

VSPA



USAF



## 2023 SPRING/SUMMER EDITION



### 28<sup>th</sup> VSPA Reunion

### Joint Base Charleston

### Charleston, SC

### October 4-8, 2023



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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

**JERRY NELSON, CMSGT (RETIRED)**  
**PRESIDENT, LIFE MEMBER #668**  
**PHAN RANG, PHU CAT, TUY HOA 69-70**



My VSPA Brothers and Sisters,

As we enter 2023, I would like to discuss our 27th VSPA Reunion held in Phoenix, Arizona. Last year, we held the reunion in the Sheraton Crescent Hotel, and they did a magnificent job of supporting us. All facets of the reunion went very well. More information on the reunion will be covered in this issue of Guardmount, with pictures and various other discussions concerning our activities. We were supported by the 56th Security Forces Squadron at Luke AFB. They did a superb job of hosting us and supporting our visit to the base. I need to give a shout out to CMSgt Jason Parrish and MSgt (Ret) Jerry Haupt for their tremendous effort in making the base tour so very successful. My sincere thanks to both of you! It was truly an honor to have General Ronald Fogelman, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, as our Guest Speaker for the banquet. His presentation was terrific. He was very gracious and stayed for the award presentation and pictures. It seemed that everyone was very pleased with the reunion and all our activities.

During the base tour, we performed a memorial service for the 23 Airmen who perished in the crash of the CH53-C Helicopter, call sign Knife-13 on March 13, 1975, in Thailand. During that speech, I announced that I, along with a group of dedicated Patriots, have undertaken the responsibility to build two monuments to honor the 18 Security Policemen and five Crewmembers who perished on KNIFE-13 while enroute to the staging area for the rescue of the SS Mayaguez and its crew. We have developed our proposed design. It is ten feet wide and seven feet tall. It weighs 12,000 pounds (2 tons) of etched black granite. One memorial will be located at the Security Forces Museum at Lackland AFB, Texas. The second memorial will be at Luke AFB, Arizona to honor the ancestors of the 56th Security Forces Squadron.

I would like to publicly thank my devoted Patriots for their tremendous effort in this project. Steve Gattis, Don Poss, Bob DeCubellis, and Bill Cummings. We could not have made it this far without their dedicated effort. We are well on our way, thanks to all of you. The proposed design is in this issue of Guardmount. It is also posted on our website at [www.VSPA.com](http://www.VSPA.com) with a link for donations. We started raising funds at our reunion last year with direct donations and the sale of the Mayaguez Medallion and The Pieta lithograph. Sales have continued through our BX. Flyers showing the Mayaguez Medallion and The Pieta are also in this issue of Guardmount with instructions on how to make a purchase.

Steve Gattis attended the NKP Reunion in Charleston, South Carolina. Then Bill Cummings, Steve Gattis and I attended the Safeside Reunion in Valdosta, Georgia. Our efforts resulted in approximately \$5,000 being donated. Additionally, we have obtained several other donations that have given us a strong start.

The Mayaguez Medallion was created with all twenty-three names to honor those who perished on Knife-13, and really exemplifies our commitment to the Mayaguez Memorial Project. NKP Veterans and Security Forces Defenders purchased over 100 medallions in April. The Pieta lithograph was donated by an artist in California for our project, thanks to Vice President Bob (Deke) DeCubellis. These two items are available right now through our BX. At the same time, we are actively seeking donations to help build the memorials. It is a Defender Nation cause (active duty and former Security Policemen), and your help is needed. Please consider helping us build





these memorials to recognize the sacrifice of these courageous men who volunteered in the valiant hope of saving the crew of the SS Mayaguez. VSPA.com has a DONATE button to make it easier for you to DONATE. We need your help to build these memorials. PLEASE DONATE! Please give me a call if you have questions.

We have begun our planning for the 28<sup>th</sup> VSPA Reunion which will be held in Charleston, South Carolina. We will be staying at the Crowne Plaza, Charleston Airport. CMSgt (Ret) Gary Jones conducted the site visit for us at the hotel and reported that all things were very nice. We held our 2013 reunion at this location, and they have recently renovated. Steve Gattis also attended the NKP reunion in that hotel and stated that it was very nice. We have had a huge response this year and the hotel is SOLD OUT. I encourage everyone to see the information on the registration form and flyer that is included in this issue of Guardmount.

**ADDITIONAL HOTEL ROOMS ARE AVAILABLE.** Make hotel reservations now through the phone number we provided in the flyer included in this issue of Guardmount, as well as a mass email. **IF YOU HAVE TO CANCEL YOUR ROOM FOR ANY REASON, DO NOT CALL THE HOTEL(S). CONTACT THE REUNION BRAT (1-360-663-2521) SO THAT SHE CAN COORDINATE ROOM REASSIGNMENTS FOR THOSE MEMBERS WHO ARE ON A WAITING LIST. DON'T DELAY!**



We are going to change a few things this year to make it easier for our members. Due to our mobility issues, we are not going to Charleston AFB this year. I have talked to the Security Forces leadership, on base, and they will be coming to our hotel to provide briefings and demonstrations for us. That will save loading and unloading the buses several times. It will also lower the registration fee since we will not be renting buses on that Friday. I have talked to a lot of Brothers who have not attended reunions since the pandemic, and they say they are coming. Please make your hotel reservations now so we have a better idea of the numbers attending.

This year, we will be conducting an election for all VSPA officers. The election will be discussed in this issue of Guardmount. I encourage each of you to consider getting involved in the leadership of your organization and consider running for a position. It is very important that we seek members who are willing to step up and consider these positions. From personal experience, the honor of helping lead this association is an incredible experience. As I end my fourth year as president in October, I will continue in the position of Past President to assist the incoming president by providing continuity. I loved every moment of my time as your secretary and then as your president. I will always be a part of our Association!

As many of you know, the VSPA reunion is my favorite time of year. I can't wait to see my brothers and sisters upon arrival in Charleston, South Carolina. We will have some special activities planned that I am confident you will enjoy. This year, some of us are staying over until Monday for an offshore fishing trip in Charleston. If you are interested, please call me at 210-273-4777, so I can add you to the trip. Again, it is truly an honor to represent each of you in our association. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at the previously mentioned number. I am looking forward to seeing you soon!

Jerry Nelson, President



## THE VSPA SISTERHOOD

Sheila Cain, Sisterhood President



*Dear Sisters and Brothers of the VSPA,*

*I hope this finds you all healthy and happy. Winter is behind us, and the holidays are now a thing of the past. Hopefully, everyone had a Blessed holiday season however you choose to celebrate. Hopefully, we will all have a safe and enjoyable summer. Travel adventures await the warm days ahead of us.*

*Looking forward, we are planning a great reunion in Charleston, South Carolina. From the opening of registration to the close of the reunion at the annual Memorial Service, it shall be an exciting and memorable event. Schmoozing, war stories, reminiscing with old friends and making new friends are always a highlight in the Hospitality Room.*

*The VSPA members will hold their annual business meeting on Saturday morning and will elect a new slate of officers to lead us forward into 2024.*

*A very deep and appreciative **THANK YOU** go to Jerry Nelson and his staff for all the help and support they have shown to the Sisterhood. I'm sure I speak for the Sisterhood members when I say it has been an honor and privilege to work with you in this great organization.*

*At the same time, the Sisters will be holding their meeting. We try to do things a little different. We open our meeting with a mimosa toast. We hold a Memorial Service for all the sisters who have passed since our last reunion. If you know of a sister who has recently passed, please contact myself or Sisterhood Chaplain Roberta Smith.*

*We continue our meeting with shared experiences and information that allows us to help the members in their lives and support each other.*

*At the last reunion in Phoenix, a group of our wonderful sisters formed a committee and developed a form to be used to help support our Veterans. These sisters, all nurses, did an amazing job of giving us another tool for the health of our members. Please see the article on this project further in the Guardmount.*

*As in the past we will be holding a main raffle at the Saturday night banquet. This raffle helps to offset the cost of supplies for the hospitality room. If you plan on attending the Sisterhood meeting, please consider bringing a gift to the meeting that we can use for a raffle.*

*I am very excited to see everyone in October. I'm sure it will be a fantastic reunion. As always, I am available at any time day or night if anyone needs anything. All you need to do is phone me at 716-480-9101 or send an email to [smgervase@yahoo.com](mailto:smgervase@yahoo.com).*

*My Love, Peace and Joy to you all.*

*Loyally,  
Sheila Gervase-Cain, Sisterhood President*

*Wife of Greg Cain, Binh Thuy 67-68*





# 2022 VSPA Reunion Remembering Phoenix, Arizona













**Vietnam Security Police Association**  
**28th Reunion**  
**Charleston, South Carolina – October 4-8, 2023**  
**Joint Base Charleston**

The 2023 VSPA reunion will be held at the Crowne Plaza Charleston Hotel, 4831 Tanger Outlet Blvd. North Charleston, South Carolina 29418. The contract room rate is \$152 per night, plus tax. The room rate *includes a free breakfast*. The rooms include a refrigerator. The group room rate is available three days before and three days after the reunion based upon room availability. You must book early to ensure that rooms are available. DON'T WAIT! This hotel fills very quickly! **HOTEL SOLD OUT!**

**HOTEL INFORMATION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE RESERVATIONS AT THE CROWNE PLAZA:**  
**IF YOU HAVE TO CANCEL FOR ANY REASON, PLEASE CALL THE REUNION BRAT AT 1-360-663-2521 TO COORDINATE REASSIGNMENT OF YOUR ROOM RESERVATION. DO NOT CALL THE HOTEL!** The Reunion BRAT has a list of VSPA members who are waiting for room at the Crowne Plaza.

**ADDITIONAL HOTEL ROOMS:** The Reunion BRAT has worked extensively to help us resolve room availability and has blocked additional rooms at two areas hotels at the same price of \$152 plus tax, including breakfast. A TOTAL OF 30 ADDITIONAL ROOMS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE HOTELS BELOW. Book at the Fairfield Inn first. They have ten rooms for us. It is right next door and uses the same parking lot as the Crowne Plaza. The next hotel is the Towne Place Suites. They have 20 rooms available for the VSPA and a shuttle that will transport you to the Crowne Plaza for our events. The Crowne Plaza will also shuttle you back to the Towne Place Suites.  
 DON'T WAIT! MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW!

