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

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# VIETNAM 1998, VIEWS FROM THE PAST

April, 1999

Like many before me I served in Vietnam exactly 30 years ago in 1967 to 1968. My tour of duty was strictly at Tan Son Nhut Air Base located on the north western edge of Saigon. I know many of you remember this base, especially Security Policeman who were there with me during the 1968 TET Offensive. As you may recall, during the TET attack in the early morning hours of January 31, 1968, we lost four good men (Louis Fischer, William Cyr, Charles Hebron, Roger Mills) in 051 bunker (Echo 37) which was located on the western perimeter of Ton Son Nhut and took the brunt of the attack. As I recall, the 051 Bunker Area was assaulted by three enemy battalions. Without exaggeration, the five Security Policeman (including Alonzo Coggins who survived) in the bunker and 377th Security Police Squadron fought gallantly against overwhelming odds. In my mind I can still hear their frantic radio transmissions for help as tracer fire, flares and rockets lit up the night sky.

Recently (December 1 – 7, 1998) I had the fortunate opportunity to return to Saigon. During my visit I made it a point to see Ton Son Nhut one more time and try to locate the area of the 051 bunker. Believe it or not, the 051 bunker is still standing. With the help of some excellent Vietnamese guides (Tung & Khoi) and some slick maneuvering (this area is a restricted military zone) relocated the bunker. The 051 is the only bunker still there. The original barbed wire perimeter of the airport has now been replaced with a 12 foot concrete wall. Highway I (also still there) is a bustling, busy two lane thoroughfare.

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At first, because of all the area improvements and the concrete security wall, I could not locate the exact area of the 051 bunker which sat approximately 40 meters east of Highway 1. As we were searching down Highway 1 I just "happened" to see the roof of what appeared to be an old bunker protruding above the concrete wall! With the assistance of the two Vietnamese guides I was able to get to the area and to the top of the wall to get a view of the lone standing monument. It was the 051! For a moment all I could do was stare in amazement. I couldn't believe it was still there! As 1 stared and recalled the battle, it seemed to just stand silent and alone as reminder of the sacrifices of war.

The area across Highway 1, which used to be an open kill zone with just a few dwellings and rice paddies, is now built up with businesses all along the highway. The old Vinatexco factory, from which the Viet Cong staged their attack, is also still there but now operates under another name.

Much of the flight line looked the same as it did in 1968. Most of the revetments have been removed but were replaced with concrete canopies which are still there and are visible from the terminal. The original control tower, adjacent to the old C – 130 and main trouble area is still in use. The original airport terminal has been remodeled on the inside but looks the same on the flight line side as it did in 1968. The front side of the terminal has also been remodeled; however, I was able to clearly recognize the area as it was in 1968.

# VSPA Points of Contact

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### DISMOUNT

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Once again we have a formation to honor another of our fallen brothers. We received word from Lonnie Carter's wife that he passed away on December 30, 1998. He served at Phan Rang 6/67 to 6/68 and was also stationed at Bien Hoa.



## Secretary/ Treasurer



1. Information concerning dues payments: The notice that went out in January 1999 issue was sent as a reminder that Association dues are payable each January. If you received a notice you were not delinquent. If you receive a notice in this issue you are delinquent. Please send dues to: Steve Ray and made payable to VSPA. My new address is: 2887 Hampton Cove Way, Hampton Cove, AL 35763. The dues remain \$10.00 per year for regular and associate members and \$5.00 a year for supporting members. I hope this clears up the confusion. Many thanks to the members that sent in extra moncy (as a donation) to pay for those members that cannot afford to pay.

II. The reunion booklet should be out this month to those that ordered them.

III. VSPA has worked with the  $366^{th}$  Security Force Squadron to name an area of Mt. Home AFB. ID after an SP that was killed in action during the war. The SP chosen was A2C Gary L. Fuller of the  $366^{th}$  SPS Da Nang Air Base RVN. A2C Fuller was KIA 27 February 1967. A coremony was held at Mt. Home AFB on 25 March 1999 and the Gary L. Fuller Security Forces Defender Park Pavilion was officially dedicated. VSPA member Lewis Barnett attended the ceremony and represented the Association at the dedication.

