diesel into it and on it's first mission in the field, it was destroyed and the crew killed when an RPG hit it.

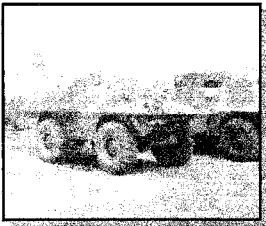
Anyway, I was soon trained to drive the new M-113s and found myself spending most of my time running a QRT in Charlie area. It was strange learning to (Continued on page 7)



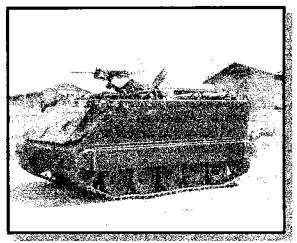
The old gas powered APC "Fluffy" before we gave it to the army. Note the extra armor plating and the QC patch on the side.



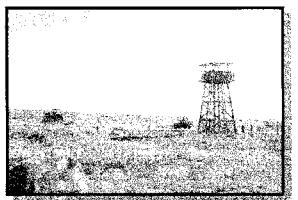
Bunker Hill 10, I spent my first night on post here. Also the location where Capt. Maisey was killed by an RPG during the 68 Tet Offensive.



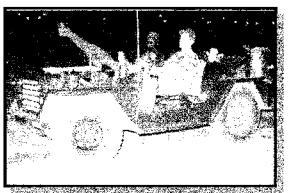
Part of our fleet of V-100's. We mounted Mini-guns on 2 of them.



One of the 4 new APC's (M-113) we received in mid 1969.



Another look at Bunker Hill 10 and it's neighboring tower. (Bunker is on the left.)



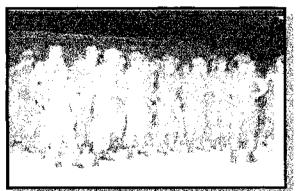
One of the Charlie Area SAT's (with the usual sleeping QC in the back seat.)



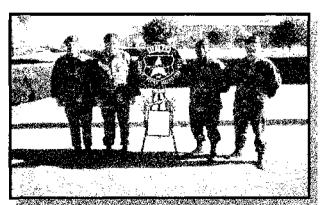
Sgt Kennedy, "Of course we all thought we were cowboys in those days.

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A partial listing of the attacks at Bien Hoa in Kennedy's tour.



Charlie flight Guardmount - for those who were there, let me know if you recognize yourself.



Maj. Allen Jamerson, Commander of the 56st SFS, Luke AFB and his senior NCO staff.

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(Continued from page 4)

steer by pulling sticks instead of turning a wheel, but I soon got the hang of it and was an expert at popping donuts in no time. Although we had the armored vehicle, our manpower was such that we really has little more on our APCs (usually 4-5) versus the usual 3 on a SAT. I can only remember a couple times when we had more people on our QRT. Once was when we went on alert during the Tet holiday in January of 1970, when we had just eight people on the team.

The other time was during President Richard Nixon's visit to Vietnam, which was a long and boring day. I remember my team was one of several pulled from our regular night-watch duties and deployed during the day as additional perimeter security in preparation for the visit. My team, with several augmentees and a SP lieutenant along with a second APC, was positioned on a small village road outside the west perimeter fence, about two hundred vards off the end of the runway. Our job was to block the roads on either side of the runway approach and provide a secure path as Air Force One landed at Bien Hoa. I remember we sat there for something like12 hours waiting for Nixon's plane to arrive. Not only was it a long boring day, but President Nixon's plane never came closer than 10-20,000 feet above as it flew over us and landed at Tan Son Nhut. All we got were two of the President's F-4 Phantom fighter-escorts and sunburns. We did a hell of a job protecting that road though.

As Larry speculated, we did in-fact mount miniguns on a couple of our V-100s. This was just one of a number of improvised weapons or defensive systems developed by Air/Security Police in Vietnam, many of which originated at Bien Hoa.

As I'm sure many of you saw, Vietnam was probably the largest test lab (up to that point in history) for tactics and weapons. In one case, my QRT participated in one of the initial deployments of one of these new weapons systems, the XM-174 automatic grenadelauncher. We were called into the armory one night and issued this new weapon with several magazines. It would use the same mount on our APC as the M-60. So, after mounting the weapon, we headed back out to our area, before we got two blocks away, it broke and we had to take it back for repair. I know for a time after that, the XM-174 was always transported on someone's lap and mounted after arriving on post. When it worked, it was great and because of the automatic feed, it could lay down a perfect pattern of grenades.

I was at Bien Hoa when President Nixon instituted his "Vietnamization Program." While we understood what was intended, it really created some problems for SP's trying to protect bases. I don't know how things were after I left, but it was crazy at first. As part of the efforts to wind down U.S. involvement in the war and save money, we were even told at one point that we had to have a confirmed target before we could put up a slap flare. A lot of gays had a hard time with this because it was often difficult to know if you had a target without putting up a flare so you could see what was there.

Because Bien Hoa City was off limits, my entire tour of duty in Victnam was spent on base except for a bus ride to Tan Son Nhut for my R & R flight; a four hour trip to Long Vinh in an attempt to get Comm-Gear for our new APC's; and that wonderful day off the west perimeter on top of my APC.