**Fairfield Inn**

**843-300-3100 to make their reservations.**  
**4841 Tanger Outlet Blvd. North Charleston, SC 29418, right next door to the Crowne Plaza.**  
**Kings and Queens \$152 + Tax Breakfast Included (Total of 10 Rooms)**  
**Rate available 3 days pre and post based on availability.**  
**Room Block is Vietnam Security Police**  
**Complimentary Parking**  
**Complimentary Airport Shuttle**

**TownePlace Suites Charleston Airport/Convention Center**

**Phone 843-990-7777**  
**5001 Fashion Avenue North Charleston, South Carolina 29418**  
**King Rooms Only \$152 + Tax Breakfast Included (Total of 20 Rooms)**  
**Rate available 3 days pre and post based on availability.**  
**Room Block is Vietnam Security Police**  
**Complimentary Parking**  
**Complimentary Airport Shuttle and Shuttle to Crowne Plaza**

If you encounter any difficulty with hotel reservations, reserve the room, obtain the confirmation number, and contact the Reunion BRAT at 1-360-663-2521. Explain the problem and she will correct it for you.





### AIRPORT INFORMATION:

Book your flight to “Charleston International Airport” (airport code: CHS), in North Charleston, South Carolina. **YOU MUST BE AWARE OF AIRLINE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS. BRING A MASK!** *The hotel does have an airport shuttle.*

**REUNION REGISTRATION FEE:** \$184 per person (early bird) plus an optional tour on Thursday.

**AGENDA:** The agenda is generally accurate, but is subject to change due to Joint Base Charleston operational requirements for the 628<sup>th</sup> SECURITY FORCES SQUADRON:

- Wednesday, October 4: On-site Registration and Reception Dinner at the hotel.
- Thursday, October 5: Optional Tour of the **Charleston Tea Garden, a Factory Tour and tram tour of the Tea Plantation, PLUS a visit to the Charleston Market Specialty Shops.** 50 people maximum. There will be time for lunch on your own at the Specialty Shops, but you should eat your buffet breakfast.
- Friday, October 6: Buffet breakfast. 1300 Presentation by the 628<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron **at our hotel.** Dinner and evening are open for squadron and base dinners or gatherings.
- Saturday Morning, October 7: Breakfast buffet before the VSPA Business Meeting. Afternoon open.
- Saturday Morning, October 7: Breakfast buffet before the VSPA Sisterhood gathering of wives and companions. Afternoon open.
- Saturday Evening, October 7: Banquet dinner with awards and raffle.
- Sunday Morning, October 8: Breakfast buffet before the Memorial service and reading of the names. The reunion will end after the memorial service.
- The Hospitality Room will be stocked with FREE snacks & beverages and will be open as much as possible.
- **THE VSPA BX STORE WILL BE AT THE REUNION THIS YEAR.**

### **CRITICAL INFORMATION!!! PLEASE READ!!!**

Our hotel has been inspected by our VSPA Life Member Gary Jones who has inspected our hotels in the past. He knows exactly what we need. His inspection was highly detailed, including contract space verifications. His report was OUTSTANDING!

We have spoken with many of our members regarding fatigue and the length of time for our tours. Members who attended previous reunions expressed concern regarding early start times, as well as fatigue and the extended days while on base. More and more of our members have difficulty walking; however, some walking may be required for the optional tours. Our planning for events will reduce walking time significantly. Our goal is to provide an opportunity for a reunion with less physical demands and more time to visit with each other in the Hospitality Room.

*The REGISTRATION FEE will be \$184 per person. Our economy has been very difficult for all of us. However, for comparison purposes, the registration fees for our last three reunions were: Washington, D.C. \$210; Colorado Springs \$190; Phoenix \$210. We always work hard to control cost and sincerely hope that the registration fee is not something that will impact your ability to attend our reunion. The registration fee includes an EARLY BIRD CREDIT of \$25 for those who have a registration postmarked by **September 5.***

**THE FOLLOWING IS A CRITICAL CHANGE TO OUR REUNION REGISTRATION PROCESS. PLEASE READ!**



The Reunion BRAT and your VSPA Board of Directors experienced severe impact on planning and preparation FOR THE 2019 REUNION due to **late and incomplete registrations** that were received long past the deadline.

The impact on the VSPA Board and Reunion Planning Committee consisted of delaying plans with the base, including the meal at the base, working with outside entities who had approval authority over our ability to visit the U.S. Capitol, Arlington National Cemetery, and multiple units at Joint Base Andrews. A variety of other problems occurred that we had to resolve on behalf of our members by contacting them for the Reunion BRAT. The same issues applied to Colorado Springs and Phoenix but were significantly reduced through the implementation of our EARLY BIRD FEE, which will also be applied this year as unanimously approved by our membership.

THEREFORE, THE \$25 EARLY BIRD CREDIT ON YOUR REGISTRATION WILL BE HONORED IF YOUR REGISTRATION IS POSTMARKED BY SEPTEMBER 5. FOR REGISTRATIONS POSTMARKED AFTER THAT DATE, THE REGISTRATION FEE WILL INCREASE BY \$25.

We have had a huge response to our warning that rooms would sell fast at our reunion host hotel, The Crowne Plaza Charleston. Many of you responded immediately. Some missed the opportunity and discovered that the hotel was sold out. Please take advantage of the 30 additional rooms at area hotels.

*If you have a question or need additional information about this reunion, please contact VSPA President Jerry Nelson [JRNEL1423@aol.com](mailto:JRNEL1423@aol.com) or call him on his cell phone at (210) 273-4777. We hope to see you in Charleston, South Carolina for our 28<sup>th</sup> VSPA Reunion! It will be great to see you.*

THE REGISTRATION FORMS FOLLOW THIS PAGE.

**“We Take Care of Our Own!”**





VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION REUNION REGISTRATION FORM



28th Reunion Charleston, South Carolina October 4 - 8, 2023

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

RVN or Thai base \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron \_\_\_\_\_ Years 19 \_\_\_\_\_ to 19 \_\_\_\_\_ (Do not list bases outside of Vietnam or Thailand)

RVN or Thai base \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron \_\_\_\_\_ Years 19 \_\_\_\_\_ to 19 \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of your guests(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Banquet meal selection: BEEF \_\_\_\_\_ CHICKEN \_\_\_\_\_ VEGETARIAN \_\_\_\_\_

List any special needs: \_\_\_\_\_

In case of emergency, notify: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your first VSPA Reunion? YES: \_\_\_\_\_ NO: \_\_\_\_\_

REGISTRATION FEES

Are your annual VSPA dues current? Dues Renewals Only ..... \$15 = \$ (Not for new members - to join the VSPA, please see "VSPA Membership" on the instructions page).

Number of persons attending the Reunion including you # ..... X \$184 = \$ (EARLY BIRD CREDIT OF \$25 INCLUDED if postmarked by September 5)

Number of persons attending the Reunion including you # ..... X \$209 = \$ (LATE FEE OF \$25 INCLUDED if postmarked AFTER September 5)

OPTIONAL THURSDAY TOUR

Charleston Tea Garden, Plantation and Factory Tour, plus the Charleston Market Specialty Shops \$52 per person # \_\_\_\_\_ (Maximum of 50 People) ..... X \$52 = \$ (First come, first served)

KNIFE-13 MEMORIAL T-SHIRT FUNDRAISER \$25 TO HELP BUILD TWO KNIFE-13 MEMORIALS. Please circle the shirt size and number of shirts: SM \_\_\_\_\_ MED \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ XL \_\_\_\_\_ XXL \_\_\_\_\_ XXXL \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_ X \$25 = \$

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED = ..... \$

SEND PAYMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS, AND MADE PAYABLE TO:

THE REUNION BRAT 16817 Mountainside Drive East Greenwater, WA 98022 (360) 663-2521 TheReunionBRAT@hotmail.com



## PLEASE READ

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE REGISTRATION FORMS

1. The information that you provide on this form is critical for a successful reunion. All name and base information will be placed on your reunion identification badge. Guests will also receive reunion identification. The reunion ID will serve as your identification throughout the reunion.
2. PLEASE PRINT or type all information clearly. Do not use abbreviations on any portion of the registration form.
3. RVN OR THAI BASE INFORMATION: Please list only those bases where you served in Vietnam or Thailand. When listing bases, do not abbreviate. When listing squadrons, please indicate Air Police, Security Police, or specific detachments. The information will be used on your reunion ID.
4. HOME ADDRESS and MAILING ADDRESS: for your confirmation letter. THE CONFIRMATION LETTERS WILL BE MAILED BY SEPTEMBER 15, 2023.
5. TELEPHONE AND EMAIL ADDRESS: Your contact information is vital to a successful reunion. You will also receive a copy of the attendee roster upon arrival at the hotel.
6. NAMES OF YOUR GUESTS: Please provide the first name, middle initial and last name of your guest(s) on the Registration Form.
7. RENEWAL OF ANNUAL DUES: For existing VSPA members only - you can renew your dues at the time of registration if they are not current. VSPA membership must be current to attend the reunion or bring a guest. Life Members have paid their dues for life.
8. VSPA MEMBERSHIP: If you are not a member of the Vietnam Security Police Association, please do not send \$15 with this registration form. For information on how to become a member, contact Paul Shave at 505-831-9401 or email him: [Paul.Shave@hotmail.com](mailto:Paul.Shave@hotmail.com). You will have to submit a completed application form and a DD-214 showing service in the USAF as an Air Policeman, Security Policeman or an Augmentee in Vietnam or Thailand 1958 to 1976, and a discharge under honorable conditions.
9. REUNION COST: The registration fee is \$184 per person UNLESS YOU MISS THE EARLY BIRD DEADLINE WITH A POSTMARK OF SEPTEMBER 5. The registration fee will be \$209 per person for all registrations postmarked after September 5. THIS IS CRITICAL because of the work that must be completed by the Reunion BRAT and your Board of Directors. The following work must be completed by the Reunion BRAT after registrations are received: A full audit of all names, base names, squadrons, and fees paid. The audit of names must be correct in order to print reunion ID badges, pay advance fees to the hotel and bus transportation company based upon the number of people attending the reunion. Only then can the confirmation letters be mailed to our members. All of the registration and identification information must be assembled in Registration Welcome Packages that have to be mailed in bulk to the hotel with enough time for delivery no later than Tuesday, October 3, the day before registration opens at the hotel. Shipping and delivery are very difficult to guarantee with the current delays in mail systems and shipping. Once the packages arrive at the hotel, another audit must take place so that reunion specific items may be placed in each welcome package, including reunion pins, patches, meal tickets, bus tickets, raffle information and local restaurant information. PLEASE DON'T DELAY.
10. **KNIFE-13 MEMORIAL T-SHIRTS: We are raising funds to build two memorials for the 18 Security Policemen and five crew members who perished in the crash of their helicopter, KNIFE-13, on May 13, 1975, while enroute to the Mayaguez Rescue Staging Area. They were all assigned to the 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand.**





## THE VSPA HEALTH INFORMATION FORM



Prepared by Five Members of the VSPA Sisterhood who are Caring Wives and Highly Skilled Nurses: Sue Nelson (Minnesota), Barbara Garcia (Arizona), Wanda Haynes (Texas), Judy Curnick (Michigan) and Cathy Childers (Texas)

Healthcare is always a main topic of discussion at our annual reunion Sisterhood meetings. Recent reunions have heightened our awareness due to medical emergencies and trips to local emergency rooms, mostly for members of our VSPA Brotherhood. The experience of being transported to an ER can be both frightening and confusing for everyone involved, including the person being transported, their family members and concerned VSPA members who accompany their VSPA brother or sister to the hospital.