IV. On 12 February 1999 the VSPA sponsored a medal presentation ceremony for Sergeant (Ret) Alonzo J. Coggins. Sgt. Coggins was the sole survivor of the 051 bunker during the Tet Offensive at Tan Son Nhut on 31 January 1968. Sgt. Coggins was badly wounded during the attack and after medical evacuation to the U.S. he spent several months in a hospital before being medically retired. After returning home, Sgt. Coggins received his citations in the mail; however, he'd never received his medals. In fact, he never was sure he was entitled to wear the decorations. All that changed on 12 February 1999 at Carter Hall, Lackland AFB. Texas. Several 377th SPS members, VSPA officers Kevin Fitzgerald and Steve Ray and other VSPA members (including B/General Richard Coleman), media representatives and more than 225 active duty personnel were in attendance for the awards ceremony. Simply put - all of you would have been proud of the way the ceremony was conducted. Security Forces personnel did an OUTSTANDING job putting everything together. Special thanks go to Major (Ret) Thom Joyce for getting Sgt. Coggins recognized. HQ. Air Education and Training Command went to great links to see that everything was done to honor Sgt. Coggins. Sgt. Coggins was awarded the Silver (Continued on page 8)



### SAFESIDE

I joined SAFESIDE in May of 1968 after trying successfully to get out of Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota. When we got off the plane at Hickam AFB,Hawaii we weren't met with flowers. Instructors from the 1041st Combat Security Police Squadron had us down giving them 20 just for being there. An hour later we were at Schofield Barracks, "I" quad, gatting our issue of cammies, jungle fatigues, web gear and steel Leimet. I realized then, this wasn't going to be the Kaussian vacation you see on TV. Three months of Arnoy Pauger training, running everywhere we went and 5 hours of sleep a eight. Chin up bar in front of the chow hall and FCPT every morning plus a mile and a Leaf can before breakfast. After completing our school we deployed in mass to Phan Rang Air Base, XVH Aug 68.

Gur first assignment, day two, was to jump on a C-130 and fly to Pleiku Air Base in the central highlands. We got there in less than an hour. In flight MSgt Taylor told us we'd be coming off the aircraft shooting ala Khe Sahn. We all jammed mags into our M-16's and prepared for the worst. I don't remember feeling the plane touch down but the back doors opened revealing a scenario unlike my stereotypical impressions of what Nam should look like, rolling green hills with mountains all around. We ran down the ramp as soon as the C-130 stopped and secured the area. That's when I heard the laughter. The Aerial Port guys were rolling on the ground. I guess it wasn't as hot as advertised.

First night I was posted on a jeep with a .50 cal., the call sign was RAT I. We headed out to the perimeter to patrol the fence line. Two A1H Skyraiders (Spads) flew by after returning from a sortie somewhere west of us. One still had nape on his wings and dropped it about 150 yards south of us. I thought we were under attack. In a few weeks we learned the ropes and found out that every nights intel said we were surrounded and would more than likely be overrun. Our jeep was re-christened "QUICKIE 1" as MSgt. Taylor thought Rat 1 too demeaning, I guess he never watched Rat Patrol on TV.

It was not long after that we got our first taste of why we were there. I recall one night we were watching Spooky work out around the 937th Engineer Hill area when a 122mm rocket slammed into the POL area. The concussion knocked me down and I heard shrapnel fly over me. Y could feel the heat from the fireball all the way out to t runway where I was crawling. I made it to the bunker a went over why I had forgotten the drill about Cover a Concealment.

During another attack our Barracks took a hit. It blup our Barbecue area and collapsed the bunker where i fellow Safesiders were. Usually we'd sit out there and dribeer while other bases got it. Ring side seats took a hit the evening and thank God we took a night off from that ritue My only worry at the time was that my new TV was a stroyed by the biast.

On another night in the middle of a mortar attack I sees some Fleiku airmen tear into a pallet of Schlitz beer w bayonets and later claim it was mortar damage. The sar attack saw 10 tape recorders at the Service Club vapor from a near miss. Funny that not a transistor was found : terwards.