I was lucky enough not to have to defend against a ground assault, but I did experience more than 20 rocket attacks, a mortar attack and unfortunately, two friendly fire incidents. On one occasion, an Army fire-base several miles northeast of us got bad coordinates for a fire mission. They walked two rounds each of 105 mm, 155 mm and 175 mm Willie-Pete across the east perimeter towards where my SAT was delivering coffee to a tower next to Bunker Hill 10. The last round landed about 100 feet across the perimeter road from us. You can bet the pucker factor was in fall force then. Luckily no one got hurt.

The other incident, however, had deadly results. In this case, the III Corps ARVN Special Forces fire-base on our southeast perimeter fired two 105 mm HE rounds directly north over my QRT's position near the end of the runway. The rounds impacted inside the Army's 101st Airborne area, killing several soldiers. To make matters worse, 3 hours later, after an investigation of the incident, they fired the <u>same</u> gun again, hit the <u>same</u> target, killing and wounding more soldiers. We were on a sandbag detail at the time and hit the dirt because the rounds were fired so low; they sounded like they were coming in on us.

My Vietnam adventure may not be as glamorous as some or as frightening as others, but an "adventure" noncheless and a proud part of my memory. In fact, it seems that my service in Vietnam and as a Security Policeman has actually become more important to me over the years and has furnished me with memories and friends, some new, that will last a lifetime.

My last memory of Bien Hoa AB was getting on my "Freedom Bird" and taking off, ironically over my first post, Bunker Hill 10 on the east perimeter.

Mike Kennedy, Sgt.



Getting Over Vietnam

The war in Vietnam ended 24 years ago. Many vets still suffer from their experience. Many secular psychiatrists by their nature have chosen to ignore the reality of the spiritual dimension of man and by doing this they overlook the only resource that can achieve lasting results. The traumatic experiences of Job and King David are classic examples of how a man, with the help of God can survive horrible trauma. David was a warrior who's "hands were stained with the blood of war," who was guilty of murder, conspiracy to commit murder, adultry and many other crimes, yet he was later declared to be, "a man after God's own heart." War experiences vary and impact the conscience and spirit of man and need a spiritual healing. Peace which is so illusive to men of war can only be achieved through knowing the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Messiah. Knowing the Lord can help us gain a new identity which helps us to be at peace with our Vietnam experience, there will still be tough times but with His sustaining grace. The same peace is available to the many women who have known Vietnam vets. The time for tearing is past, the time for mending is now. "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven ... a time to tear and a time to mend." (Eccles.3:1,7)

Portions of this article were written by Larry Haworth, Pointman Ministries.

Steve Janke/ Chaplain

Ted, you are missed by many, our prayers go out to your family.

1999 VSPA Reunion

5th Annual Reunion October 7th to October 10th 1999 Las Vegas, Nevada at the Hotel Sanremo. Call 800-522-7366 for reservations. Room rates are \$69 Sunday to Thursday, \$99 Friday and Saturday, single or double occupancy plus 9% tax.

The hotel is right off the strip, close to everything. Registration Fee: \$166 per couple or \$89.00 per single, this will cover the following: Welcome Package, Hospitality Room, Reception Dinner Buffet Reception Open Bar, Saturday Business Meeting Continental Breakfast, Saturday Night Banquet Dinner. Also we are working on side trips to Hoover Dam, Nellis AFB, any one who wants to play golf please let us know and we can work on some tee times.

Airfare: Please check with your travel agencies and make your reservations or check with Kennewick Travel at 800-323-8728 for group airfare rates.

For assistance contact Steve Gattis Home Phone: (909) 986-6991 E-Mail gattis@gte.net or The Reunion Brat, Linda Irvine at 509-582-9304 or email BratEmail@aol.com



(Continued from page 4)

I didn't know but the next time I see you will be over twenty years.
The plane gets me home and I kiss the ground.
The family I left is the same one I found.
We embrace and hug and cannot separate..
The difference between life and death is only fate.
When I was there I dreamed of home..
Now I am here but how my mind does roam.
When I was young I was taught in school..
That freedom was not free and the golden rule.
I know them both but one came hard.
To learn it I had to leave my own back yard.

By Steve Janke 3/25/99

Jacob Joseph Chestnut

June 21, 1999 the 20th Security Force Squadron dedicated its new headquarters building to slain Capitol Police Officer and former USAF Security Policeman Jacob Joseph Chestnut, better known as "JJ".

JJ was born in Myrtle Beach, S.C. and enlisted in the Air Force from there. He served two tours in Vietnam as an SP. Win-Ling Chestnut, JJ's widow, spoke for the family at the ceremony, expressing hope that vio-

Road, Venice, FL 34293

lence could be eliminated in this country.

Two of the Congressmen from S.C. witnessed JJ first-hand as he preformed his duties professionally and with dedication on a daily basis. They spoke at the dedication giving glowing accounts of his duty performance, giving the Air Force credit for his professional training.

Congressman Spratt said, "... we can not bring Jacob J. Chestnut backto life. But we can make sure his live is remembered, held out as an example for all to follow. And we hope that this building, which bears his name, will serve that purpose." (*Taken from the Air Force News*)

Membership Application (send Copy of DD 214 and \$10.00 fee to Terry Morris)

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Dates of S.E.Asia Duty	
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For Sale	
1. Association Patch - made around a QC design	\$ 5.00
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 6. 7th Air Force Coin	\$ 6.00
7. Black Baseball Style Cap with any of the above Patches on it	\$12,00
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13. Mini-Security Police Badges, 1 3/4" high, Official Issue	
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ase add 10% to your order for shipping and handling, minimum of \$3.00. F	2
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