The VSPA motto is “We take care of our own.” The motto of the VSPA Sisterhood is “Taking care of those who take care of their own.” Therefore, we need your help to take care of you during a medical emergency at a reunion, especially if you are unconscious!

Many spouses stated that their husbands don’t take them along to their routine medical appointments so “who knows what’s discussed”. It was also noted that many of us are traveling or “snow-birding” around the country during our “golden years” so the need for clear, concise medical information is needed to keep the VA team, the local primary doctors and those unexpected “on the road” medical visits up-to-date and aware of our complex medical history, especially for our men - to prevent duplication of tests, medications and wasted time, which is absolutely critical during an emergency.

Together, five members of the VSPA Sisterhood who are a highly trained group of VSPA “nurse wives” developed a simple, easy to complete, healthcare form to use on a routine basis (Please see the attached form). Our immediate goal is to have this form available for everyone who attends the coming reunion in Charleston. Therefore, it will be sent as a mass email to all members as well as being published in Guardmount. Our long-term goal is to have the blank form located on the VSPA website for easy access, downloading and printing. For now, we recommend that you print a few forms at a time, so you’re prepared to update as needed. We also recommend that you keep a completed copy in your car glovebox, as well as your suitcase for those unexpected medical situations. **PLEASE BRING A COMPLETED COPY TO THE REUNION.** Our last two reunion demonstrated that the lack of this information caused delays during medical emergencies. Help us help you whether it is a cardiac event, an Agent Orange related illness like cancer or diabetes, an automobile collision, or an injury during a fall. This information is vital for you to receive timely care.

Angie Costello and Roberta Smith have inspired us and have been extremely helpful regarding caregiver and death benefits. They lost their husbands due to Agent Orange related cancer that took its toll after extended illness. Thankfully, they did not pass at a reunion, but it could have happened. We have had members who were terminally ill attend reunions, doing everything in their power to attend one last reunion with their VSPA brothers and sisters.

We encourage all of you, especially our VSPA Sisters, to step forward with your talent to help our group with all the challenges we face in the future. We are blessed to have a large resource/knowledge base within our Sisterhood! We need to tap into this available resource to sustain our group, to maintain and support our VSPA Brotherhood and Sisterhood continuously over time. Most importantly, we need to acknowledge our age and the potential for a medical emergency. Please be prepared for a medical emergency involving you or a loved one.

**Print and complete the VSPA Health Information Form.  
Bring the completed form to the reunion!**



My concerns today are: \_\_\_\_\_

Name:		Last 4	Date of birth:		Date:
Veteran: Yes No		Agent Orange Exposure: Yes No		Advanced Directives: Yes No	
Healthcare Provider:				Provider Phone #:	
Insurance Company:			Ins #		Group#
Blood Type:		Medication Allergies:			

**Emergency Contact Information**

Name:		Relationship:	Phone:
Name:		Relationship:	Phone:

**Medication(s)**

Medication	Dose	Frequency	Medication	Dose	Frequency

**Problem List/Medical Diagnosis**

Diagnosis	Date	Diagnosis	Date

**Surgeries**

Surgery	Date	Surgery	Date

**Other Information:**



# 2023 ELECTION OF VSPA OFFICERS

## CALL FOR BIOS AND PHOTOS

The VSPA's By-Laws call for elections of officers every two years, with all current members being given an opportunity to vote. Current members may vote in person by attending the business meeting at the annual reunion, or by mailing in a written ballot, which will be printed in the next issue of Guardmount. Each member may submit only one ballot. There are six positions up for election: President, Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Historian. The other positions on our board of directors (President Emeritus, Past President and Communications Director) are permanent positions as recognized by our Constitution and By-Laws. All other positions in the VSPA are staff positions appointed by the president and board based upon expertise and willingness to serve the members of the VSPA. Elected officers will be confirmed and installed after the voting is completed at the reunion in October. The term of office of all positions is two years. The positions do not receive a salary and are entirely on a volunteer basis.

VSPA members have until **August 5, 2023**, to declare their intention to run for an elected VSPA position and must submit a bio and photo for publication in Guardmount. Each person who runs must have been a regular member or life member in good standing for at least two years prior to the election. Board members must have the ability to attend future business meetings that are held at our annual reunions. They must communicate via the Internet and by phone on a regular basis and must make the commitment to provide the time necessary to serve in the position - none of these are ceremonial positions.

If you want to run for an office on the VSPA Board of Directors, you'll need to submit a photo and one-page biography. Send your bio and photo to VSPA's Guardmount Editor, Mike Kennedy, electronically (mike3sps@verizon.net) or by surface mail (14766 Foxfield Lane, Fontana, CA 92336) soon enough so that he receives your information by **August 5, 2023**. The bios and a ballot will be made available in the next issue of Guardmount.

The duties of the elected board positions below are from the VSPA By-Laws:

**PRESIDENT** - The duties of the President shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Act as Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board of Directors.
- B. Cause to be called all regular and special meetings of the organization.
- C. Preside over all regular and special meetings of the organization.
- D. Enforce the Constitution and By-Laws.
- E. Direct and supervise the operation of the organization.
- F. Prepare and present the Board of Directors Annual Report at the annual business meeting.
- G. Coordinate the confirmation of all appointed staff members with the Board of Directors.
- H. Keep a current folder that includes all official correspondence, records, and official materials assigned to his care and turn over the folder to his successor.
- I. Be an ex-officio member of all committees, except the "Nominations Committee."

**VICE PRESIDENT** and **SECOND VICE PRESIDENT** - The duties of the Vice President and the Second Vice President shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Assist the President in the discharge of his duties.
- B. Assume the duties of the President in the event of his absence, illness, or call to eternal Guardmount.
- C. Execute the powers and authority of the President, when required, in the absence of the President.
- D. Serve as elected members of the Board of Directors.
- E. Serve as Chairman and member of the Public Relations Committee if a committee is necessary.
- F. Serve as a member of the Scholarship Committee.
- G. Prepare and present annual reports relative to the operation of their respective office at the annual business meeting.
- H. Keep a current folder that includes all official correspondence, records, and official materials assigned to their care and turn over the folder to his successor.
- I. The Second Vice President shall provide oversight for all record keeping activities and assist the President by maintaining hard copy records when necessary.

**SECRETARY** - The duties of the Secretary shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Officiate when required in the absence of the President and Vice President.
- B. Serve as an elected member of the Board of Directors.
- C. Serve as a member of the Membership Committee.
- D. Be the clerk of the organization.
- E. Be the custodian of all business-related non-financial records and materials, with the exception of: those records which are created and maintained by the VSPA Historian, the VSPA Membership Chairman, the VSPA Treasurer and VSPA Communications Director Don L. Poss; or those records which are required for performance of the duties of the registered agent and liaison with VSPA's tax accountant and tax attorney. All such records shall remain property of the organization.
- F. Take minutes and keep permanent records of the proceedings of all annual Business Meetings and meetings of the Board of Directors.
- G. Prepare and distribute election ballots, if necessary and as required.
- H. Ensure that only members in good standing vote on organizational business. The Secretary will be assisted by the Membership Chairman and the Sergeant-at-Arms.
- I. Serve as official organization correspondent.
- J. Keep a current folder that includes all official correspondence, records, and official materials assigned to his care and turn over the folder to his successor.

**TREASURER** - The duties of the Treasurer shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Serve as an elected member of the Board of Directors.
- B. Act as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee if the committee is necessary.
- C. Be the Chief Financial Officer of the organization.
- D. Be the custodian of all financial records of the organization.
- E. Receive and be responsible for the collection of all monies due and payable to the organization.





- F. Have custody of all organization funds, and shall provide for the safekeeping, retention, disbursement, and investment in a manner acceptable to the Board of Directors.
- G. Receive donations on behalf of the organization.
- H. Issue letters in acknowledgement of all donations as required by tax codes.
- I. To work with the President to make such reports and returns as are required by Federal, State and local governments, the Articles of Incorporation, the Constitution, and these By-Laws, including the disbursement of appropriate taxes and fees.
- J. Maintain accounts appropriate to the structure and activities of the organization and in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and principles.
- K. Keep a current folder that includes all official correspondence, records, and official materials assigned to his care and turn over the folder to his successor.

**HISTORIAN** - The duties of the Historian shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Serve as an elected member of the Board of Directors.
- B. Serve as Chairman of the Historical Committee if a committee is necessary.
- C. Prepare and present a report at the annual business meeting regarding the history projects completed during the preceding year.
- D. Keep a current folder that includes all official correspondence, records, and official materials assigned to his care and turn over the folder to his successor.

*A melancholy mood fostered this poem.  
Overall, my life is good. Sometimes one just has to express thoughts.  
Erlyce*

*He's Dead  
They said,  
Shot in the head  
They said,  
What do you mean?!  
I said,  
He can't be dead!  
We've planned our life ahead  
We were going to be wed  
  
He told me he'd come back  
But he served his Country instead.  
  
Fifty Five years later  
I remember him well*

*And I have a different life  
Instead.  
  
But I will be forever glad  
For the times we had.  
  