We reponded one night to a call for assistance from a 633rd SPS out by the south perimeter. They had moveme in their Starlight Scope. I squinted into the fuzzy at best of tics and sure enough there was movement. I opened up or with a full can of API and tracer mix. They claimed wh ever it was, was destroyed and we resumed our patrol. T next moming Camp Holloways commanding officer want to know why we blew up his windsock.

Every day something weird would happen and I was ways waiting for the other shoe to drop. We'd see Squa go out in two and threes and come back alone. Or we wou pull around to the back side of the base and watch the Hue come in and drop off the wounded from the heavy fighti going on all around us. It was sobering to see the Arr drop an unconscious soldier from a hovering Huey and th go back for more.

We never mixed much with the PCS types there as were considered too intense. I am sure we never gave the any reason to think otherwise. We were never penetrat and after 4 months redeployed back to Phan Rang for t coming 2nd round of TET. I'll never forget Pleiku as lo as I live. It is the place I dream about and want to revisomeday. I just wish I'd got to know Pat Dunne while I w there. Better late than never.

C.Larry Sutherland, TSgt USAFRes 822nd Combat Security Police Sqdn



At the last reunion I preached at our Sunday Morning service about the way Jesus was unique as God's son. Today I'd like to add a couple thoughts to that address, as to why I admire God's son. I admire Him first of all because He came so far, from heaven, distance meant nothing to Him to reach us. Secondly, He appeals to me because He came so low, as a baby, not some arrogant King with demands, but as a man in the likeness of man. Thirdly, I admire God's son because He has come so long, long ago, working a plan that included us. In that plan he decided that we would go to war and return alive. Fourthly, I admire God's son because He reached so far out through time and eternity to us so we could be with Him. One day the Bible says He will welcome us home. I also admire all of you guys. Thanks for your friendship.

Let's keep our president, Ted Janiak, in our prayers as he continues with his therapy. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Sincerely, Steve Janke/ Chaplain VSPA

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us

(Editor note: To learn more about our chaplain and how he went from a Security Police K-9 handler at Cam Ranh Bay Vietnam to a minister spreading the word of God. Check out his web site at www.geocities.com./~pointmen/PMIMSteveJ. htm

#### (Continued from page 8)

1999. After that there will be no more sold. Make all checks payable to VSPA and write "museum project" in memo section for donations. Send orders to Steve Ray at my new address listed in this issue. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. Specify the size (up to XXL). The T-shirt idea, design, and inspiration for the museum project belong to CMSgt. Danny Buskey of the 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group on Lackland AFB. He is indeed a resourceful individual.

One last thought. Kevin Fitzgerald and I had the opportunity to see and visit with the current crop of Security Force troops going through their training cycle. We were both very impressed with what we saw and heard. The Security Force troops are heads above any other troops we observed, without exception. General Coleman, his staff, and the current Security Forces leaders deserve to be recognized. (Continued from page 1)

The original main gate to the base has been removed and the main gate area and the area along the main gate road which led west to the SP barracks, Mars station and heliport is now open and a commercial business area. Tan Son Nhut has been downsized and the perimeter moved about two hundred yards to the north of the main gate road. The two large octagon water towers east of the old SP barracks are still there. These towers helped me recognize the area. Many may also recall the area just outside the main gate referred to as 100P Alley. This area of buildings is also still there.

In consideration of my Bien Hoa counterparts, I traveled to Bien Hoa in hopes of photographing Bunker Hill 10. However, after the long ride there, photographs were not allowed anywhere around the base area. The highway to Bien Hoa from Siagon and the Bien Hoa area are now all built up with very little country side.

Saigon still looks much the same as it did in 1968 but is much more crowded. You can see some modernization and building improvements and such things as cell phones, street phone booths, fax machines, photocopy centers and believe it or not "the Yellow Pages." Anyone desiring to return need not have any anxiety or concern about the trip. The Vietnamesc people are friendly and have no animosity toward Americans. The city was safe and relatively inexpensive. Western influence is very much alive and English is still widely accepted and spoken. Although the official name of the city is Ho Chi Minh, everyone continues to call it Saigon.