Another man came into my life,  
A farm boy, blue eyes  
Who made me his wife.  
He consoled me, treated me gently,  
Eased my pain and let me live again.  
  
I honor Lee's Memory  
And mourn his death in Vietnam on July 8, 1966*

## ANGELA “ANGIE” COSTELLO

### THE VSPA SISTERHOOD THE NHA TRANG GANG

#### A WIDOW’S JOURNEY FROM GRIEF TO A CELEBRATION OF LEGACY

The 2022 Reunion in Phoenix was the first I attended since the death of my husband, Jim Costello, VSPA Life Member #552. He served at Nha Trang in 1969-70 and died of Agent Orange related cancer on **January 14, 2022**. Now, he is listed at Life Member #111, which includes all of his VSPA brothers who have stood their final Guardmount, including those who died in Vietnam and Thailand.

When I arrived at the hospitality room, I was immediately embraced by Jim’s brothers, members of the VSPA Sisterhood and members of the Nha Trang Gang. The emotion was palpable. I was overcome with gratitude for the generosity of spirit and genuine affection shown to me. So overcome, in fact, that I had to leave the hospitality room and return to my hotel room where I had a good cry ... because they do take care of their own.

I composed myself, returned to the hospitality room and that is when my healing began. Jerry Nelson told me, “I know this is hard, but you are here representing and honoring Jim.” That was the moment I turned from grief and focused on the legacy of the VSPA and our brothers and Sisters. There is something about the pain of grief that is cleansing. I also discovered that it can be strengthening, providing a sense of purpose as it has for other widows who are members of the VSPA Sisterhood.

There are some brothers who say we should focus only on the stories relevant to their service in Vietnam and Thailand. They feel that the VSPA is not the place to embrace and share the joy and heartache we experience now. To me, that is a disservice to all our brothers as well as our Sisterhood whose motto is: “Taking care of those who take care of their own”. Our brothers are not defined only by their service but by the honorable way they have overcome the pain and trauma of that service. They are husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles and grandfathers. They have the strength of character to carry on, to seek the experience of joy and love. One of our brothers told me that the embers of war and suffering are always smoldering, waiting to be fanned into flames. Those same embers can also be fanned into love, creating a legacy.

Our brothers continue to demonstrate their strength and character simply by surviving and finding joy, at the same time never forgetting their brothers who did not return. Yes, the war shaped them. Boys became men overnight. The same traits they learned and honored during their service remain as an integral part of their character. Traits such as faith, honor, loyalty, friendship, and an overwhelming desire to protect family and country.

Every year, we honor the brothers and sisters we have lost since the previous reunion. If their names are spoken and their stories are shared with and by their children, and their children’s children, every brother will live on. The VSPA is a continuum. Just as we reach back to our ancestors for our fundamental values, we as guardians of that legacy must reach ahead to our children and their children. If we do that, our brothers and sisters will not die but will live on in the hearts and minds of the next generations, including the Defenders who have followed in their footsteps. That is the legacy of the VSPA.







Thankfully, your legacy is also my legacy as a wife, mother, grandmother, and member of the VSPA Sisterhood. Like so many of our brothers and sisters, I am whole once again because of the VSPA. Thank you!

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# TALKING PAPER

## KNIFE 13 MEMORIAL MONUMENTS

Prepared By The Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc.



- The Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc. (VSPA) has proposed to raise funds, design, and deliver long-overdue memorial monuments to honor the 18 Security Policemen and five aircrew members (all assigned to the 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand) who perished in the crash of United States Air Force Helicopter, Knife 13, on 13 May 1975 in Thailand. Monuments will be located at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona (home of the 56<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing and 56<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron) and the Security Forces Museum at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.
- The VSPA is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt organization of military war veterans who served as United States Air Force Air Policemen, Security Policemen, and Augmentees in Vietnam and Thailand. All donations to the memorials will be tax deductible for donors.
- The VSPA will seek support from corporate America and other patriotic organizations. Fund-raising is already underway using VSPA's extensive network of retired and active-duty Security Forces Defenders, including K-9 and others, plus the Special Operations community.
- The VSPA will fund, design, contract, transport and deliver approved monuments to mutually agreed upon and prepared sites that we have already surveyed at both bases.
- The VSPA has several members with in-depth experience in successfully creating and delivering world-class, distinctive memorials honoring this Nation's Military Veterans.
  - Granite Memorial Benches at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio and Moody AFB, Georgia.
  - A series of photo-etched black granite Veteran's monuments created in the Town Square Park of Murrieta, California, in addition to a grey granite Fallen Warriors Monument, a POW/MIA Table, a 30-foot obelisk, and an Honor Garden where memorial bricks and tiles are available.
  - A Gold Star Honor Garden recently completed and dedicated September 22, 2022, in Hatboro, Pennsylvania.
- We anticipate raising the necessary funds to create the Knife-13 Monuments at Luke AFB, Arizona and Lackland AFB, Texas to recognize all who volunteered and perished when their helicopter, Knife-13, crashed while enroute to the staging area for the Mayaguez Rescue and Recovery Mission, also known as the Last Battle of the Vietnam War.
- The anticipated cost of both granite monuments has been estimated at \$100,000. The COVID pandemic, as well as labor and supply chain considerations prevent more accurate budget estimates. Once site and design concepts are agreed upon, and with approval from the Air Force Historical Research Agency, we will develop A&E renderings with more accurate cost.

Jerry R. Nelson, President  
Vietnam Security Police Association  
Personal Cell Phone: (210) 273-4777





## KNIFE-13 MEMORIAL

 TSgt JACKIE D. GLENN 56TH SPS	 SSGT GERALD A. COYLE 56TH SPS	 SSGT FALEAGAFULU ILAOA 56TH SPS	 SGT JIMMY P. BLACK 56TH SPS	 SGT BOBBY G. COLLUMS 56TH SPS	 SGT THOMAS D. DWYER 56TH SPS
 SGT BOB W. FORD 56TH SPS	 SGT GERALD W. FRITZ 56TH SPS	 SGT GREGORY L. HANKAMER 56TH SPS	 SGT MICHAEL D. LANE 56TH SPS	 SGT WILLIAM R. MC KELVEY 56TH SPS	 SGT ROBERT W. ROSS 56TH SPS
 SGT DARRELL L. HAMLIN 56TH SPS	 SGT DAVID A. HIGGS 56TH SPS	 SGT DENNIS W. LONDON 56TH SPS	 SGT ROBERT P. MATHIAS 56TH SPS	 SGT TOMMY R. NEALIS 56TH SPS	 AMN EDGAR C. MORAN II 56TH SPS
 CAPT JAMES G. KAYS (AC) 21ST SOS	 1LT LAURENCE FROEHLICH (CP) 21ST SOS	 TSgt MC MULLEN, GEORGE III (FE) 21ST SOS	 SGT ROBERT P. WELDON (FE) 21ST SOS	 SGT PAUL J. RABER (CC) 21ST SOS	

**DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF OUR KNIFE-13 BROTHERS**

EIGHTEEN SECURITY POLICEMEN FROM THE 56TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON AND FIVE AIRCREW MEMBERS FROM THE 21ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON, ALL WERE ASSIGNED TO THE 56TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS WING AT NAKHON PHANOM ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE BASE, THAILAND (NKP). OUR BROTHERS WERE VOLUNTEERS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE VALIANT HOPE OF SAVING THE LIVES OF THE CAPTURED CREW OF THE SS MAYAGUEZ. ALL PERISHED ON MAY 13, 1975, IN THE CRASH OF THE CH-53C SEA STALLION HELICOPTER #68-10933, CALL SIGN KNIFE-13, WHILE EN ROUTE FROM NAKHON PHANOM RTAFB TO THE STAGING AREA FOR THE MAYAGUEZ RESCUE OPERATION AT U-TAPAO ROYAL THAI NAVY BASE.

WE SHALL ALWAYS REMEMBER THEM!

### THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

THE UNITED STATES MERCHANT SHIP SS MAYAGUEZ AND ITS CREW WERE CAPTURED ON MAY 12, 1975, BY KHMER ROUGE INSURGENTS IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS OFF OF THE COAST OF CAMBODIA. PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD ORDERED THE U.S. MILITARY TO RECOVER THE SHIP AND SAVE THE CREW. 75 SECURITY POLICEMEN FROM THE 56TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON AT NKP ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE BASE, THAILAND VOLUNTEERED FOR THE MISSION ON MAY 13, 1975, BASED UPON THEIR PRIOR TRAINING FOR EMBASSY

EVACUATIONS DURING OPERATION EAGLE PULL. FOUR HELICOPTERS FROM THE 21ST SOS LIFTED OFF FROM NKP TO TRANSPORT THE SECURITY POLICEMEN TO THE STAGING AREA AT U-TAPAO. SHORTLY AFTER LIFT-OFF, KNIFE-13 FELL OUT OF THE FLYING FORMATION, CRASHING IN DENSE JUNGLE DUE TO CATASTROPHIC MECHANICAL FAILURE. ALL 22 AIRMEN ABOARD KNIFE-13 DIED DUE TO IMPACT AND SUBSEQUENT FIRE WITH EXPLODING AMMUNITION. THE SS MAYAGUEZ AND HER CREW WERE RESCUED ON MAY 15, 1975.

## KNIFE-13 MEMORIAL

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
56TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON, AND 21ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON, NAKHON PHANOM RTAFB, THAILAND

### KNIFE-13 GOODBYES

STANDING ON THE METAL TARMAC AT U-TAPAO, PEERING AT STARS ON THAT WARM MAY NIGHT, THREE BLINKING LIGHTS APPEARED ON THE HORIZON ... HEARTBROKEN, THE FOURTH NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

LANDING IN BREATHELESS SLOW-MOTION, NOT KNOWING WHICH ONE WENT DOWN, WE WERE TOLD THAT OUR BROTHERS WERE LOST ... FOUR JOLLY GREENS, NOW ONLY THREE.

STANDING THERE, MY HEART SINKING WITH THE POUNDING ARRIVAL OF EACH WHIRRING ROTOR, READING THE NUMBERS ON THEIR SIDES AS THEY POWERED DOWN EACH PULSING JET MOTOR, I BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT MY DELTA SQUAD BROTHERS WOULD NOT DISEMBARK. MY BROTHERS NO LONGER THERE, I BEGAN A SOUL QUENCHING REALITY, A MISSING SPARK, MY YOUTHFUL SPIRIT QUICKLY LOST.