"Again," one thing this trip taught me was, "God Bless America And Her People." We are a really blessed nation. I feel more proud now that I had the opportunity to defend our way and assist the Vietnamese people. To me, the trip was well worth it.

> Frank Ybarbo 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam 1967-68 "PROVEN IN COMBAT"

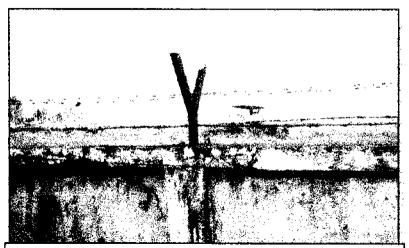
Steve Ray Secretary/Treasurer



Sgt. Alonzo Coggins (Ret) with friends at the luncheon after the awards ceremony. He is the one with the medals on his chest.



Sgt. Louis H. Fischer (right) 377th SPS. Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN KIA 31 Jan 1968. MSgt. Jack Roberts (Ret) is on the left. Jack is also a member of VSPA and donated this photo.



051 bunker, Tau Son Nhut taken December 4, 1998, call sign Echo 37.

This is outside the Main Gate area. The row of buildings under the "Konica" sign used to be called 100P alley. This was where all the prostitudes hung out. *Taken by Frank Ybarbo, 377th SPS in 1998* 

This picture is continued on down the street on the next page.



Tan Son Nhut flight line. The Tab Vcc shelters replaced the revetments. The MLR (Main Line of Resistence) was just behind these shelters. F-4 Phantom area was just beyond the trees. *Photo by Yharbo* 



This is the road that led from the Main Gate to the SP barracks. The barracks and motorpool were about 100 meters west of these water towers. I couldn't believe the towers were stillthere. *Photo by Tharbo* 1998



This is the old Main Gate area. The road led straight down to the SP barracks and heliport. This down the street from the other page. *Photo by Ybarbo 1998* 

# HURRAH! (Ode to Philip)

They say the war is over, they say the time is now. They say we all can come back home, we say we don't know how.

We sat so long in silence, afraid to see the sun. So many times back in the past the promise came undone.

They say we all are heroes, the vets of Vietnam.

- But I don't think they understand just who or why I am.
- So many lies and alibi's professes by those who stayed.
- As long as they looked down their nose, that long we were betrayed.
- And what about our comrades who didn't quite survive?
- They couldn't take the guilt and shame, they couldn't stay alive.
- Some are living yet in solitude, still troubled and alone.
- They came back to the USA but never made it home.
- Yeah, the war is finally halted, and we can hold our heads up high.

America has forgiven us and it doesn't matter why. The blessing is upon us and the curse is gone at last. We're celebrated heroes now, but the time for that

has passed.

- Just let us be remembered in the statues and the songs.
- As those who followed down the roads of many rights and wrongs.
- Like soldiers in those other wars we fought the gallant fight.
- But came back home to ridicule and had to stay the night.

In light of somewhat recent (2-3 years now) realization by the Public at-large that we are no longer monsters, this poem is a reminder that for many it comes too late. It almost seems that our vindication is also a way for the public to forgive themselves; please forgive my bitterness but some of them couldn't wait that long. I tried to have this published in several other veterans publications. I decided that perhaps it was best that I stick with my own . . . the people I fought beside.

Philip was a victim of the, "after war." He was a Marine that marched down the long, lonely road, withdrawing daily from his family and friends. He finally ended it on an S curve in a too-fast sport car, a casualty of a lack of public support.

John W. Fox, MSGT., USAF (Ret) 31<sup>st</sup> SPS Tuy Hoa 10/68-7/70 377<sup>th</sup> SPS Tan Son Nhut 12/70-3/71 483<sup>rd</sup> SPS Cam Ranh Bay 4/71-5/71 90 SOS (483<sup>rd</sup> ABGp) Nha Trang 5/71-10/71



The Florida Vietnam Veterans 12th Annual Reunion will be held at Wickham Park, Melbourne, Florida from April 16-18, 1999. There will be a gathering of VSPA members and a cook out is being planned at one of the shelters in the park for Saturday afternoon. We will have a table in the recruiting tent which we can use as a point of information and gathering point. We are looking for as many of you as possible to join us.