HEROES WHO VOLUNTEERED AND BROKE BREAD WITH ME, NOW THE GHOSTS OF KNIFE-13. THROUGH GOD'S INTERVENTION I HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM THEM JUST HOURS BEFORE, HANDSHAKING AND HUGGING GOODBYES, NOT REALIZING THERE WOULD NEVER BE MORE. I SHIFTED BETWEEN ANGER, DESPAIR, AND THE REALIZATION I WOULD NEVER AGAIN SEE MY BROTHERS ALIVE ... A TWENTY-YEAR OLD SERGEANT, INSTANTLY GROWING IN MATURITY TO A TEMPERED OLD THIRTY-FIVE.

THEY ARE ALWAYS IN MY THOUGHTS, NOW AND IN THE DECADES SINCE THAT WARM AND FATEFULLY CLEAR NIGHT, WHERE THREE BLINKING LIGHTS APPEARED ... HEARTBROKEN, THE FOURTH NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

SGT J.C. HAGLER, 56TH SPS, NKP 1974-1975, SOLE SURVIVOR OF DELTA SQUAD, KNIFE-13 MAY 13, 1975





## KNIFE 13 COMMEMORATIVE MEDALLION



The medallions are being sold as a fund-raising effort to build two memorials to honor the 18 Security Policemen and five aircrew members who were assigned to the 56th Special Operations Wing at Nakhon Phanom, RTAFB, Thailand. They perished in a CH53 Helicopter crash, call sign: KNIFE-13, that went down enroute



to the Mayaguez Rescue Staging Area on May 13, 1975. Their names are on the medallion. The memorials will be constructed at two locations and are pending final approval. All additional donations for the memorial will be accepted. The VSPA is a tax exempt 501(c)(19) Military Association.

**Height:** 4 inches    **Width** 2.5 inches    **Thick:** 5/32"    **Plating:** Shiny Gold

Questions regarding the memorials may be directed to VSPA President  
Jerry Nelson:    **Cell:** (210) 273-4777    **Email:** [jrnell1423@aol.com](mailto:jrnell1423@aol.com)

**Sales POC:** The Vietnam Security Police Association BX

Email address: [vspastore@yahoo.com](mailto:vspastore@yahoo.com)

Phone: (989) 686-3639 - Credit cards are accepted.

Checks payable to the Vietnam Security Police Association with a note for the KNIFE-13 Memorial may be mailed to:

VSPA BX c/o Van & Joyce Digby  
3062 Lantern Court  
Bay City, MI 48706

Online ordering and credit card processing is available in the VSPA BX located at [VSPA.COM](http://VSPA.COM) by clicking on STORE at the top of the page.

You may also go to <https://vspa.coffeecup.com/shop/> then click on PRODUCT CATEGORIES and select CHALLENGE COIN.

**COST:** \$ 25.00 in honor of the 25th Anniversary of Defensor Fortis, plus shipping & handling, which depends upon the weight and number of medallions purchased.



**WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN**



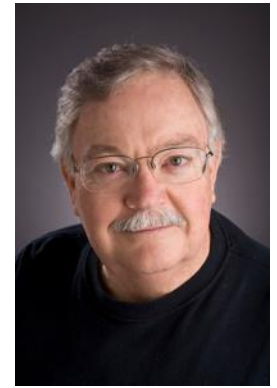




## Tower Kilo 7 Alpha

Steven J. Hall, Sergeant

Life Member # 639; Binh Thuy 1968-69



As a USAF Security Policeman, I spent most of my twelve-month tour posted in one of the seven, thirty-foot tall guard towers that ringed the three and half mile perimeter of Binh Thuy Air Base in the Mekong Delta. The towers overlooked an expansive sea of elephant grass. Four barbed wire fence lines, spaced about four hundred yards apart, were strung around the outside of the hard packed dirt road that defined the base's perimeter. Between the fences, that paralleled the perimeter road, elephant grass grew unchecked. In some areas the grass grew up to fifteen feet tall and was so dense that a tower guard couldn't see anything in or behind the tall grass. Being posted in one of the towers meant that you spent the entire Day shift or Swing shift by oneself. The Day shift personnel went to work before sunrise (0600 hours) and were relieved after eight hours. Swing shift took over afterward and worked until just after sunset (2000 hours). From time-to-time the sector's Security Alert Team (a two-man Jeep patrol, armed with personal weapons and an M-60 machine gun) would stop at the base of the tower to pass along some new scuttlebutt or laugh about the latest comedic episode of Chickenman (an Armed Forces Radio and Television comedy program). After a few minutes they'd drive off to seek relief from the unrelenting sun or find cover from an approaching monsoonal downpour.

Unlike the huge U.S. air bases at Tan Son Nhut, Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay, Binh Thuy Air Base was a very small Vietnamese Air Force Base, located about 80 miles southwest of Saigon. It was situated along the Bassac River, about seven miles west-northwest of the provincial capital of Can Tho city in Phong Dinh province. The geography was flat river delta and except for the trees that grew along the banks of the rivers and canals there were no topographical features to break the monotony of the delta marshland. A person could see as far as the distant tree lines or as far as the hazy weather permitted. On this day in January 1969, I couldn't see very far into the distance due to the smoke and haze that accompanied the low cloud cover. I wasn't really concerned with how far out I could see because my primary duty was to watch the area within the perimeter fences. The problem was that spotting someone inside the fence lines was a challenge due to the dense elephant grass. Just the same, I watched carefully because I knew that a Viet Cong sapper team would take me out before making their way onto the flight line to blow up our aircraft and kill our support personnel. Knowing that I was (for the most part) out there all by myself gave me good reason to stay alert.



It's amazing how the human mind adapts to unusual situations. After a while, being in a perimeter tower all day long becomes normal and routine. But, it's neither normal, nor routine and I had to keep reminding myself of that or I might become complacent and let my guard down. If that were to happen, I could find myself in real trouble.

This particular afternoon's Swing shift had been like most of the many hot, humid and boring days of the past five months since I had arrived in Vietnam. While standing in the tower scanning the





area, I had no reason to think that this day would be any different. The afternoon dragged on into the late evening and as usual and per their daily routine, the ARVN (Army Republic of Viet Nam) troops were trucked in from the field and posted on the cement pillboxes that ringed the perimeter road. In addition to the big olive-green trucks that brought the ARVN soldiers out to their defensive pillboxes, the traffic on the perimeter road increased as smaller vehicles carrying personnel for the shift change at Paddy Control paraded by. Paddy Control was the Air Traffic Control center for the Mekong Delta. It was a well-bunkered compound about a quarter mile down the road from my tower (radio call sign) "Kilo 7 Alpha". There weren't really that many additional vehicles on the road, but by comparison to the rest of the day it was Binh Thuy's rush hour. The early evening was the best part of the day for a tower guard on the swing shift. As the sun dropped lower in the sky, the day got a little cooler. The increased activity along the road gave me something different to look at and that partially relieved the daylong boredom. It was a sign that I would soon be relieved and that was always a welcome thought. On the other hand, it also meant that it would soon be dark and "dark" was when Charlie came out to play, so it wasn't a time to get distracted.

It wasn't quite dark, but the light level was dropping quickly so I made sure to scan my area of responsibility with the binoculars one more time before they became useless. I concentrated my interest in an area about a hundred yards off to my right and a couple of hundred yards out into the fence lines. This area is where the elephant grass was very tall and very dense. The area had a narrow, shallow canal that ran toward the base, right through the fences. The canal gave cover and concealment to VC sapper teams and made that area a perfect route to infiltrate the base. Since there was no breeze, I was watching for movement of the grass itself. Movement at the top of the grass would be an indication that something or someone was displacing the grass at its base.



After a few minutes of observation, it occurred to me that the perimeter lights (floodlights on tall poles) on my side of the base (east side) were not yet turned on. At dusk, the large floodlights would normally be on; illuminating an area about a hundred yards out from the perimeter road and providing light for the Starlight scopes (a Starlight scope was a large tubular night-vision device that magnified ambient light. It assisted in spotting enemy movement in low-light conditions). I turned around and looked across the base to the west side of the perimeter; I could see that the perimeter lights along that side were lit up. In the past when the lights weren't operational, they were out on both sides of the perimeter. "That's odd", I thought. By then it had grown fairly dark, so I picked up the Starlight scope to check out the area in front of me, but because of the low cloud cover and lack of perimeter lighting to activate the internal sensors the Starlight scope was just about useless. Around that time, I began to get an odd feeling about the situation. Call it gut instinct or a guardian angel watching over me, something wasn't right, and I just couldn't ignore it. As I stood there, I recalled what our instructors in Tech School taught us; an optimum time for infiltrators to penetrate a base is during a shift change when the guards were distracted. That nagging feeling about something not being right got a lot stronger.



Per standard procedure, once it was dark the K-9 handlers were posted along the road. Their big stake-bed truck stopped at the base of the tower and dropped off the K-9 team that was assigned to patrol the area near Kilo 7 Alpha. After the handler got his K-9 partner off of the truck and got his gear together, I leaned over the edge of the tower and told him I thought something odd was going on. I pointed out to him that the perimeter lights were out on the east side, but they were working on the west side. I pointed out that the cloud cover made the Starlight scope all but useless and the shift change was occurring, causing the guards to be

preoccupied. He was quiet for a minute and then said something like, “You know, I think you’re right. I’m going to walk down the road a little ways.” After he left, I thought to myself, “Jeez, he probably thinks I’m nuts!”

About ten minutes after the K-9 team disappeared down the road and into the darkness, Satan jumped up and the fireworks started. An ARVN listening post was situated about 250 yards out front of me and to my left. From the ARVN listening post, automatic weapons fire cut a crimson path directly across in front of me. The ARVN’s red tracers were immediately answered by green tracer fire, ripping into the darkness from my right, directed at the listening post. The green tracer fire confirmed that my gut instincts were right, and I wasn’t nuts after all because Communist forces used green tracers. As the tracer fire volleyed back and forth, I felt like I was watching a lethal tennis match. I grabbed my radio to report the automatic weapons fire to Central Security Control (CSC), but I was so shook-up that what came out of my mouth was gibberish. I kept waiting to hear CSC dispatch a Security Alert Team to the area, but of course they didn’t because they couldn’t possibly have made any sense out of what I had called in. After taking a few moments to calm myself, I picked up the field phone and called into CSC. I asked them if they understood my radio report. “Yeah”, the voice said, “You have gun fire outside the perimeter.” “No!” I countered, “I have automatic weapons fire inside the perimeter fences!” Right about then, another volley of red and green tracers were exchanged, so I picked up the radio, held it up and keyed the mic. This time I knew they got the message loud and clear because the radio chatter increased substantially. Within minutes, a SAT team and NCOs were all over the place. Interestingly enough, none of them showed any desire to come up in the tower. Who could blame them? Hell, I didn’t want to be there either!

The squadron’s mortar crew, (radio call sign) “Firefly” requested permission to lob out a few H.E. rounds, but the ARVN mortar crew got the assignment. The ARVN mortar crew peppered the area with about four rounds. After a while, “Firefly” was allowed to shoot off some mortar flares, but I wish they hadn’t because the light from their mortar flares lit me up like a June bug in a ballpark. At times like that; one becomes acutely aware of one’s own mortality. The ARVN mortars made it clear to the sappers that they didn’t have a chance-in-hell of getting on the base that night, so I guess the sappers decided not to push their luck and took the rest of the night off. After an hour or so, when everything settled down and the night flight (Devil Flight) was posted, I was relieved from post. I turned in my weapon, went back to the barracks and reviewed the evening’s events with a good friend, John Barleycorn.



The rest of the night was quiet. An investigation of the event discovered that the lighting system on the east side of the base had been sabotaged. The approach route taken by the sappers indicated that the Paddy Control (air traffic control) compound was their probable target. By infiltrating prior to the shift change, the sappers would have avoided the increased security provided by the much larger and more heavily armed Security Police night flight. All the elements were working in favor of the sappers, but the ARVN soldiers in the off-base listening post detected them before they could complete their mission. The ARVN mortar fire killed two of the sappers. It was unknown if any other sappers were killed or wounded.

I still wonder about that night. The strength of the premonition I felt was like nothing I’d ever experienced. Where did that overriding sense of the impending danger come from? Personally, I think my guardian angel earned his combat pay that night.





## VSPA Members Go Back To College

Robert “Deke” DeCubellis, Colonel, USAF (Ret.)  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Life Member #347; Bien Hoa 1970-71



This spring, several of our members decided to go back to skool, err, actually I meant to say La Sierra University in Riverside CA. One might say we’re too old to teach new tricks to, but in this case the rolls were reversed. We became “added-junk perfessors” in a series of meetings with university students. The purpose was to interact with them in a special La Sierra’s History 430 course lead by Dr Andrew Howe, Professor of History. The goal was to expose students to the history of the war in Southeast Asia from the perspective of those who fought it, survived it, and came home to a less than receptive welcome to get on with their lives.

The initial meeting took place at the March ARB Air Museum where interested Vietnam Veterans were invited to meet with Dr Howe and the students who were enrolled in this course. The objectives of the course were outlined, and everyone got a chance to get acquainted. Given the personal nature of what we would be asked to do, one might expect that some vets might be reluctant to have their memories and lives tugged and probed after so many years, but we all decided it was worth the effort.

VSPA members Mike Kennedy, Larry Breazeale, and Deke DeCubellis joined other vets recruited from the area to ensure we had several vets for each class segment. We worked through some ground rules we could all agree to that would make the time productive. We met once a week for 2 hours at a mutually agreed upon time on the La Sierra Campus.



Larry Breazeale, and Deke DeCubellis with their group at the La Sierra University campus.

Dr Howe’s syllabus had some pre-requisites for the students to meet along with readings, papers and the usual things one might expect from an upper division course. Our part of it was to expose these students to firsthand recollections that would answer their questions about such things as where we fought, how we lived, what we ate,





what kind of jobs we had in service and after, questions about our families and friends, PTSD and how we cope with it, and the like. Many of us brought in personal photos, maps, and other documents to help illustrate things of interest to the students or that helped us drive home a point. We were frank with our views, emotions and concerns. The students asked thoughtful questions, showed respect for our service and our willingness to help them understand things about the war that you'll never find in a textbook.



The last meeting of the semester was pretty unique. With the approval of Dr Howe, I'd prepared a six-question survey to be completed by each student. The purpose was to see if we met the objectives, what they liked best about it and what we might improve upon if we were to participate in future courses. Dr Howe complied the survey and we got some very honest and useful feedback but were quite pleased with the results.



Mike Kennedy, and Army veteran Steve Mackey met with their group at VFW Post 10267 in Jurupa Valley.



And as a rather surprising finale, all the segment's students and vets met together on campus where the students presented thoughtful gifts to each of us as an expression of their appreciation. Several of us also attended a post-class dinner at a local Vietnamese restaurant hosted by the mother of one of the students. Mom was a small child when Saigon fell and she immigrated to the US, studied hard and became a well-established physician. Her daughter is a graduating senior recently accepted to medical school.

So, would I count those 2 ½ months of fighting traffic to get to class on time to have my brain picked by college students as worth my effort? Well, if asked to do it again, my answer is yes. Our nation's youth need to hear our stories, perspectives, and insight, particularly when structured in a course such as Dr Howe created.

In the segment that Larry and I conducted, we made sure to impress upon these future leaders that the freedoms they've come to enjoy and expect were paid for by the men and women who serve. We emphasized that wars should not be fought unless there's no other choice and that those who are sent to do the grunt work are supported from start to finish. We also suggested that the more they learn from these lessons in history, the less likely our country will repeat the mistakes of past generations. I think we met and exceeded the course objectives. I think these young men and women will take what we've shared with them and put it to good use as they move beyond their college years.



GATESHACK GARY POPS ONE FOR A CORPORAL IN THE VNAF.





## KNIFE 13 MEMORIAL FUND RAISER COMMEMORATIVE LITHOGRAPH



**Height: 24 inches**  
**Width 18 inches**  
**Color: Sepia/bronze**

**THE PIETA** – Honoring the Military Nurses of the Vietnam War by Delita Alvarez Piercy, approved and painted from the original Vietnam Women’s Memorial Sculpture by Glenna Goodacre.

The lithograph depicts a military nurse holding a wounded soldier and is known as The Pieta. The beautiful lithograph was made available to the VSPA by the artist, Delita Piercy, to honor our members for their service and sacrifice. The Pieta lithographs are being sold as a fund-raising effort to build two memorials to honor the 18 Security Policemen and five aircrew members who were assigned to the 56th Special Operations Wing at Nakhon Phanom, RTAFB, Thailand. They perished in a CH53 Helicopter crash, call sign: KNIFE-13, that went down enroute to the Mayaguez Rescue Staging Area on May 13, 1975. The memorials will be constructed at two locations and are pending final approval. **The frame is for display only. The Pieta is being sold unframed and would be a superb gift for Veterans and nurses.**

Questions regarding the lithograph may be directed to Robert DeCubellis, VSPA 2<sup>nd</sup> VP at 951 212-3999 or [dehollylu@gmail.com](mailto:dehollylu@gmail.com)

**COST:** \$ 25.00 in honor of the 25th Anniversary of Defensor Fortis, plus shipping and handling. The lithograph will be rolled and mailed in a tube

All additional donations for the memorial will also be accepted. The VSPA is a tax exempt 501(c)(19) Military Association.

**Sales POC:** The Vietnam Security Police Association BX

Email address: [vspastore@yahoo.com](mailto:vspastore@yahoo.com)

Phone: (989) 686-3639 - Credit cards are accepted.

**CHECKS** for purchase and/or donations payable to the Vietnam Security Police Association with a note for the KNIFE-13 Memorial may be mailed to:

VSPA BX c/o Van & Joyce Digby  
3062 Lantern Court  
Bay City, MI 48706

Online ordering and credit card processing is available in the VSPA BX located at **VSPA.COM** by clicking on **STORE** at the top of the page, then click on **PRODUCT CATEGORIES**, then click on **FUND RAISING FOR KNIFE-13 MONUMENTS**. You may also go to <https://vspa.coffeecup.com/shop/> then click on **PRODUCT CATEGORIES** and select **FUND RAISING FOR KNIFE-13 MONUMENTS**.

**WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN**







## ME AND CLIFF

Larry Fleming, Vice President  
Life Member #131; Nha Trang 68-69



In November 2007 I made the decision to return to an era in my life that I thought I would never dig up again. After talking to my wife Martha, I said we were going to the VSPA (Vietnam Security Police Association) reunion in Washington D.C. in conjunction with the 25th Anniversary of The Wall. It would be a God sent decision that would change my life along with many other Vietnam Veterans including a good friend of mine that I hadn't seen in over 39 years. That event brought me and Cliff Gregory back together and reestablished a friendship that I thought was long gone.

Vietnam was an experience that has and still is challenging the very lives of many Veterans to this day. I think for many of us it is easier to block it from our memory, but for others that is an impossible feat because of an issue that is called PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Memories visit us at the least opportune times and cause emotions to surface that are stressful to the Veteran and others around him or her.

I remember thinking back on my life and realizing after Vietnam, jobs that I worked in and people I worked with for years probably didn't know I was a Vietnam Veteran because that was a guarded fact of my life that I wanted to keep a lid on. I remember coming home to not so much a hero's welcome and it hurt deep down inside. I was not alone in my feelings because I have talked to many other Veterans. When I returned from Vietnam, I still had a little over a year left to serve, which I wound up being stationed at Hamilton Air Force Base in beautiful Northern California. I was even considering applying for a job with the San Francisco PD because they were looking for recruits hot and heavy. Reenlisting was not an option because I needed to get far away from the service. Service over, my wife, Martha and I packed up and headed back to Texas where we would be back in the same town we grew up in where both our families were. We were ready to start our lives away from the memories of the Military.



Life for us was pretty typical I guess, ups and downs, moves and different jobs. We were blessed with 2 beautiful daughters which parlayed into beautiful grandchildren. 2004 rolled around and retirement was the new norm, moved to Glen Rose, Texas and built a beautiful home next door to Lise and Steve Gattis.

Steve and I met in Vietnam in 1968 through a mutual friend, Mike Daoust, who I had been stationed with in Minot, North Dakota. We left North Dakota and went to Vietnam together. Steve and Mike were stationed in Cam Ranh Bay, and I was in Nha Trang. On a few occasions I was on convoy escort to Cam Ranh Bay where I would try to go by and see Mike, which is when I met Steve Gattis. Steve and Mike were involved in the VSPA and Steve tried to sell me on joining this Veterans group in 2002, I agreed to join by paying dues but chose not to attend any reunions because I didn't need to resurrect this void I was trying to conceal.