Special rates for rooms at the Comfort Inn are being given to VSPA members, (407) 255-0077. Make sure to ask for VSPA discount. There is still some rustic camp sites at the park, first come first serve. Hope to see you there.

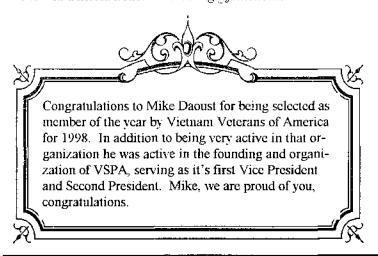
## Membership

The response to VSPA has been great to say the least. Since we started in 1995 we have located or been located by over 850 AP's/SP's. I've heard from more than one member that they thought they were the only SP left in the land of the Big BX! Not so! In 1998 we signed 156 new members, that's almost one every two days. There are 28 newbies in 99 already! VSPA has 497 members that have paid dues in 98 and or 99. VSPA is off to a great start but we still have a long way to go. If memory serves, and it occasionally does, there were over 600 AP's at Phan Rang in "66" alone so there are a lot of our brothers out there yet to be found and signed up. You all can help.

If you have paid your 99 dues as of March 8th then you should have received your new membership card. If for some reason you have paid your dues and not received your card or if there is a spelling error please let me know ASAP. With VSPA's rapid growth and address changes etc. it's difficult to keep track of everyone but easy to correct the mistakes. Also, if space allows we will print the names in Guardmount of the Supporting Members. Again, if someone's name has been omitted, PLEASE let me know.

Lastly, if you have never been able to attend one of the National Reunions make a real effort to make it to Las Vegas in October. You'll make some great new friends and maybe even reunite with some old ones. It also promises to double as a great family vacation as family members are always welcome. Hope to meet you all there.

Terry Morris W5148 East Bush Road Pardeeville, W1 53954-9443 (608) 429-9090 NEW EMAIL ADDRESS incoming@jylnet.com



#### (Continued from page 2)

Star and Purple Heart Medals by Lt. General David W. McIIvoy, Vice Commander, Air Education and Training Command, Randolph AFB, Texas. The General is himself a Vietnam veteran, having flown B-52 combat missions over North Vietnam in 1972. The Tan Son Nhut story presentation and the American flag presentation were particularly moving. Audio tapes, along with the film were shown of the actual attack. Colonel Billy Jack Carter's recorded voice of a memorial service with the 377th SPS troops (held at the 051 bunker site for the four SP's that were killed defending bunker 051) caused the past to leap into the present. There were few dry eves in the audience to be sure. Following the ceremony, a lunchcon was held in Sgt. Coggins honor. VSPA presented Sgt. Coggins a copy of the book. "Battle for Saigon, TET 1968," signed by the author, Keith William Nolan; a photo of Lewis Fischer (provided by VSPA member Jack Roberts - a copy of the photo was also given to the Security Forces Acadenty to be placed in Carter Hall next to the Fischer Memorial); a free Life Membership in VSPA; a T-shirt commemorating the occasion and several other VSPA merchandise items (these were donated by John Langley). VSPA also presented each 377th SPS member that attended the hincheon with the same T-shirt, free of charge. After the lunchcon Sgt, Coggins and the 377th SPS members went to the base television studio where they told their stories which will forever more be preserved. That is fitting.

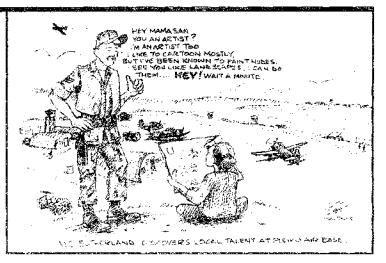
Special thanks go to the Air Force Security Police Association and the Security Services Federal Credit Union (Mr. Robert L. Sherwood) located at 7323 Highway 90 West. San Antonio, Texas for the generous donation of \$1000 each to help VSPA defray the cost of the air fare for the 377th SPS veterans and miscellaneous expenses incurred to conduct the ceremony. Please support those that have supported VSPA in this endeavor. While I wrote letters to other credit unions, banks, etc. on Lackland AFB and in the San Antonio area those listed above are the only ones to contribute. Please remember that and act accordingly.