For 5 years I avoided attending any reunions. In 2007 Martha and I packed a bag and headed to D. C. I think Steve told me that a guy named Cliff Gregory was going to attend the reunion also. I thought it would be good to see an old friend that I remember being close to while stationed in Nha Trang. We arrived at the hotel and upon entering the lobby there he stood, Cliff Gregory.

Cliff and his wife Mary were as glad to see us as we were to see them. We talked and laughed and laughed and talked, it was truly great to see him. We talked about events and other guys we were stationed with, what we had



been doing for the last 39 years and enjoyed each other's company. We were to march in the Veterans Day parade with our fellow VSPA members down Constitution Ave. Cliff and Mary, Martha and I walked side by side in the parade. We were enjoying something we had not experienced before. People were clapping, cheering and waving flags for.....us. From the sides of the street were cheers of "welcome home brother" tears and emotions were all over our group.

There were other extraordinary events that happened that week that were life changing as well, a trip by our group to Arlington National Cemetery that brought some of us to our knees. A group of school kids began to clap for our group of Vietnam Veterans as we were totally overwhelmed by the simple outpouring of applause. What an experience we had been blessed with; memories that have become unforgettable.

With the reunion over we bid goodbye to Cliff and Mary, vowing to stay in touch and return the following year for the next reunion. I began to think about Cliff, he was a different man than I had known in Vietnam. He probably thought the same about me. We had lived our lives the best we thought we could and were now family men with grandchildren. In the few short days, we had together we had enjoyed each other's company, shared stories about life, and above all, laughed. We laughed like we were kids again. I know people looked at us and wondered why we couldn't act our age, but I think this brought the best out in us.

After a few more reunions we were able to find a few more guys we were with in Vietnam. We were all proud of our nick names that were penned by Cliff: Larry "Wi Wi" Fleming from Glen Rose, Texas, Terry "Butterfly" Hall from New Jersey (now a Texan), Bill "Biago" Motta from Cherry Hill, New Jersey and Al "Babysan" Gerrard from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and last but not least Cliff "Boom Boom" Gregory from Hattiesville, Arkansas. After the five of us became the founders of the infamous Nha Thang Gang we became a pretty close bunch. We have been to each other's homes, met each other's kids and shared in activities such as reunions and to attend washing The Wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a very somber and emotional event we did together.

Me and Cliff stayed in close touch by constantly texting to keep up with each other i.e., Mowing, grandkids games, doctor's appointments, mowing, fixing cars, building stuff, building houses, mowing, watching Arkansas sports on TV, what we were eating, DLW, mowing, trips and constant jokes and seeing who could make each other laugh out loud through a text. I think we were as close as we could be living 450 miles from each other. Cliff and Mary were dear friends and we enjoyed visiting in their home, what a beautiful place they have.

My whole world changed on April 5, 2017. Cliff "Boom Boom" Gregory left this world without texting or calling or dropping a line. A call at 10:00 pm from Mary's cell phone from Cliff's son Matt could not be good news. Matt said his dad had passed away while sitting at the table eating supper. As devastated as it was for me, I can't imagine what Mary, Matt and his daughter, Ashley were going through. I went back to my last text from Cliff:

**WiWi, Gooooooooooooo Morning Glen Rose. What's up with this man. I have a bad crick in my neck??? Why on vacations, last one was in Tampa. Shoot Heck WiWi. Won't stop me WiWi, going sledding Friday, 75 degrees today, snow Friday, heck yeah, you settled in yet after your trip to DC, Be easy on yourself, & tell Deadeye that I'm treating my DLW in the manner that she become accustomed to ❤️ . Well y'all have a good day @ keep on smiling. Old Pal 🌟🌟#1, 😊😎**

I've read this text several times since we lost Cliff. This was the friend that thought of other people often, he really cared about people and just wanted to give a quick shout out to brighten up someone's day. I received these kinds of texts from Cliff from time to time. Who could not have a good day after this kind of greeting?

This has been an interesting time for me, I lost probably the closest friend that I had at this time in my life. Now the interesting thing about this is I knew Cliff in Vietnam for a part of a year. Our year in country overlapped



with different times so that's why it was a part of a year that I knew him. I also think I'm closer to Terry, Bill, and Al than people I grew up with and went to school with. We developed a bond with each other that will never be broken, and this is from a window of time in that year 49 years ago. Cliff, Mary, Martha, and I have had a great 10 years since being reunited in 2007. There are memories that will last me until the end. My daughters Marissa and Andra attended our reunion in 2014 in Shreveport, Louisiana. They got to meet the Nha Trang Gang and were welcomed with open arms. Marissa attended a couple more reunions with us and loved Cliff as much as I did, she was devastated by his passing.

Martha and I talked to Mary this morning and it was good to hear from her, I am glad she has a lot of family to support her. They say time heals all wounds, sometimes I wonder, I hope so. I know I will never hear that laugh; I won't get another text to start my day or to get that last "Boom Boom out" for the night.

"Every days a Holiday"

Love ya man!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

April 20, 2017.



The NHA TRANG GANG (L to R) Terry Hall, Al Gerrard, Bill Motta, Cliff Gregory and Larry Fleming



Larry Breazeale and Deke DeCubellis at the March Air Reserve Base Air Fest in April 2023 where we provided info on VSPA's Knife13 Memorial Project to include accepting donations for the Medallion and the Pieta portrait.





## A MESSAGE FROM JANET MATTHEWS, CHAIR OF THE WARRIORS MEDAL OF VALOR COMMITTEE, TO THE 2022 RECIPIENTS OF THE WARRIORS MEDAL OF VALOR:

Congratulations to all the previous recipients of the Warriors Medal of Valor. Sarge would be proud to have you included in this special group. For the new members of the VSPA, be assured that Sarge would seek you out just so he could say, "Welcome Home, Welcome to the VSPA." Not all of you had the chance to meet Sarge, though I hope you have heard about him. Alvin W. Matthews, MSgt, USAF retired, served in the 483rd Security Police Squadron at Cam Ranh Bay Air Base in the Republic of Vietnam from January 1971 to January 1972. He was an instructor at the Security Police Academy before he retired from the Air Force in 1980. He found the VSPA on the Internet and like many of you, he kind of watched from a distance before deciding to join or attend a reunion. It is an honor to say that he is Life Member #127. Sarge posted his final Guardmount on January 4, 2008, his 66th birthday. His resting place is plot number 111 at Cedar Hill Cemetery, Scottsboro, Alabama, a plot he specifically selected to honor his Brothers. We have some wonderful memories of our Sarge. I am so glad that he found the VSPA. He loved this association, he loved his Brothers, and I know he is proud of the continued commitment and growth. He would definitely tear up at the thought that you continue his dream of honoring his VSPA Brothers with this medal.

## *The Warriors Medal of Valor Request for Nominations*

Sarge and the Nominations Committee established the following criteria for consideration: The nominee must be a member in good standing of the VSPA plus any one or combination of the following:

- a. Valor (recognized or unrecognized by the Air Force) for service as an Air Policeman, Security Policeman or Augmentee in Vietnam or Thailand.
- b. Outstanding service to the members of the Vietnam Security Police Association. The Nominations Committee may consider the nomination of a civilian or member of the military, who is not a member of the VSPA, if they have provided outstanding and extraordinary service to the VSPA.
- c. Outstanding service to the military and/or Veterans.



You may submit the nomination by including the name and your justification for why this member deserves the medal. Please include as many **details** on their service as you can. Nominations must be submitted to me at the following email address: [janetmm62@gmail.com](mailto:janetmm62@gmail.com) no later than **August 5, 2023**. The Warriors Medal selection committee must have time to review the nominations, make the selections, engrave the medals, and prepare the certificates. The medals and certificates will be presented at the VPSA Reunion Banquet in October. Thank you for your service and **WELCOME HOME!**

Janet Matthews, Daughter of VSPA Life Member #127



**Vietnam Security Police Association**  
**J.J. CHESTNUT MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**

(<http://www.vspa.com/t-rip-chestnut-1998.htm>)

Richard (Rick) Gano, Life Member #46, Bien Hoa AB – 66-67

**Deadline: October 1, 2023**

The VSPA (USAF) has established a scholarship fund in memory of J.J. “Jacob” Chestnut. J.J. was a career USAF Security Policeman and served two tours in the Republic of Vietnam, with the 12th Combat Security Police and the 633d Combat Security Police. After completion of his military career, J.J. Chestnut became a member of the U. S. Capital Police. In 1998, during an attack which shocked the nation, J.J. Chestnut was killed in the line of duty defending the U.S. Capital Building by a deranged individual attempting to gain access to sensitive areas. J.J. Chestnut is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

All VSPA members, spouses, children, grandchildren, stepchildren/step-grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are eligible to compete for this scholarship. Normally one \$500.00 award is given annually. The award will be granted to those seeking education beyond the high school level and may include trade schools, community colleges, junior colleges or four-year college or university.

The deadline for submission of this scholarship application is the first day of October each year. The basis for the award will be recommendation(s), Grade Point Average (GPA) and the applicant’s response to one of the below listed questions and recommendation.

VSPA members may request applications on behalf of applicants via the public bulletin board on the VSPA Web Site, email, or telephone. Applications may also be requested by survivors of a deceased VSPA Member.

Please complete the biographical data and recommendation. On a separate piece of paper please respond to one of the following questions, in 500 words or less:

1. In what instances, if any, do you feel that the United States is justified in taking military action?

*Or*

2. Many people feel the military today is alienated from the general population. How can this alienation be eliminated or prevented?

Submit the completed application via e-mail to: [rickgano@gmail.com](mailto:rickgano@gmail.com) or regular mail to:

Richard (Rick) Gano  
 31025 S. Kaufman Road  
 Canby, OR 97013  
 (503)577-2199





**Vietnam Security Police Association  
J.J. Chestnut Memorial Scholarship Application**

**APPLICANT'S BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of VSPA member: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and address of school currently attending or last attended:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current degree/education level: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and address of school currently or planning on attending:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Grade point average: \_\_\_\_\_

- Note:** 1. Please attach a copy of your most current transcripts.  
2. Recommendation of school official, principal, university administrator, department chair, or guidance counselor.

Name of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments concerning applicant's qualifications and potential:

\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature/Title of person making recommendation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Military Homecoming

Lonnie D. Beeson, Sergeant First Class (Ret.)  
635th SPS, U-Tapao RTNA 1970-71

I graduated high school in May of 1966. A couple of weeks later I turned eighteen and registered for the draft. In late summer of 1967, I received my draft notice. I immediately contacted the local Air Force recruiter. Fortunately, I had taken the Air Force entrance exam in high school when a recruiter visited our school, so on October 23, 1967, I was on a plane headed for Amarillo AFB, TX for basic training. Six weeks later I was bound for Lackland AFB to attend Security Police Training School. My class was nearing graduation when the North Korean Navy detained and boarded a US Navy ship, the USS Pueblo. The crew was held captive.



Lonnie Beeson & Sentry Dog Thunder X912  
U-Tapao RTNA, Thailand - 1971

After graduation and thirty days leave I and much of my class landed in Seoul, Korea as part of a U.S. forces build-up known as Operation Red Fox. Five of us wound up at Taegu Air Base just out from the city of Taegu (now known as Daegu). What followed was thirteen months of basically guard duty. I worked Tiger Flight, so I spent twelve hours nearly every night walking in circles around F-4 Phantom fighter jets or maybe around the outside of some obscure building. If I was lucky, I might get to work the main gate alongside ROKAF military police who kept a sharp eye out for Korean airmen taking stolen property off base to sell on the black market. When that airman tried to get back on base, he had to pay the MP's their share or pay the consequences, usually a beating on the spot. It was not unusual to see officers and senior NCO's disciplining junior enlisted with a punch in the face or even striking them with a board. The Republic of Korea Air Force was much different than ours. I was a nineteen-year-old country boy, and I was seeing a lot of new things.

I left Korea on Easter Sunday, 1969. I processed through McChord AFB, WA and after a leave at home in the Ozarks I reported to Luke AFB, AZ. It was a TAC base that mostly trained pilots from the German Air Force. Most of the duty was law enforcement. Lower ranks (me) pulled gate duty frequently. We worked the typical rotating shift which was all new to me as was wearing a Class B uniform and polishing black leather gear. We were armed with a Smith and Wesson .38 cal Combat Masterpiece pistol. It was not bad duty, but I soon grew restless, so I went to personnel and volunteered for Thailand. I soon received orders and after a stop at Lackland AFB/Camp Bullis for combat training I went home for thirty days leave. I arrived at U-Tapao Royal Thai Naval Air Station in February of 1970. I was assigned to Tiger Flight. After a couple of weeks, it was announced at Guardmount that the K-9 section at U-Tapao was accepting volunteers for dog handler duty. I was the only one who volunteered. I spent a couple of weeks learning how to handle a dog through OJT. I then walked a dog for the next year or so before being promoted to staff sergeant and taking on the job of K-9 flight sergeant. I served with the likes of Bill Cummings and John Homa. When my twelve-month tour was nearing an end, I requested and was granted an extension of eight months to take me to my discharge date in October of 1971. Near that time a new kennel master took over the K-9 section. As soon as he learned that I was not school trained as a dog handler he sent me back to Tiger Flight security where I spent the rest of my twenty-month tour.

I was discharged at Travis AFB on the twentieth of October 1971. After about eighty days at home, I reenlisted in the Air Force and was sent to Westover AFB, MA where Rob "Billy" Bold, my roommate in Thailand, was stationed. Luckily, I was assigned to work as NCOIC of the Pass and ID section of the Security Police Squadron. It was great duty with "banker's hours" and Class B uniform. Westover was on the list of bases being closed as





part of the Base Realignment Program and in the summer of 1973, I received orders for Beale AFB, CA, home of the SR-71 spy plane. In the spring of 1974 with the end of the Vietnam War, the Air Force instituted a program known as "Palace Chase" to accomplish downsizing of the active-duty force. I was discharged and traded my remaining time for duty in the Air National Guard. I served in the Missouri Air National Guard at St. Louis for a few years and was then released from military duty. I spent ten years as a civilian before deciding to enlist in the Missouri Army National Guard.

I was trained as an armament repair specialist and worked on the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter and later the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter. In 1995 I went to work full-time at my guard unit as a civilian technician of the Dept of Defense. In 2005 parts of my unit were activated for duty at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. We arrived there just before Thanksgiving. During our twelve-month tour I spent just over three months TDY to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, and an equal amount of time at Ballad Air Base in Iraq. I had just turned fifty-eight when I was sent to Iraq. Quite old to be serving in the heat. Kuwait was hot but I thought Iraq was worse. In early November 2006 my unit flew out of Kuwait City International Airport bound for Scott AFB, Illinois.

Representatives of our unit met us there and relieved us of our weapons, gas masks and other combat gear. The Patriot Guard Riders were there and gave us a hero's welcome. They escorted our buses all the way to Ft. Leonard Wood, MO where we spent the next few days processing off of active duty. We were then loaded onto buses bound for our home station in Springfield, MO. The Patriot Guard escorted us all the way. Just outside of Springfield we were met by the Missouri State Highway Patrol. We received what the Patrol called the "Presidential Welcome and Escort". All the side streets along our route in the city were blocked with city police at every intersection. We cruised past cheering crowds and received a huge homecoming celebration when we arrived at our destination. It was a wonderful feeling, especially in light of the lack of a homecoming from my two previous tours.

I spent eight years wearing the Air Force uniform and twenty-three years in the Army uniform. It was a great privilege and honor serving my country all those years and through three deployments. And it was truly a moving moment when this old Vietnam vet received a real homecoming at last. I wish all Vietnam era vets could have experienced what I finally did.

**RAFFLE**



**RAFFLE**

**REMINDER:** *Again, as in previous years, we will be conducting a raffle at the Saturday evening banquet. The funds are used to help defray the reunion cost and supply the Hospitality Room.*

**SISTERS:** *If you could possibly bring a nice gift that we could add to the selection, it would be greatly appreciated.*



**NOTE:** All Officers and Staff are unpaid VSPA members who volunteer to serve their brothers in the association. Officers were elected in 2021 for a two-year term. Staff members were appointed to assist and advise the officers of the association as needed.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

**President:** Jerry Nelson; Safeside Phan Rang, Phu Cat, Tuy Hoa 69-70; [jrnel1423@aol.com](mailto:jrnel1423@aol.com); 210-273-4777

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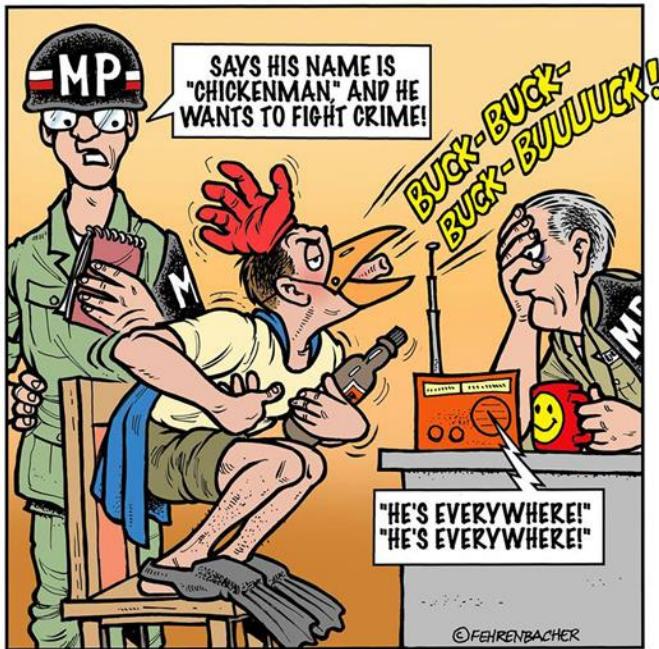
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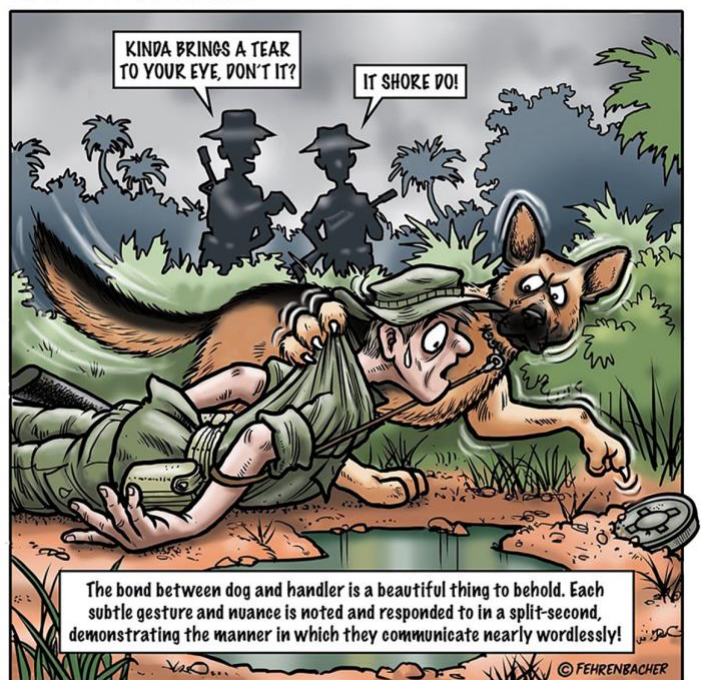
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**IN-COUNTRY**



**WWII HAD CAPTAIN AMERICA...  
VIETNAM HAD CHICKENMAN!**

**IN-COUNTRY**



The bond between dog and handler is a beautiful thing to behold. Each subtle gesture and nuance is noted and responded to in a split-second, demonstrating the manner in which they communicate nearly wordlessly!

**THESE RELATIONSHIPS CAN TAKE TIME.**

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# U.S. AIR FORCE

## WARNING

### RESTRICTED AREA

IT IS UNLAWFUL TO ENTER THIS AREA WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE INSTALLATION COMMANDER.

(SEC. 21, INTERNAL SECURITY ACT OF 1950; 50 U.S.C. 797)

WHILE ON THIS INSTALLATION ALL PERSONNEL AND THE PROPERTY UNDER THEIR CONTROL ARE SUBJECT TO SEARCH.

USE OF DEADLY FORCE AUTHORIZED.

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