The T-shirts that were mentioned were sold to the active duty forces as a commemorative item of the ceremony. VSPA decided to continue selling the T-shirts to fund a project at the SP museum on Lackland AFB. Monies collected will go to purchase an LCD projector. The T-shirts are black and silver with the current Security Forces Eagle on the front with Security Police at the top and Security Forces at the bottom. In bctween is the SF Logo. Also written on the front is, "a proud past a promising future." On the back is a picture of the 051 bunker. VSPA members can order a T-shirt forward \$15.00 each plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. If you don't want a T-shirt but wish to contribute to the museum project, we will except donations as well. VSPA will sell the T-shirt until Ju;y (Continued on page 4)

# **New Cartoonist**

We have a new cartoonist for Guardmount, to learn more about him read his article on page 3 of this issue. He draws cartoons about real life incidents that occurred while he was in Nam. We will have more in the coming issues of Guardmount. Welcome aboard.





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

Name			
Address			
State	Zip	Phone	
Unit in S.E.Asia			
Dates of S.E.Asia Duty			
Description of Duty			

Looking For?

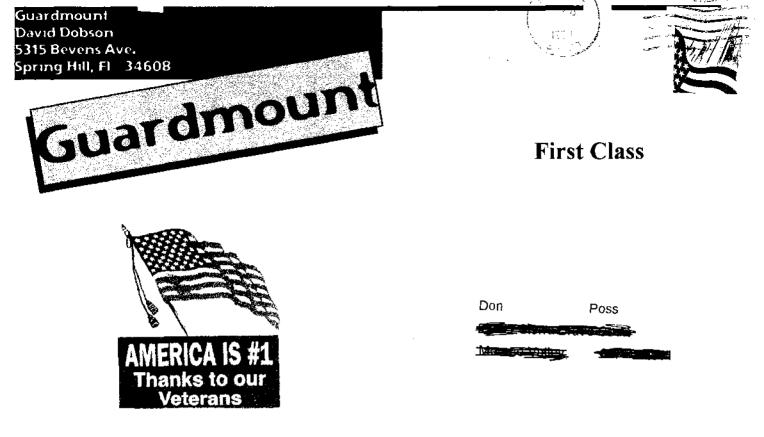


## ASSOCIATION MERCHANDISE FOR SALE



1.	Association Patch - made around a QC design	\$ 5.00
2.	Air Force Combat Veteran Patch	\$ 4,00
3.	Security Police Badge Patch	<b>\$</b> 4.00
4.	QC lapel pin	\$ 4.00
	QC patch, Actual size. Quality Reproduction. American Made	\$ 5.00
6.	7th Air Force Coin	\$ 6,00
7.	Black Baseball Style Cap with any of the above Patches on it	\$12,00
8.	Air Force Flag 3' X 5', Nylon	\$15.00
9.	VSPA T-shirt featuring QC patch L, XL, XXL.	\$14.00
10. Association Bumper Stickers		\$ 1.50
11.	7th Air Force - Patch	\$ 4.00
12. 7th Air Force – SP Lapel Pin – Pewter		\$ 6.00
13. Mini-Security Police Badges, 1 3/4" high, Official Issue		<u> </u>
14. 7th Air Force (Hanes) T-shirt, Full color design (L,XL, XXL)		\$ 14.00

Please add 10% to your order for shipping and handling, minimum of \$3.00. Please make checks for merchandise payable to John Langley. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Send checks to John Langley, 150 Aurora Road, Venice, FL 34293



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## 1999 Reunion

VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION 5th Annual Reunion, October 7th to October 10th, 1999, Las Vegas, Nevada, Hotel: San Remo. After April 15 call 800-522-7366 for reservations, *do not call before that date*.

The hotel is right off the strip close to everything. Registration Fee: \$89.00 per person, 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.

For more information please contact the reunion committee. Mike Daoust Office (912) 654-2121 E-Mail skycop@clds.net Or Steve Gattis Home Phone: (909) 986-6991 E-Mail gattis@gte.net. Please contact Mike or Steve not the officers.

